

Know Your Faith:
An Exposition of the Christian Worldview

Volume 2 - Revelation

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Introduction

Forward to the Series Know Your Faith

The series *Know Your Faith: An Exposition of the Christian Worldview* is a detailed examination of apologetics, hermeneutics and theology reflecting an Evangelical-Pentecostal/Charismatic perspective. The present emphasis in the church on practical Christian living, which is certainly necessary, has at the same time created a void in the hearts and minds of believers for understanding the foundations of their faith, that is, what they believe and why. This lack of solid grounding in Christian truth can unfortunately lead to shallowness of commitment, lack of perseverance in trials and vulnerability to false teachings and “every wind of doctrine” that passes through the Church. This series is intended to provide believers with a deeper understanding of the foundations of their faith.

These volumes were first released in the Russian language under the title *Слово о Боге: Евангельское богословие для восточных христиан* (*A Word about God: Evangelical Theology for Eastern Christians*), with about 10,000 copies of the individual volumes presently in circulation, and multiple times more downloads of individual topics from the series (www.russiantheologicalresources.com).

Let us highlight some special features of these books that may distinguish them from other attempts to systematize Christian truth. First, this series gives special attention to the biblical teaching of the baptism in the Holy Spirit as a spiritual experience distinct from and subsequent to conversion, and to the full range of spiritual gifts available to the church today.

Second, the author has attempted to avoid a confessional theology approach, but instead to employ a biblical theology one. In the former approach, biblical material is gathered to support positions already defined by a confessional or denominational group. In the latter, a theme is traced chronologically from the beginning of the Bible to the end, allowing the Bible speak for itself. This also enables the reader to see how the theme developed over time as God revealed more of His truth. In addition, material from the intertestamental period and the views of the Early Church are at times included in the investigation to demonstrate how post-prophetic Israel and post-apostolic Christianity understood God’s revelation in Scripture.

Third, this series describes and evaluates not only the Western (Catholic/Protestant) views on doctrinal questions, but the Eastern Orthodox understanding as well. The author of this series lived and taught for 20 years in countries of the former Soviet Union and is well versed in the special theological nuances of Eastern Christianity. Rarely do we find a resource where an objective evaluation of Eastern Orthodoxy is included in a systematic theology format.

Fourth, these books defend the Arminian view of predestination, which the author feels best represents the total biblical picture. Although this is not the only systematic theology text that holds that position, it is one of the few that does. We treat the topic with some depth, devoting three chapters of volume 3 to the issue.

Fifth, in volume 4, we utilize the theme “union with Christ” as an organizing center for discussing God’s salvation plan. In this discussion, we will discover that all the benefits of salvation are directly related to and entirely dependent upon the fact that God has placed us “in Christ.” One of the primary goals of this series is to reestablish the preeminence and priority of the long-neglected biblical concept of union with Christ as the all-inclusive principle for understanding and appropriating God’s grace in salvation.

Finally, in distinction from other treatments of systematic theology, we employ here an integrated approach of apologetics, hermeneutics and theology. We do this in order to present not only individual discussions of theological topics, but also a total Christian worldview, beginning with God’s existence, continuing with His revelation and nature, and concluding with an exposition of His plan, expounded under the rubric: faith, hope and love. The order and content of these five volumes progressively unfold the Christian worldview:

- Volume 1 – Existence: Does God exist? If so, who is He?
- Volume 2 – Revelation: How does God make Himself known?
- Volume 3 – Nature: What is God like?
- Volumes 4-5 – Plan: What is God’s goal for humanity?

The material in volumes 4 and 5 is organized according to the apostle Paul’s famous maxim: “But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love” (1 Corinthians 13:13). The section on “faith” details God’s plan of salvation and how to obtain it. The section on “hope” describes our future after death and at the end of time. “Love” concerns questions of practical Christian living, both individually and corporately in the context of the Church.

We express our heartfelt appreciation for the following tools used extensively in this series:

- Logos Bible Software (<https://www.logos.com>)
- New American Standard Bible: 1995 update. – LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.
- Nestle-Aland: Novum Testamentum Graece. – Eds. Aland, K. Aland, Karavidopoulos J., Martini C. M., Metzger B. M. – 28 revidierte Auflage. – Stuttgart: Deutsche
- Bibelgesellschaft. Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia: With Westminster Hebrew Morphology. – Stuttgart; Glenside PA: German Bible Society; Westminster Seminary, 2001.
- Wikipedia.org

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About the Author

Dr. Thomas Wespetal was born in 1957 in the city of Racine, Wisconsin (USA). He received Christ at age 17 and the following year followed Him in water baptism. In that same year, he experienced the Baptism in the Holy Spirit, after which he began attending Pentecostal and Charismatic fellowships.

Dr. Wespetal studied medicine at Oral Roberts University, earning an M.D. degree. He practiced medicine for several years before answering God's call to the full-time ministry of the Word. He subsequently studied at the Assemblies of God Seminary, receiving a Master in Biblical Languages.

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Introduction to Volume 2

A key element in our quest to know God is discovering how He has revealed Himself. God is so much greater than we are that we cannot fully grasp Him simply with our intellect. We must depend on His good favor to make Himself known to us, that is, we rely on His self-revelation. This volume is devoted to the theme of God's revelation, i.e., how He reveals Himself and His plan.

We can summarize the contents of this volume as follows. God has revealed Himself primarily and most authoritatively in verbal form, that is, through language. God's authoritative words are contained exclusively in the 66 books of the Protestant biblical canon. Although the original biblical books have long ago perished, we rely on the science of textual criticism to restore these autographs. The original autographs are verbally and fully inspired, i.e., every word they contain is the very Word of God. We interpret God's revelation by means of the grammatico-historical method of analysis, which we will discuss in detail later in this volume.

Since the Word of God comes to us in two Testaments, Old and New, the question arises about the relationship between them and the application of the Old Testament to New Testament believers. In this volume, we defend the premise that the Old Testament Law applies to the New Testament believer in an adapted form, namely the "law of Christ." God's Old Testament promises find fulfillment both in the Church and later in Israel, which will turn to Jesus as Messiah in the end times. We will also investigate the sometimes curious use of the Old Testament in the New. We conclude that along with direct application of Old Testament ideals in the New Testament, we also observe new applications of Old Testament principles and typological application of certain Old Testament passages.

This volume also evaluates several aberrant interpretive methods, namely allegorical interpretation, the historical-critical method, and authoritative appeal to Church tradition. In addition, postmodern philosophy has given birth to several new approaches in hermeneutics, such as conventionalism, literary criticism, deconstructionism, the "new hermeneutic," and existential hermeneutics. All these approaches have the common feature of minimizing or rejecting authorial intent, which is the key factor for proper interpretation of the biblical text. Other "new players" in the field of hermeneutics, which we will critically evaluate, are structuralism and liberation theology.

Finally, we are interested in not only faithfully interpreting individual passages of Scripture, but also in formulating Christian doctrine from the Bible and constructing a wholistic Christian worldview. Therefore, this volume concludes with a discussion of the theological process, by which Scripture becomes theology, and which will serve as the basis for investigating doctrinal questions in subsequent volumes of this series.

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I. God's Revelation

Chapter 1. How Does God Reveal Himself?

In our previous volume, we demonstrated that an Ultimate Being does indeed exist and that the Christian faith provides us with best understanding of who He is and what He is like. The next question is a big one: "How does the Christian God make Himself known?" If our goal is the knowledge of Ultimate Truth, we must discover how to personally attain that knowledge.

Happily, we can narrow our search by enumerating the means, by which humans obtain knowledge. First, we learn by observation. If this is God's primary means of self-revelation, then we will know Him by studying what He has done, both in creation and in human history. Second, we have intuitive knowledge, that is, we can sometimes simply sense within ourselves what is true. If God primarily communicates to us in this way, then we find the path to Truth in personal religious experience or in the progressive development of human religious thought through history. A third option is language. Does God reveal Himself verbally in inspired books? Finally, God could certainly reveal Himself through a direct, personal encounter with an individual.

In this chapter, the task before us is to investigate these possible paths to knowing God's revelation and acquaint ourselves with various movements that promote or have promoted these options.

A. Revelation through Nature (General Revelation)

In the world of theology, a special term is used to designate God's revelation through nature – God's "general revelation." More specifically, general revelation includes what we can know about God through His creation, the human conscience, and our human experience. We recall the classic reference from the Hebrew Scriptures about knowing God through creation: "The heavens are telling of the glory of God, and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night reveals knowledge" (Psalm 19:1-2). The apostle Paul also affirmed, "That which is known about God is evident within them, for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made" (Rom 1:19-20).

Paul also writes about knowing God's standards through the human conscience. In Romans 2:14-15 we read, "For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the

Law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them.” Finally, wise Solomon feels we also learn truth by observing life in the world. He notes how laziness results in poverty (Prov 24:30-32), and how adultery leads to misery (Prov 5:7-14).

Knowing God through nature seems straightforward. Yet, a noted 20th-century theologian, Karl Barth, issued a now famous challenge to this idea. He emphatically denied that God reveals Himself by means of general revelation. He objected to the idea that God’s revelation could be impersonal. In Barth’s opinion, God always reveals Himself through personal encounter, primarily through the coming of Jesus Christ to the earth. Barth did concede that we can encounter God through Scripture, preaching and the sacraments, but only if and when they lead us into a personal experience with Him.¹

How did Barth come up with such a notion? In his theology, Barth emphasized God’s “transcendence” – that He is distinct from His creation. He emphasized that feature to the extreme of claiming that God must take the initiative to reveal Himself in a personal spiritual encounter in order for someone to know Him. He also noted that sinful human nature distorts the knowledge of God obtained through observation.² Furthermore, Barth emphasized the unity of God’s nature. To maintain that unity, God’s actual presence must accompany His self-revelation. Finally, Barth felt that God’s self-revelation always led to a positive response by the recipient of that revelation. Consequently, He must be personally present and active in drawing the recipient to Himself.

Nonetheless, Barth’s view has serious shortcomings. First, as we have seen, the Bible, which Barth accepts as true, clearly speaks of general revelation. Second, it logically follows that if we observe what a person has done, we gain some knowledge of the person himself/herself. A person is revealed, at least in part, by what he/she does. Therefore, one can certainly know something about God by observing His work in creation.

In connection with general revelation, we must familiarize ourselves with a related concept called “natural theology.” Natural theology refers to a person’s ability to actually know God through general revelation. If general revelation does exist, which seems beyond doubt, the question remains as to whether people can properly perceive that revelation and come to true conclusions about God based on their observations.

Various theories exist to delineate the relationship between general revelation and natural theology. The theory “deism,” which we discussed in volume 1, proposes that God created the world and then abandoned it, leaving people to deal with their issues on their own. People do not need personal contact with their Creator, and it is beneath His dignity to do so.³

Deist Edward Herbert proposed that through general revelation one could know all one needs to know about God, namely: (1) God exists, (2) He is worthy of worship, (3) one must pursue holiness, (4) one is in need of repentance, (5) God will reward and punish.⁴

Therefore, deists believe in general revelation and consider natural theology not only possible, but also imperative, since God does not reveal Himself in any other way. The individual must formulate his/her understanding of God based on what He has done in creation and conscience, and only by that means. On the other extreme, we have Karl Barth’s view that general revelation does not exist. Consequently, natural revelation is also ruled out, since it is derived from observations about God in nature.

We welcome more moderate positions. Roman Catholicism, for example, accepts the existence of general revelation and believes that one can form a natural theology from it. Yet, this knowledge is limited, since there are aspects of God’s nature and plan that are available to us only through direct revelation from God. The 16th-century reformer John Calvin held a different view. He taught that people are so deeply affected by sin that they will unavoidably distort the knowledge of God available through creation. So then, for Calvin, general

¹Mueller D. L. Karl Barth // Patterson B. E. Makers of the modern theological mind. – Waco, TX: Word, 1972. – P. 83.

²Ibid, p. 73.

³Warfield B. B. The works of Benjamin B. Warfield, Volume 1: Revelation and inspiration. – Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2008. – P. 38.

⁴Helm P. The divine revelation. – Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1982. – P. 8.

revelation indeed exists, but it does not benefit anyone. Natural theology, that is, theology formed without the benefit of direct divine revelation, is ruled out.

Based on what we have said earlier, it is difficult to take Karl Barth's theory seriously. We refuted deism in our previous volume. That leaves us with the Catholic and Calvinistic views. The apostle Paul can aid us here. We have already cited him in support of the existence of general revelation (Rom 1:19-20). Yet, contrary to Calvin, Paul states that people are responsible for the knowledge available through general revelation, claiming that unbelievers "are without excuse" (v. 20). They could have known about God through creation, but rejected that knowledge. Clearly, God would not hold people responsible for what they could not do. The fact that God will judge people for their rejection of His revelation in creation shows that they are thus able to know Him.

We find more support in Paul's teaching in Athens, where he states, "He made from one {man} every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined {their} appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him" (Acts 17:26-27). Here we see that God expected humankind in general, particularly those not privileged with special revelation, to seek Him, which is possible only if they could perceive Him in nature.

Moreover, in the second chapter of his letter to the Romans, Paul relates that the conscience can "accuse or defend" (Rom 2:15), showing that conscience can provide true knowledge of God's standards. Finally, in the book of Job we read the following: "But now ask the beasts, and let them teach you, and the birds of the heavens, and let them tell you. Or speak to the earth, and let it teach you, and let the fish of the sea declare to you. Who among all these does not know that the hand of the LORD has done this?" (Job 12:7-9). The author affirms that nature can teach us about the ways of God.

As we form our response to the question of the relationship between general revelation and natural theology, we must take into consideration still other factors. Paul continues his discussion of creation in Romans chapter 8, and there claims that our planet Earth is in a fallen condition: "For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption..." (Rom 8:20-21). So then, creation, having departed from its initial perfection, will not give us a precise picture of the nature of its Creator.

Paul also speaks of the fallen condition of humans, which will consequently lead to their distortion of what can be observed about God in nature. He writes that people are "darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart" (Eph 4:18). This means that people are likely to reject the knowledge available to them through general revelation. Paul directly states this fact in Romans 1:21: "For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened," as well as in Romans 3:10-11: "There is none righteous, not even one; there is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God."

Based on the above considerations, we may conclude the following. First, general revelation does indeed exist. God does reveal Himself and His ways through creation, conscience and human experience. However, because of the fallen state of creation, the picture of God presented by these means is not precise, which renders any theology derived from them, at best, only an approximation of the truth. We also conclude that natural theology is possible – people can potentially arrive at true knowledge of God by means of observation. Yet, in practice, people generally do not accept what God has revealed of Himself in nature. Hence, this method of God's self-revelation, in and of itself, seems inadequate.

B. Revelation through Personal Religious Experience (Mysticism)

Another suggested means of acquiring God's revelation is through special mystical experience, or a personal, spiritual encounter with God. Adherents of this approach describe this experience with terms like

“feeling,” “intuition,” “encounter,” or “awareness.” According to this view, God speaks to the individual directly, through the heart. The individual comes to know God and His plan intuitively.

Mysticism has a long history in the Christian Church, especially in the East. Noted in this regard are Eastern mystics like Symeon the New Theologian (949-1022) and Seraphim of Sarov (1754-1833). The Western Church boasts similar individuals like Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) and Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556).⁵ More modern mystical theologians in the West include Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) and Karl Barth (1886-1968).⁶

Many consider Friedrich Schleiermacher the father of liberal theology. His views differed markedly from other thinkers of his day and are coined by the term “Romanticism.” Schleiermacher put great weight on the idea of God’s immanence, that is, His nearness to creation and interaction with it. He emphasized God’s immanence to such a degree that conservative theologian Carl Henry considered him a pantheist.⁷ Like the classic mystic, Schleiermacher felt that God communicates through inner feelings or intuition.

Schleiermacher delineates his mystical approach in his hermeneutic (i.e., interpretation of Scripture). Schleiermacher advises us not only to analyze a text from a grammatical point of view, but also to conduct a psychoanalysis of the text’s author. For Schleiermacher, the goal of Scripture interpretation is to reproduce for oneself the inner world and inner experience of the author and relive the feelings of devotion that he had when writing his text.⁸ In this way, the reader may secure personal contact with the One, Who inspired the biblical author in the first place. Schleiermacher claimed that the indicator of a true mystical experience with God is the presence of a deep feeling of dependence on Him.

As for Karl Barth, we have already discussed his views on general revelation. His theological system, in its entirety, is named “Neo-orthodoxy.” As mentioned before, Barth believed that God reveals Himself only through a personal, spiritual encounter. God is so transcendent that there does not exist any natural point of contact between God and people. Therefore, in order for God to reveal Himself, He must take the initiative to “break in” to an individual’s consciousness. The most striking example of this kind of “inbreaking” is the coming of God’s Son, Jesus Christ, from heaven to earth.⁹ As is common among mystics, Barth feels that human language is incapable of adequately expressing God’s nature or communicating the knowledge of Him.

Barth’s theology birthed his unique approach to Scripture. He felt that the Bible is the Word of God only when the Holy Spirit makes the words of Scripture alive in the hearts of the readers. That is, the Bible can “become” the Word of God. Before and after that personal encounter with the Spirit, the Bible is simply regarded as a testimony of previous encounters between God and people. Thus, it loses its inspired status.¹⁰ Nonetheless, Barth ascribes a special status to the Bible, claiming that these personal encounters with the Spirit occur exclusively through the words of Scripture.

In summary, for Barth, God’s revelation does not consist in information about God, but in an encounter with Him. God reveals Himself only through a personal, spiritual experience of encounter, and when that encounter concludes, people have no access to Him until He takes initiative again to reach out to an individual.¹¹ Thus, we see the mystical nature of Barth’s theology.

Barth fears that if we consider the Bible God’s Word as such, then we limit God’s freedom and sovereignty, since now God is obligated to fulfill His Word. Barth fails to consider, though, that no one compelled God to

⁵Burgess S. M. *The Holy Spirit: Eastern Christian traditions*. – Peabody, MS: Hendrickson, 1989. – P. 56-59, 79-82; Burgess S. M. *The Holy Spirit: Medieval Roman Catholic and Reformation traditions*. – Peabody, MS: Hendrickson, 1997. – P. 53-57, 117-121.

⁶Henry C. F. H. *God, revelation, and authority*. – Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1999. – V. 2. – P. 248.

⁷*Ibid*, v. 4, p. 154.

⁸Thiselton A. C. *Hermeneutics and theology: The legitimacy and necessity of hermeneutics* // McKim D. *A guide to contemporary hermeneutics*. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986. – P. 163-165; Gillespie T. W. *Biblical authority and interpretation* // McKim D. *A Guide to contemporary hermeneutics*. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986. – P. 211-212.

⁹Henry, v. 4, p. 157.

¹⁰Helm, p. 41.

¹¹*Ibid*.

give His Word in the first place. God's giving of His Word is actually an expression of His freedom and sovereignty.¹² Barth also fears that regarding the Bible as God's Word will allow to reader to somehow "control" God. Yet, as Helm properly notes, knowing someone in no way implies gaining control over that individual.¹³

It appears that mysticism has exerted, and continues to exert, a significant influence on Christian thought. The well-known Catholic theologian Karl Rahner claims, "The Christian of the future will be a mystic, or he or she will not exist at all," meaning that a person's faith will be primarily based on "a genuine experience of God emerging from the very heart of our existence."¹⁴ Yet, should Christianity welcome this tendency?

We can note some significant weaknesses in this approach. First, mysticism unavoidably leads to subjectivity. Each individual will develop his/her own unique understanding of God based on his/her personal spiritual (mystical) experience. There will be as many views on God as there are people who hold those views. There are no objective criteria, by which one can verify claims about God. There are no objective criteria to judge right from wrong, spiritual experience from human imagination, or the Spirit of God from another spirit.¹⁵

Second, we see no need to make mystical experience an exclusive means to knowing God. Personal experience with God need not exclude other means of revelation, but rather will compliment them.¹⁶ If the same God we experience in personal, spiritual encounter has revealed Himself in other ways, then accessing these other means will in no way interfere with obtaining a true knowledge of God, but, instead, will only enrich that knowledge.

At the same time, we must heartily affirm that personal experience with God is healthy and vital for developing a personal relationship with Him. God is a living God and seeks fellowship and interaction with the people He created. Yet, an exclusive reliance on mystical knowledge of God is haunted by the defect of subjectivity, as noted above.

C. Revelation through the Historical Development of Religious Thought

Others have advanced the idea that God reveals Himself progressively through the development of religious thought in history. According to this theory, over time, religious thinking has progressed from more primitive to more sophisticated forms. Later religious thinkers have borrowed concepts from earlier thinkers, developed them, and passed them on to later generations. Many think that Christianity represents the highest attainment of human religious consciousness.

So then, God does not reveal Himself as such, but people discover Him as religious faith progresses over time. Such an approach has much in common with the theory of evolution in science. We may even term this idea the "evolution of religion." In the world of theology, it is known by the phrase "History of Religion."

Let us trace the route religion has supposedly taken through human history. Primitive peoples encountered natural forces that they could not control, but that, nonetheless, affected their lives. They began to worship these powers in order to appease them and, in so doing, to secure for themselves success and security. In time, people began assigning names to these powers, like Neptune, Diana, etc.

Later, people began acknowledging among many gods a patron god, who especially cared for their tribe. According to this theory, early Israel believed in many gods, but recognized Yahweh as their tribal, patron god. Israel advanced religious thinking in that it eventually embraced monotheism, the belief in only one God. This supposedly occurred in the fifth-sixth centuries BC. Proponents of the "History of Religion" school assert that the first monotheist was the final (unnamed) editor of the Pentateuch, who lived at that time.

¹²Frame, p. 222-223.

¹³Helm, p. 45.

¹⁴Rahner K. The practice of faith: A handbook of contemporary spirituality. – New York, Crossroad, 1983. – P. 22.

¹⁵Henry, v. 2, p. 251.

¹⁶Henry, v. 4, p. 203; Helm, p. 26-27.

At first glance, this approach seems convincing. Still, a closer look will reveal some serious defects. First, this theory, which supposedly offers an explanation for the rise of Judaism and Christianity, does not seriously take into consideration what the Judaism and Christianity have to say for themselves.

For example, liberal scholars claim that an unknown editor produced the final form of the Pentateuch in the fifth-sixth centuries BC. Yet, there is no documented evidence in Jewish history that such a person ever existed or did such a monumental work. In addition, no one has ever discovered a copy of one of the supposed documents he employed to make his composition. The Jewish Scriptures, as well as Jesus and His apostles, all attribute the writing of the Pentateuch in its final form to Moses.

When one accepts the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, one obtains a totally different picture of origins of monotheism. In the 15th century BC, Moses wrote, "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!" (Deut 6:4). Here we see that Moses, who lived about a thousand years before the so-called editor of the Pentateuch, was clearly a monotheist.

Even before Moses' time, the Jewish Scriptures testify that Abraham, who lived in the 21st century BC, believed in one God. He once said, "I have sworn to the LORD God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth..." (Gen 14:22). He also stated, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?" (Gen 18:25). Additionally, the apostle Paul flatly contradicts the History of Religion approach. In Romans 1:21-23, he claims that humans were originally monotheists, but degraded into polytheism.

So then, the teachings of Judaism and Christianity draw a totally different picture of the development of religious thought than the History of Religion approach does. According to the former, the initial religious faith was monotheism, and polytheism arose as a deviation from it.

Aside from the biblical witness, historical data also contradict the History of Religion approach. We know of another monotheist of ancient times – Akhenaten (1353-1336 BC), an Egyptian pharaoh. In his time, he required the worship of Aten, who was identified with the disc of the sun. We also know that in ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia, as far as records allow us to trace, worshippers recognized a chief god among the pantheon of gods. In Egypt this was Ra, the sun god, and in Mesopotamia – Anu, the sky king. It seems that the earliest faiths embraced the notion of a chief god above the rest.

We must ask the question, "Does what we observe in ancient religions represent a developing monotheism, or a degrading monotheism?" In other words, did the Egyptians originally worship only Ra and later adopted other gods into their faith, or did they worship many gods in the beginning and then "promoted" Ra? We may pose the same question about the worship of Anu in Mesopotamia. What actually took place in antiquity: a developing monotheism, or a degrading monotheism?

To answer this question, we need to consider several factors. Ancient religions paid very little attention to the chief god of their pantheon. They found the lesser, immanent gods more to their liking. As a rule, people are more fascinated by novelties than by established traditions. Consequently, we may posit that the lesser gods appeared later. These considerations weight in favor of an original monotheism, degrading into polytheism.

We can confirm antiquity's neglect of their chief gods with data from Sumerian texts.¹⁷ Enmesharra was the original, or at least one of the original gods of Sumer. He gave his authority to Anu and was subsequently forgotten. Anu, in turn, gave his authority to Enlil, after which the ancients withdrew their worship from the former as well.

The Aztecs believed in two original gods, from which all other gods and people originated. Their names were Ometecuhtli and Omeciuatl. Yet, it is written of them, "By the time of the Spanish Conquest, the two primordial beings had largely been pushed into the background by a crowd of younger and more active gods."¹⁸

¹⁷Кураев А. Протестантам о православии. – 7-е изд. – Ростов-на-Дону: Троицкое Слово, 2003. – Р. 299.

¹⁸Banks G. Land of the Aztecs and Incas // Eerdmans' handbook to the world's religions. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994. – P. 54.

In addition, the chief god of Canaan, El, “appears in some of the myths as an old man, too old to act effectively.”¹⁹

Russian Orthodox scholar Andrey Kuraev comments on this phenomenon: “In some sense, the Original God continues to be considered the most powerful being, but cultic practice dares to appeal to Him only in the most extreme circumstances.”²⁰ Similarly, M. Eleade writes, “If such action (i.e., an appeal to other gods) does not produce the desired results, people remember the Highest Being, who, in ordinary times, was nearly forgotten,” and also, “In the cults of so-called primitive peoples, the Highest Beings occupy last place.” Eleade concludes, “Forgetting the High God, the Creator, was a relatively frequent event in the history of religion.”²¹

We must also consider the extensive research done by Andrew Lang and Wilhelm Schmidt concerning primitive religions that exist now. Lang studied a tribe in Australia, whose God is known as the “Creator.” He requires from people a moral lifestyle and unselfishness. Conventionally, the “Creator” is not represented by an idol. Once, He destroyed the world by a flood because of people’s ungodliness.²²

It is remarkable to see the overlap between the faith of these primitive aborigines and the so-called “evolutionary advanced” faith positions of Judaism and Christianity. It is unlikely that they borrowed these concepts from the Bible, but their faith may well reflect an original monotheism that they have preserved over the centuries.

Schmidt conducted an exhaustive study of primitive people groups worldwide and published the results of his study in a twelve-volume work *Der Ursprung der Gottesidee (The Origin of the Idea of God)*.²³ He concluded that the more primitive the tribe, the higher their conception of God. He claimed that in comparing primitive cultures with more “advanced” ones, we observe that not one of the “advanced” cultures held a higher view of God than the more primitive.²⁴

Schmidt’s description of the God of these primitive tribes is as follows: “He is One, has existed from eternity, knows all things, is beneficent, inculcates morality, is all powerful, and was the creative Power... no image of the primitive Supreme Being is made anywhere.”²⁵ If we postulate that the faith of primitive tribes reflects the faith of the most ancient peoples, we uncover another testimony in favor of an original monotheism. World-renown biblical scholar Bruce Metzger supports Schmidt’s conclusions and relates critics’ reaction to his findings:

The outcome of this book is that evolution cannot be postulated as an explanation of the origin of religion, but the facts – cold, hard facts – demonstrate that monotheism was everywhere the earliest form of religion of which we have knowledge. Schmidt has smitten his opponents hip and thigh. Instead of answering him, they have largely ignored his documentation of evidence, preferring rather to brush him aside.²⁶

To the above, we may add the testimony of W. A. P. Martin, former president of Peking University: “China, India, Egypt and Greece all agree in the monothetstic type of their early religion. The Orphic Hymns, long before the advent of the popular divinities, celebrated the *Pantheos*, the universal God. The odes compiled by

¹⁹Millard A. Cradle of civilization: The Ancient Near East // Eerdmans’ handbook to the world’s religions. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994. – P. 66.

²⁰Куряев, p. 300 (translation from Russian).

²¹Ibid, p. 300, with reference to Элиаде М. Указ. Соч., p. 94-95 (translation from Russian).

²²See Lang A. Making of Religion.

²³Wilhelm Schmidt (linguist) - Wikipedia.

²⁴See Schmidt P. W. The origin and growth of religion.

²⁵Metzger B. M. Book review: The origin and growth of religion. By Father P. W. Schmidt // Bibliotheca Sacra. 1935. № 92. P. 502-503.

²⁶Ibid, p. 501.

Confucius testify to the early worship of Shangte, the Supreme Ruler. The Vedas speak of 'one unknown true Being, all-present, all-powerful, the Creator, Preserver and Destroyer of the Universe.'"²⁷

Still more arguments for an original monotheism can be advanced. In human history, we note people's tendency to reject monotheism. The history of Pharaoh Akhenaten, who made mandatory the worship of one god – Aten, is illuminating in this regard. Immediately after his death, the Egyptians returned to the worship of many gods, which shows their predilection for polytheism. Excavations of the tomb of a certain official of Akhenaten confirms this claim. We see in his tomb evidence of inscriptions honoring Aten alone, but also later alterations to honor other gods as well. Could not these alterations have been made after Akhenaten's death?²⁸

Moreover, one sees in the history of Israel clear indications of a popular attraction toward polytheism. Only after the exile to Babylon did the Jewish people fully embrace the teachings of Moses and the prophets, that God was one. Even in our day, certain practices of traditional Christian denominations hint at this polytheistic tendency – namely, the honoring of Mary and the saints.

In refutation of the History of Religion school of thought, we can point out the uniqueness of Hebrew faith in comparison with other belief systems of ancient times. One of the most noted theologian of Old Testament studies, John Bright, acknowledged that Israel "brought with them onto the stage of history a religion quite without parallel in the ancient world,"²⁹ and, "Her (i.e., Israel's) conception of God was from the beginning so remarkable, and so without parallel in the ancient world."³⁰ This may show that Israel did not borrow their conception of God from neighboring tribes, but received it by divine revelation.

In light of the above considerations, we may confidently conclude that in the course of human history the idea of God has not developed, but degraded from monotheism to polytheism. Then, how can we explain the predominance of monotheism in the religious world today? It is best explained not by a progressive evolution of religious thought, but by divine intervention. The positive influence of Judeo-Christian faith is responsible for the rise of monotheism, and those faiths received that knowledge by special divine revelation.

Unfortunately, several of the early Christian apologists were also ready to concede, at least in part, to a more evolutionary pattern in the development of religious thought.³¹ Justin Martyr, for example wrongly associated the Stoic concept of "Logos," an all-pervading, impersonal rational force, with the "Logos" of John's Gospel, who is the incarnate Son of God, Jesus Christ. In his attempt to defend Christianity before a pagan world, he suggested, "For whatever either lawgivers or philosophers uttered well, they elaborated by finding and contemplating some part of the Word... Christ, who was partially known even by Socrates (for He was and is the Word who is in every man...) (2 *Apology*, 10).³² In addition: "For each man spoke well in proportion to the share he had of the spermatic word, seeing what was related to it" (2 *Apology*, 13).³³

Clement of Alexandria committed the same error: "Before the advent of the Lord, philosophy was necessary to the Greeks for righteousness.... Philosophy, therefore, was a preparation, paving the way for him who is perfected in Christ" (*Stromata*, 1.5).³⁴

Finally, we will conclude our discussion with a helpful thought from the prominent 19th-century evangelical theologian B. B. Warfield. He correctly notes that in the History of Religion approach we encounter a confusion of the roles of revelation and reason.³⁵ When a person seeks the knowledge of God by reflection,

²⁷Strong A. H. Systematic theology. – Philadelphia, PA: American Baptist Publication Society, 1907. – P. 531.

²⁸National Geographic-Ukraine. – December, 2004. – P. 24-31.

²⁹Bright J. A history of Israel. – 3rd ed. – Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1981. – P. 144.

³⁰Ibid, p. 157.

³¹McGrath, p. 46-47.

³²From Roberts A., Donaldson J., Coxe A. C., eds. The Ante-Nicene Fathers. – Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Warfield, p. 39-41.

his/her reason plays an active role in obtaining that knowledge. On the other hand, when God gives revelation, human reason is passive and merely receives that information. Warfield writes,

The characteristic element in the Bible idea of revelation in its highest sense is that the organs of revelation are not creatively concerned in the revelations made through them, but occupy a receptive attitude. The contents of their messages are not something thought out, inferred, hoped, or feared by them, but something conveyed to them, often forced upon them by the irresistible might of the revealing Spirit.³⁶

D. Revelation through Historical Events

This approach works off the assumption that God makes Himself known through His acts, that is, though what He has done in history. We know God by reflecting on His mighty deeds. This theory takes two main forms: the so-called “death of God” theology, and “narrative theology.”

We will investigate the “death of God” theology as espoused by one of its leading proponents, Thomas Altizer.³⁷ According to this teaching, God “died” in the sense that He became part of His creation. Originally, God existed separate from the world, but subsequently He surrendered His transcendence and became completely immanent, that is, joined Himself to the material world. This occurred at the moment when He became incarnate in the person of Jesus Christ, and thus irrevocably united Himself with the material universe. The Early Church, however, supposedly invented the story of Jesus’ resurrection and ascension to again “locate” God in heaven and restore His transcendence. According to Altizer, however, God, in fact, “dissolved” into His creation.

Consequently, since God and the universe are now one entity, it is senseless to expect from God any supernatural intervention. He now works exclusively by natural means, especially through the efforts of people. Since God is totally immersed in His creation, He works equally through the Church and through society. Therefore, the people of God should be active participants not only in religious work, but in social and political affairs as well.

Nonetheless, the “death of God” theology is subject to criticism. First, multitudes of people over time have testified of divine intervention in their lives in answer to prayer. Such cases are far too numerous to attribute them simply to chance. Second, when we observe conditions in society, it becomes difficult to conclude that God is working equally in the Church and in secular society. Although the Church is far from perfect, in comparing conditions among God’s people with conditions in society, one must conclude that God is more active in the former. In addition, there exist numerous historical evidences of Christ’s resurrection, as delineated in chapter 16 of the previous volume. Finally, the “death of God” movement was very short lived. It began in the 1960’s, and boasts few adherents today.

Let us turn our attention to the second form of “revelation through events,” i.e., “narrative theology.” Unlike the previous theory, narrative theology focuses attention on God’s works among His people as recorded in the Bible. According to this theory, however, the Bible is not God’s Word, but only records the historical events, through which God revealed Himself. Marshall describes this view as follows:

“The Bible gives us, we must say, not simply a recital of historical events which functioned as divine revelation, but rather an account of historical events in the midst of which a revelation of God took place. So, from this point of view what is at issue is not so much the truth of the Bible as a source of

³⁶Ibid, p. 44-45.

³⁷Gundry S. N. Death of God theology // Elwell W. A. Evangelical dictionary of theology. – 2nd ed. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001. – P. 326-327.

divine revelation but rather the truth of the Bible in its depiction of the human situation in which God revealed Himself.”³⁸

Consequently, the goal of Bible study is to somehow “get behind” the words of Scripture and mentally reproduce the historical events described therein. By means of reflection on these events, the reader receives revelation about God and His plan. Similar to how God opened the eyes of the biblical authors to recognize His action in history, the Holy Spirit opens the eyes of the reader of Scripture to understand the significance of the events recorded there for today.³⁹

Yet, we note serious problems with this approach as well. First, the Bible records not only God’s deeds, but also His words. In Scripture, God not only acts, but also speaks. Additionally, historical events do not interpret themselves. We need a reliable interpretation of historical events in order to understand their meaning and significance. In this regard, J. I. Packer wisely remarks, “For men can ‘know that he is Yahweh’ from seeing his works in history only if he speaks to make it clear that they are his works, and to explain what they mean.”⁴⁰

Also problematic is that the only source of information about biblical events is the Bible itself. How can the reader “get behind” the text to reflect on biblical events independent from the text? Where else can material for reflection come from, except from the pages of Scripture? In addition, in claiming that He reveals Himself only in actions, this theory severely limits God’s ability. Why can God not speak? It leaves the impression that God is mute.

We can underscore other weaknesses as well. The Bible contains various literary genres, but narrative theology relates only to the narrative genre. What about other literary forms in the Bible, like law, prophecy, apocalypse, epistle, proverbs and poetry?⁴¹ Moreover, when God speaks, that is also an event. If God’s revelation consists only in His acts, then we must include His “speech acts” as well.⁴² Finally, in Scripture, we encounter many instances where God predicts future events. Therefore, one must include in the chronicle of God’s acts His future ones as well, which are made known only by prophetic utterances.⁴³

In conclusion, we can confidently state that God does indeed reveal Himself through events, that is, by means of what He does. Yet, that is certainly not the exclusive means of God’s self-revelation. In addition, as mentioned above, the record of God’s deeds must be properly interpreted. Easton gives a fitting summary of the issue: “The Scriptures are not merely the ‘record’ of revelation; they are the revelation itself in a written form,” for “the accurate preservation and propagation of the truth.”⁴⁴

At the same time, one must not undervalue the importance of God revealing Himself through His works. Helm rightly asserts that God’s revelation in Scripture mainly concerns His deeds in history and their interpretation. Helm explains that a “historical” approach to revelation (as opposed to a more “philosophical” approach) was necessary, seeing that God’s goal was not only to give information about Himself, but also to accomplish salvation. Therefore, God needed to act in history, thereby revealing Himself by means of His mighty acts of redemption.⁴⁵

E. Revelation through Direct Personal Encounter with God

³⁸Marshall I. H. Biblical inspiration. – Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 1982. – p. 56-57

³⁹Noted in Henry, v. 3, p. 259.

⁴⁰Packer J. I. Revelation // Wood D., Marshall I. New Bible dictionary. – 3rd ed. – Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1996. – P. 1016.

⁴¹Scalise C. J. From Scripture to theology. – Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1996. – p. 33.

⁴²Warfield, p. 12.

⁴³Henry, v. 3, p. 257.

⁴⁴Easton M. Revelation // Easton’s Bible Dictionary. – London: Bracken Books, 1989. – P. 583.

⁴⁵Helm, p. 32-35.

Without doubt, the best possible means of receiving God's self-revelation is to encounter Him directly, such as was the case when God became incarnate in the Lord Jesus Christ. The early disciples of Jesus not only heard His words, but also saw Him in action: how He dealt with people, how He handled various situations, etc. The apostle John describes this experience of direct fellowship with the Lord as follows: "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth" (Jn 1:14). Yet, unfortunately, Jesus is no longer physically present with us. Our knowledge of Him now depends on the testimony of Scripture.

Aside from the coming of Christ, we note several similar experiences of direct fellowship with God in Scripture. Certainly, Adam and Eve knew God personally as they fellowshiped with Him in the Garden of Eden. Moses has a similar relationship with the Lord: "The LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend" (Ex. 33:11), and, "With (Moses) I speak mouth to mouth, even openly, and not in dark sayings, and he beholds the form of the LORD" (Num 12:8). Although we know little about his history, Enoch possibly had a similar walk with God (see Gen 5:24). At the same time, we must consider these as rare exclusions to the rule that, in our fallen world, regular, direct contact with God does not typically occur.

Nonetheless, the apostle Paul testifies of a time when direct fellowship with God will be restored. This will occur at Christ's Second Coming, when believers will see Him "face to face" and "know, just as we have been fully known" (1 Cor 13:12).

F. Revelation through Words (Propositional Revelation)

In the opinion of many, God reveals Himself primarily not through nature, intuition, thought or events, but through words written in inspired books. Is there any support for this thesis? First, the primary function of language is to convey information. The other means of revelation, noted above, do not have transmission of information as their exclusive or even primary goal. Since God created the language-communication system, it logically follows that He is going to employ it to communicate information about Himself.

Second, words transmit information more precisely and faithfully than other methods of communication. If God wanted us to know Him and His will, He certainly would have used words to communicate His self-revelation to people. In addition, information is best preserved by writing. In such a way, what God has revealed in the past can be available to future generations.

Third, another advantage of verbal communication is that the possible meaning of such communication is limited by the definition of the words and the usage of the grammatical constructions employed. These factors are fixed by the structure of the given language. Any native speaker of that language can thus verify the correctness of a saying's interpretation.

One must also consider that God created people in His image (Gen 1:26-27). He created us similar to Himself, possessing reason and linguistic ability, in order to communicate with us. Henry comments, "Issuing from the mind and will of God, revelation is addressed to the mind and will of human beings."⁴⁶ Finally, the disciples of Jesus and the Lord Himself taught that God's authoritative revelation is contained in words. Praying to the Father, Jesus said, "Your Word is truth" (Jn 17:17). The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews spoke of God, speaking through the prophets (Heb 1:1).

We must clarify, though, that in considering revelation through words, one must include the concept of context. God does not give revelation through words in isolation, but as component parts of sentences. These sentences are part of a bigger grammatical complex as well – paragraphs, which, in turn, are interpreted in light of the whole. So then, to determine the meaning God intended in the text, one must consider all these "circles of context."

Some qualify the concept of "propositional revelation" that is, revelation through words in sentences, by saying that the revelational aspect of God's communication is not the words He used, but the intention behind

⁴⁶Henry, v. 3, p. 248.

the words. Further, it is claimed that that intention may be communicated equally well by a different word choice. One may paraphrase the words of Scripture, then, or translate it into another language without any loss of communicative meaning.⁴⁷

Nonetheless, as we shall discuss later in this volume, the inspiration of Scripture applies not to the intention of the author, but to the choice of words he employed. In this regard, the apostle Paul wrote, “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness” (2 Tim 3:16). We notice here that Paul specifically says, “All Scripture is inspired by God,” i.e., what was *written* was inspired.

We heartily acknowledge that God did inspire the thoughts and intentions of the biblical authors. Yet, according to the doctrine of full and verbal inspiration, which we will study later, God also directed the word choice of the authors to communicate His intended meaning.

Concerning paraphrases and translations of God’s Word, we have no guarantee that God’s intended meaning is being faithfully communicated in them. There is no assurance that God’s Spirit is active in the paraphrase or translation to the same degree He was active in the recording of Scripture. It seems that the human factor involved in these endeavors unavoidably compromises their quality. The surest way to secure God’s intended meaning is study the Scriptures in their original languages.

Finally, some fear that human language is too limited to express God’s truth adequately – too much meaning is lost via communication in human words and expressions. Scripture, therefore, can only present us with a limited or even distorted version of God’s revelation.

On the one hand, we concede that human language, and humans themselves, are incapable of comprehending or expressing the fullness of God’s essence. On the other hand, this fact does not hinder God from giving propositional revelation sufficiently precise to communicate truth to the hearer. The revelation we receive in propositional form is certainly not exhaustive, but it is nonetheless true and adequate.

We also note that “human” language is not a creation of humans at all, but of God. God graced humanity with the gift of language to enable communication between parties. It logically follows that if God’s goal is fellowship with people, then He would create a language system that is sufficiently developed to ensure quality communication between Himself and others.

G. Conclusions

In answer to the question, “How does God reveal Himself,” it is best to conclude that God is not limited in how He may communicate with us. He may make Himself known in any way He chooses: through creation, history, intuition, reflection, etc. At the same time, it is imperative to determine which method of revelation is most authoritative in order to resolve conflicts and inconsistencies that arise among those who claim to have God’s revelation.

As stated above, one could hardly deny that the most excellent means of revelation is God’s personal appearance among men in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Yet, Jesus is no longer personally with us, and no one in our time enjoys such direct and uninterrupted contact with God.

Based on the considerations noted above, we conclude that, at the present time, the best and most reliable means of revelation is through God’s communication to us through language. De S. Cameron rightly asserts, “Certainly, the prevalence of quoted divine speech, which peppers the canon, suggests a presumption in favor of speech as *the* category within which to understand God’s communication with his creatures.”⁴⁸

⁴⁷Noted in Vanhoozer K. J. The semantics of biblical literature // Carson D. A., Woodbridge J. D. Hermeneutics, authority and canon. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1986. – P. 58-60.

⁴⁸De S. Cameron N. M. Revelation, Idea of // Evangelical dictionary of biblical theology. – Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996. – P. 679.

At the same time, we do not deny that God may reveal Himself to people by such means as visions, dreams or prophetic words. Yet, these means of communication are to be evaluated in the light what God is known to have said to inspired recipients, as recorded in Scripture. Whatever does not line up with the biblical witness is to be rejected.

Finally, we can add Helm's comment that verbal communication is not only the best method of revelation, but also an irreplaceable one. In other words, what God communicates through special, verbal revelation cannot be fully obtained by other means: not by reason, intuition, observation, or any other means.⁴⁹

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⁴⁹Helm, p. 29.

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Chapter 2: The Search for God's Revelation, part 1

Having established that God reveals Himself primarily through inspired speech recorded in inspired books, the question then arises, "Which books contain God's revelation?" The world is full of books of religious content, and even if we limited ourselves to writings espousing the Christian faith, they are numerous as well. What criteria will enable us to distinguish truly inspired books? Which ones should be included in the Bible?

Our topic is the "canon" of Holy Scripture. The word "canon" goes back to the Greek term κανών (*canon*), which originally designated a stick used for measurement. It was also used to describe a standard or norm in various contexts.⁵⁰ In a theological sense, the canon is the books that contain God's revelation and are authoritative for establishing Christian faith and practice.

Amazing as it may seem, the great majority of sincere believers in Jesus are apparently indifferent to the question of which books the Bible should contain. It is simply assumed that in its early years, the Church flawlessly determined the contents of the canon, or that God sovereignly acted to ensure that the canon included only truly inspired books, and no others.

Yet, the fact that at the present time various Christian denominations accept different lists of biblical books challenges these assumptions. This shows that, first, some Christian denominations erred in their choice of canonical books and, second, God did not sovereignly oversee the selection of books so as to ensure unanimity among all Christian groups. Another factor complicates the picture as well. If the Church possesses the ability to infallibly define the canon, does it also have the ability to inerrantly interpret it, as the Eastern Orthodox and Catholics claim?

It is unfounded for any Christian denomination to simply assume that their preferred canon is correct. On what do they base their assurance? Filson appropriately comments, "The Church is never prohibited from asking whether this is the right canon. The Church is never prohibited from asking an honest question."⁵¹

A. Definition of Canon and Errant Conceptions

1. Two Sides to the Question

When formulating a definition of "canon," one must consider both human and divine factors. People do not give books an inspired status, only God does. All that people can do is to attempt to recognize their divine origin and acknowledge their authority. Bruce Metzger masterfully expresses this distinction when he speaks of the canon both as a "collection of authorized books" and as an "authorized collection of books." The first expression emphasizes the divine factor – God authorized the books, and the Church simply collects them. The second emphasizes the human factor – the Church "authorizes" them in the sense of recognizing their divine origin and authoritative status.⁵²

Therefore, it is imperative to distinguish the inspiration of biblical books from their acknowledgement by the Church. Geisler and Nix express it this way: inspiration concerns *what* God has revealed, while the canon concerns *how* that revelation is recognized. The first is exclusively God's work, while the second involves the participation of God's people.⁵³

So then, from the perspective of the divine factor in the canon's determination, the canon began to exist with the composition of the first canonical book. As soon as any subsequent inspired book was penned, it immediately (from God's perspective) entered the canon of Holy Scripture. When the last inspired book was completed, the canon (again, from God's perspective), was closed. In relation to the New Testament, B. B.

⁵⁰McDonald L. M. The formation of the Christian Biblical canon. – Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995. – P. 13.

⁵¹Filson F. V. Which books belong in the Bible? A study of the canon. – Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1957. – P. 131.

⁵²Metzger B. M., The canon of the New Testament. – Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987. – P. 283.

⁵³Geisler N. L., Nix W. E. A general introduction to the Bible. – Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1986. – P. 211.

Warfield expresses this idea as follows: “The Canon of the New Testament was completed when the last authoritative book was given to any church by the apostles.”⁵⁴

2. Canon and Scripture

In theology today, many are embracing the misguided idea that “canon” and “Scripture” are different things. This theory is called the “exclusive canon,” and one of its chief proponents is Albert Sundberg. He feels that “Scripture” refers to any composition that early Christians considered authoritative, while “canon” refers to the final, concrete list of books, to which no changes could be made.⁵⁵ Similarly, Ulrich and Harnack propose that biblical books began their “pilgrimage” to canonicity progressively. At first, God’s people simply respected their lofty contents, then started using them in worship, then started appealing to them as authorities, and finally canonized them.⁵⁶

Other commentators have criticized Sundberg’s approach for the following reasons.⁵⁷ First, as we shall see later, Israel and the first-century Church treated books regarded as Scripture with total respect, considering them the very Word of God. A “canonical” regard for these books, then, began much sooner than Sundberg supposes. Second, as Kruger rightly asserts, “If they were able to say that certain books in their library were Scripture, then that implies they would have been able to say that other books in their library were not Scripture.”⁵⁸ It follows, therefore, that from the very start of the canonical process, there existed an element of “exclusiveness.”

Third, it is misguided to think that when the canon was “officially” closed, the canonical books somehow acquired more authority in the Church than they already had. It is commonly understood that church leaders did not create the canon, thereby conferring authority on the books, but simply recognized the books already considered authoritative (that is, canonical) by the local congregations.

Others advance a more plausible position. They suggest the notion of a *progressive canon*, which means that in the course of time, God’s people sequentially acknowledged truly inspired writings as canonical. From the moment the first writings were acknowledged, the canon began to exist (from the human perspective). This early collection of books served as a “base canon,” to which other books later were added.⁵⁹

3. Canon and Adaptability

In discussing the nature of the canon, some thinkers emphasize the existential value of these books, that is, how their readers found them meaningful. For example, Ryle feels that God’s people chose the canonical books because of their religious value.⁶⁰ We may certainly affirm that the Scriptures have a positive effect on

⁵⁴Warfield B. B. The works of Benjamin B. Warfield: Vol. 1 - Revelation and inspiration – New York, NY: Oxford Press, 1932; Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, 2008. – V. 1. – P. 455.

⁵⁵Sundberg A. C. Bible canon and the Christian doctrine of inspiration // Interpretation. 1975. 29(4). P. 356. C. Allert also holds this position (see Allert C. D. A high view of Scripture. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2007. – P. 38-42).

⁵⁶Ulrich E. The notion and definition of canon // McDonald L. M., Sanders J. A. The canon debate. – Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002. – P. 30; Allert, p. 42.

⁵⁷See Kruger M. J. The definition of the term 'canon': exclusive or multi-dimensional? // Tyndale Bulletin. 2012. 63 (1). P. 3-8; Chapman S. B. The canon debate: what it is and why it matters // Journal of Theological Interpretation. 2010. 4(2). P. 280-284; Dunbar D. G. The Biblical canon // Carson D. A., Woodbridge J. D. Hermeneutics, authority and canon. – Grand Rapids, MI: Academic Books, 1986. – P. 348.

⁵⁸Kruger, p. 5.

⁵⁹Chapman, The canon debate, p. 286, 291; Chapman S. B. What are we reading? Canonicity and the Old Testament // Word & World. 2009. 29(4). P. 341-342.

⁶⁰Ryle H. E. The canon of the Old Testament. – 2nd ed. – London: MacMillan & Co., 1895. – P. 136. A similar view in Selby D. J., West J. K. Introduction to the Bible. – New York: The Macmillan Company, 1971. – P. 2. Taken from Duffield G. P., Van Cleave N. M. Foundations of Pentecostal theology. – Los Angeles, CA: L.I.F.E. Bible College, 1983. – P. 9.

their readers. Yet, some go to the extreme to say that the canonical books were chosen *exclusively* for this reason, i.e., they were preserved and canonized because of their ability to edify.

In addition, others add that in the course of time, later editors of the biblical materials adapted them in order to make them more relevant to contemporary readers. McDonald, for example, claims, “To make them continually relevant and adaptable to the contemporary needs of the church, the scribes or tradents found ways to modify, alter, and interpret the sacred texts.”⁶¹ Consequently, the books that were easier to adapt found a place in the biblical canon.

The most well-known and influential of such thinkers is James Sanders. He states that Old Testament books remained in circulation in Israel only if their contents were continually “updated” to adapt to new conditions.⁶² If a certain book lacked such flexibility, it fell out of use.⁶³ Additionally, Sanders finds in Scripture not a few contradictions, which confirms his suspicion that the text has undergone many changes.⁶⁴

Is there value in this position? First, we agree that truly inspired writings have the capacity to speak to various people in various circumstances at various times. They possess this ability, though, due not to the creativity of their authors, but to their divine inspiration. Geisler and Nix express it well: “A given book is not canonical because it was found to be valuable. Rather, it was found to be valuable because it was determined to be canonical by God. In other words, a book is not inspired because it is inspiring; it is inspiring because it is inspired.”⁶⁵

Furthermore, we strongly disagree with the thesis that in the course of time the contents of biblical books changed in order to address contemporary issues. The goal of the canon is to serve as a *standard*, which is actually the meaning of the term. A standard, by definition, does not change. The Word of God serves as the standard for all people of all times in all places. It summons all to submit to its authority, embrace its values and conform to its norms. A canonical writing is an authoritative writing. It does not change in order to adapt to changing times, but calls its readers to return to the basic truths established by God. Sander’s ideas reflect the views not of the Early Church, but of modern thinkers who embrace a humanistic and existential worldview.

4. Canon and the Spirit

James Smith advances the theory that the Church should not be guided by a written canon of Scripture.⁶⁶ In his opinion, in the early years of Christianity, the Church was a “charismatic community,” where believers did not so much read the Word of God, but heard it, particularly through the ministry of prophets (see 1 Cor 12:28; Eph 4:11; 1 Cor 14:26). The rise of the canon extinguished prophetic ministry in the Church. At the same time, Smith does not assert that written works played no role at all in the life of the Early Church. Yet, he rejects the idea that they played a dominant role.

In response to Smith, we may say that, just as he does not completely reject the role of Scripture in the Early Church, we do not completely reject the roles of the Spirit or of prophetic ministry in it. These activities are vital to the healthy functioning of the Church. We stand with Smith in his desire to see spiritual gifts and prophetic ministry restored to the Church. Nonetheless, we part ways with him concerning the question of

⁶¹McDonald L. M. Identifying Scripture and canon in the Early Church: The criteria question // McDonald L. M., Sanders J. A. The canon debate. – Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002. – P. 416. Similar view in Charlesworth J. H. Writings ostensibly outside the canon // Evans C. A., Tov E. Exploring the origins of the Bible. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2008. – P. 63.

⁶²Sanders J. A. From sacred story to sacred text. – Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1987. – P. 18-30.

⁶³Sanders J. A. Canon and community: A guide to canonical criticism // Tucker G. M. Guides to biblical scholarship. – Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1984. – P. 33.

⁶⁴Sanders, From sacred story, p. 30; Sanders J. A. The issue of closure in the canonical process // McDonald L. M., Sanders J. A. The canon debate. – Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002. – P. 261.

⁶⁵Geisler, Nix, p. 211.

⁶⁶Smith J. K. A. The closing of the Book: Pentecostals, Evangelicals, and the Sacred Writings // Journal of Pentecostal Theology. 1997. 5(11). P. 49-71. McDonald affirms the same (see Chapman, What are we reading?, p. 340.)

authority in the Church and assert that every spiritual manifestation should be in harmony with God's written Word and be submitted to its authority.

We see that Paul, in instructing the Church at Corinth about spiritual gifts, demonstrated his authority over the prophetic ministry. Therefore, the prophetic ministry of the Corinthian church must submit to his apostolic order: "If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment. But if anyone does not recognize {this,} he is not recognized." This apostolic testimony and authority is still in force, now in written form through the New Testament. In fact, how does Smith know about the role of spiritual gifts in the Church, except by reading the authoritative teaching of the New Testament?

We also argue that Jesus Himself, together with His disciples, followed a written standard (the Old Testament) and often appealed to it to confirm their teaching. Finally, if the Church is led purely by the Spirit without Scripture, then who has the right to decide between conflicting claims by parties, who all claim to have heard from the Spirit? In such cases, it usually turns out that the "more spiritual" church leaders make the final call, which results in the reestablishment of an episcopal form of church government, a form rejected by the Reformation.

5. Canon and Control

Another deviation in conceiving the canon claims that the canon was created to exercise control over God's people. It was a political maneuver by the rabbis of Israel and the Early Church to exercise their authority over rebellious factions within the people of God. Christoph Marksches claims, "The process of canonization can in general terms be summarized as 'the process by which texts are made binding for a group by a particular elite.'"⁶⁷

On the one hand, we agree that establishing the canon is a means of exercising control by defining certain standards and norms. However, in the case of the biblical canon, the one exercising control is not the rabbis of Israel or the church clergy, but the Lord God. The authority that stands behind the canon is not human, but divine. Additionally, as we will soon see, this is not a case of congregational leadership imposing a foreign standard on God's people, but rather a recognition of what was already generally accepted by them.

Carlston advances a view similar to Marksches, that we must welcome the variety of views that existed in the Early Church. We must not endorse only one "version" of Christianity and suppress all the rest by enforcing a canon of Scripture. He feels that "heresy" is not a deviation from the norm, but a manifestation of the variety inherent to Christianity.⁶⁸

Yet, did Jesus preach various "versions" of the gospel? Do all "versions" of Christianity deserve a place? Jesus and His disciples declared one truth, and the task of the Church is to define and preserve that revelation, while rejecting and refuting all competing views. This the Church did in establishing the canon of Scripture.

6. Canon and Textual Variants

This final topic concerns not so much an improper understanding of the canon, as much as a clarifying of its nature. The fact is that we observe differences between the manuscripts that preserve the canonical books, and they are quite numerous (we will discuss textual variants in greater detail later in this volume). If the contents of a biblical book are in question, then how can we consider it canonical? In what form or with which contents can it be considered so?

⁶⁷Marksches C. *Neue Forschungen zur Kanonisierung des Neuen Testaments // Apocrypha* 2001. 12. P. 242. Taken from Landmesser C. *Interpretative unity of the New Testament // Helmer C., Landmesser C. One Scripture or many? Canon from biblical, theological, and philosophical perspectives.* – Oxford: Oxford Press, 2004. – P. 160.

⁶⁸Carlston C. E. *The canon – problems and benefits // Andover Newton Review.* 1991. 2(1). P. 33-34.

Here we must separate two issues: the status of the book, and its contents. From God's point of view, as soon as an inspired book is written, He already determines it canonical. At that time, there is no question as to its contents. If, in the course of time and as a result of copying, the contents change, the canonical status of the book itself does not change. One must merely restore it, as much as possible, to its original condition.⁶⁹

B. The Old Testament Canon

1. What the Old Testament Says

The Old Testament itself gives us clues as to how the canonical process began. If we accept the Old Testament narrative as accurate, we see that the entire process began with God Himself, who gave Moses the Ten Commandments, written on tablets of stone, which were then stored in the ark of the covenant (Deut 9:10-10:5). Eventually, Moses wrote down all the commandments that God gave Him on Mount Sinai (Ex 24:4-7). Toward the end of his life, Moses wrote down the final version of God's law and entrusted it to Israel's leaders for safekeeping (Deut 31:9, 24-26).⁷⁰ Subsequently, Moses' books were preserved in the temple (see 2 Kings 22:8).⁷¹

The Mosaic authorship of the Torah (or "Pentateuch") is confirmed by the numerous mentions of it in subsequent Old Testament books.⁷² The canonical character of his writings is shown in that Israel was obligated to observe the Torah⁷³ and was forbidden to alter its contents.⁷⁴ Twice, the Torah's authorship is ascribed not to Moses, but to God.⁷⁵ Several times, the Scriptural formula "it is written" is associated with Moses' writings. Consequently, from that time on, all other writings making a claim to be God's revelation had to line up with the teachings of the Torah.

The question arises, "Why did the people of Moses' time accept the claim that he received his revelation from God? Geisler and Nix feel that the miracles given him from God convinced that generation of the genuineness of his ministry. In addition, the entire nation received a divine visitation on Mount Sinai (Ex 19). The eyewitness testimony of that generation continued to effect generations to come, which established Moses' authority in Israel."⁷⁶

Because of the divine origin of the Torah, God's people immediately accepted it as God's authoritative Word, that is, they "canonized" it. If any work was acknowledged as God's authoritative Word, then it possessed the status of "canon," even if Israel at that time did not think in such categories.⁷⁷

Not only Moses, but also other biblical figures left behind written works. Toward the end of his ministry, Joshua added material to the Torah (Josh 24:26). He also "wrote there on the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he had written, in the presence of the sons of Israel" (Josh 8:32). Samuel wrote the "ordinances of the kingdom" in "the book," which he "placed before the LORD" (1 Kings 10:25).⁷⁸ Bergen rightly concludes

⁶⁹Also, see Bruce F. F. *The canon of Scripture*. – Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1988. – P. 287.

⁷⁰Also, see Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 4.304.

⁷¹Geisler, Nix, p. 204.

⁷²Josh 1:8; 8:31-34; 22:2, 5; 23:6; Judg 3:4; 1 Kin 2:3; 8:53, 56; 2 Kin 14:6; 18:6; 22:8-11; 23:3; 2 Chr 17:9; Neh 8:1-3, 18; 9:3; 10:29; 13:1-3; Ps 119.

⁷³Deut 17:18-20; 31:9-13; Josh 1:8.

⁷⁴Deut 4:2; 12:32.

⁷⁵2 Kings 17:37; Hos 8:12.

⁷⁶Geisler, Nix, p. 226. Harris agrees and affirms that miracles and fulfilled prophecy served as confirmation of a prophet's ministry (Harris R. L. *What books belong in the canon of scripture?* // *Presbyterian* 1981. 7.1. P. 135-137).

⁷⁷Also supporting this view: Robinson G. L., Harrison R. K. *Canon of the OT* // G. W. Bromiley. *The international standard Bible encyclopedia*. – Revised ed. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979–1988. – V. 1. – P. 592. Also, see Filson, p. 44.

⁷⁸The definite article standing before the term *safer* (book) in the Hebrew text indicates a specific book (likely, the very book of the law).

that the ancient documents, penned by Moses, Joshua and Samuel, comprised the beginning of the Old Testament canon.⁷⁹

The books of the prophets demonstrate that God's revelation continued to be preserved in written form (see Isa 30:8; Ezek 43:11; Hab 2:2; Dan 7:1). The most striking example is Jeremiah's recording of his prophecies (Jer 25:13; 29:1; 30:2; 36:2-4, 27-28).⁸⁰ It is notable that Daniel appealed to the book of Jeremiah in order to learn the time when Israel would return to Palestine (Dan 9:2). The author of 2 Chronicles also cited Jeremiah (see 2 Chr 36:21 and Jer 25:11).⁸¹

Also interesting is that in Jer 26:18-19, Jeremiah cites an earlier prophet, Micah. Micah, in turn, has common material with Isaiah (see Micah 4 and Isa 2). We also see commonality between Isa 2:4 and Joel 3:10; Joel 3:16 and Amos 1:2; and Joel 2:32 and Obadiah 17. Jonah cites the Psalter (Jonah 2:4 from Ps. 42:7).⁸² So then, even in ancient times these sources were already available in written form.⁸³

Moreover, the Hebrew canon locates the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings in the "Prophets" section, reflecting the belief that they were written by prophets, which underscores their divine and authoritative character. Harris confirms that tradition by noting that the author of Chronicles cites prophets that wrote history.⁸⁴ The following Old Testament writers were specifically identified as prophets: Joshua (1 Kings 16:34), David (Acts 2:30), and the sons of Asaph, Jeduthun and Heman (1 Chr 25:1-5).⁸⁵ Harris also notes an important characteristic of biblical narrative.

At the end or beginning of certain books, we sometimes observe concluding or introductory words, which connect the given book with the preceding or subsequent one. For example, Moses certainly did not write the account of his own death (Deut 34:5-12), but, most likely, the next canonical writer, Joshua, did. The first verse of the book of Joshua, in fact, seamlessly connects the two books: "Now it came about after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, that the LORD spoke to Joshua..." Furthermore, Judges 2:7-9 overlaps with Joshua 24:29-31. The book of Ruth finds its context in the book of Judges: "Now it came about in the days when the judges governed..." (Ruth 1:1). Additionally, the genealogy of 1 Chronicles traces back to Adam and unites the entire Old Testament history. The books of Chronicles themselves are an expansion of the previously written books of Samuel and Kings. Finally, the final words of 2 Chronicles serve as an introduction for the subsequent book of Ezra.⁸⁶

We conclude from this observation that at least some of the Old Testament writers were conscious of the fact that their works were a continuation God's revelation and the description of His activity in Israel. In other words, they consciously participated in the development of the Old Testament canon. In addition, even in Old Testament times, there already existed a set of holy books. Daniel found the writings of Jeremiah "in the books" (Dan 9:2).⁸⁷

2. The Jewish Determination of the Canon

a. Structure of the Hebrew Bible

⁷⁹Bergen R. D. 1, 2 Samuel // Logos Library System; The New American commentary. – Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001. – P. 133.

⁸⁰Beckwith, p. 65-66.

⁸¹Harris R. L., What books, p. 135.

⁸²Ibid.

⁸³Josephus also speaks of the prophets' writings (see *Antiquities of the Jews*, 10.35).

⁸⁴See 1 Chr 29:29; 2 Chr 9:29; 12:15; 13:22; 20:34; 32:32; 33:19 (Harris R. L. Inspiration and canonicity of the Bible. – Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1957, 1969. – P. 166).

⁸⁵Harris R. L., What books, p. 135-138.

⁸⁶Harris R. L. Was the Law and the Prophets two-thirds of the Old Testament canon? // Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society. 1966. 9(4). P. 168; Geisler, Nix, p. 251-252.

⁸⁷Bruce, p. 37-38.

It seems appropriate to study how the Jews established their Old Testament canon, especially in the light of the apostle Paul's words that the Jews were "entrusted with the oracles of God" (Rom 3:2). On this basis, Nichole concludes, "God entrusted his OT oracles to the Jews (Rom 3:2), and they were providentially guided in the recognition and preservation of the OT."⁸⁸

Which books exactly do the Jews acknowledge as Scripture? The Hebrew Bible has 24 books, which are equal in content to the 39-book canon of Protestantism. The difference between the two canons consists in the division of the books. One book in the Hebrew canon could represent several books in the Protestant one.

The Hebrew canon has three divisions: Law, Prophets and Writings, containing the following books respectively:

- Law: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy
- Prophets:
 - Early Prophets: Joshua, Judges, Samuel (our 1-2 Samuel), Kings (our 1-2 Kings)
 - Later Prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Minor Prophets (12 separate books for us)
- Writings: Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Job, Ruth, Ezra-Nehemiah (two separate books for us), Esther, Lamentations, Daniel, Chronicles (2 separate books for us)

It is interesting to note that in antiquity the term "canon" was not used. Instead, the Jewish Mishna and Talmud referred to canonical books as those that "make the hands unclean." Yet, the origin of this expression is unknown.

b. The Appearance of the Tripartite Structure

In the introduction to the apocryphal book *Sirach*, written by the grandson of its author in 132 BC, we read of "the Law and the Prophets and the others who followed after them," "the Law and the Prophets and the other books of our fathers," and "the Law itself, and the Prophecies, and the rest of the books." Jesus also hinted at this tripartite structure: "All things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled" (Lk 24:44). We assume that by the term "Psalms" Jesus meant the third division, i.e., the "Writings." Finally, the famous first-century Jewish historian, Josephus, comments,

For we have not an innumerable multitude of books among us, disagreeing from and contradicting one another [as the Greeks have], but only twenty-two books, which contain the records of all the past times; which are justly believed to be divine; and of them five belong to Moses, which contain his laws and the traditions of the origin of mankind till his death. This interval of time was little short of three thousand years; but as to the time from the death of Moses till the reign of Artaxerxes, king of Persia, who reigned after Xerxes, the prophets, who were after Moses, wrote down what was done in their times in thirteen books. The remaining four books contain hymns to God, and precepts for the conduct of human life (*Against Apion*, 1:38-40).

c. More on the Number of Books and Composition of the Hebrew Canon

The first indication of the number of books in the Hebrew canon is found in the writings of Josephus (first century AD) in his book *Against Apion*, as we noted above. Several things are worth noting here, especially his enumeration of only 22 books.

Many assume that Josephus combined several books (maybe imitating the tradition of his day), namely Ruth with Judges, and Lamentations with Jeremiah. In recounting the Jewish canon of his day, Origen (2nd-3rd

⁸⁸Nicole R. The canon of the New Testament // Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society. 1997. 40(2). P. 205.

century AD) did the same: “Judges and Ruth, among them in one book,” and “Jeremiah, with Lamentations and the epistle in one.”⁸⁹ Some hold to the theory that Josephus was influenced by the Septuagint, in which these pairs of books appear side by side.⁹⁰

Unlike the enumeration found in Josephus, the apocryphal book *4 Ezra* (100 AD) indicates (indirectly) a canon of 24 books.

So in forty days were written ninety-four books. And it came to pass when the forty days were fulfilled, that the Most High spake unto me saying: “The twenty-four book that thou hast written publish, that the worthy and unworthy may read (therein): but the seventy last thou shalt keep, to deliver them to the wise among thy people” (*4 Ezra* 14:44-46).

The Talmud boasts the most well-known enumeration of Old Testament books, found in the tractate *b. Baba Bathra* 14b. It is important to note that, although the Babylonian Talmud was written in the sixth century AD, it contains so-called *baraitas*, which are taken from earlier sources.⁹¹ The citation in *Baba Bathra* is from a *baraita*, and its date of composition is estimated to be the end of the second century AD. This tract lists the following 24 books:

- Law: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy
- Prophets: Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah, Minor Prophets
- Writings: Ruth, Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Lamentations, Daniel, Esther, Ezra-Nehemiah, Chronicles

The present Hebrew Bible contains the same books, divided as noted above. This means that this structure remained unchanged for the remainder of Jewish history to this day.

d. What about the Apocryphal and Pseudepigraphic Books?

After the works presently accepted in the Old Testament canon, other writing of religious content appeared on the scene. They are now known as the apocryphal and pseudepigraphic books, and many are contained in the present version of the Septuagint (the ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible). The apocryphal books are as follows (for a summary of their contents and their evaluation, see Appendix A):

- Tobit
- Judith
- The Wisdom of Solomon
- Sirach
- Baruch
- 1-2 Maccabees
- Additions to Daniel (Susanna, Bel and the Dragon, The Prayer of Azariah, and the Song of the Three Children)
- The Epistle of Jeremiah
- Additions to Esther

⁸⁹Noted in Eusebius, *Church history*, 6.25.2.

⁹⁰Ryle, p. 232.

⁹¹Beckwith, p. 26-27.

Sometimes the Apocrypha includes: *1 Esdras* (in the Septuagint called *Esdras A*), *2 Esdras*, *The Prayer of Manassas*, *3-4 Maccabees*, *Psalms of Solomon*, or *Psalm 151*.

Pseudepigraphic books are generally characterized by pseudonymic authorship (as are some of the Apocrypha as well). Here is only a small listing (for a summary of the contents of more prominent pseudepigraphic books and their evaluation, see Appendix A):

- Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs
- The Book of Enoch
- The Ascension of Moses
- The Martyrdom of Isaiah
- The Testament of Job

Nonetheless, the Jews do not accept apocryphal and pseudepigraphic books as Scripture for the following reasons. First, their teaching at times differs from the accepted books. Second, these writings sometimes originated from sectarian groups. Third, most of them were composed not in Hebrew, but in Greek.⁹² Finally, after Malachi, no other prophet arose in Israel, inspired to bring authoritative revelation from God. Josephus writes about this:

It is true, our history hath been written since Artaxerxes very particularly, but hath not been esteemed of the like authority with the former by our forefathers, because there hath not been an exact succession of prophets since that time (*Against Apion*, 1.41).

In addition, *1 Maccabees* (second century BC) also speaks of a period when there was no such prophet in Israel: “And there was great tribulation in Israel, such as was not since the time that a prophet appeared unto them” (*1 Macc.* 9:27. Also, see 4:46 and 14:41). The Jewish Talmud holds to this tradition as well: “For our Rabbis have taught: When Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi died, the Holy Spirit departed from Israel” (*b. Sotah*, 48b)⁹³. The absence of inspired prophets implies the absence of authorized authors of Holy Scripture.

Philo, who lived in Alexandria (where the Septuagint was translated) in the first century AD, although he did not list an Old Testament canon, nonetheless never cited an apocryphal and pseudepigraphic book.⁹⁴ Furthermore, in the early second century, the scholar Aquila made a new translation of the Old Testament from Hebrew to Greek. His translation, though, contained only the already accepted 24 books of the Hebrew canon without apocryphal or pseudepigraphic additions.⁹⁵

3. The Closure of the Old Testament Canon

Although it is indeed helpful to discover how the Jewish people handled the question of the Old Testament canon, the surest way to define it, as we shall soon see, is by discovering how Jesus and His apostles related to this question. If we are able to clearly determine their understanding of the Old Testament, we will have a perfect example to follow.

Nonetheless, before we undertake this task, it is necessary to inquire whether or not a fixed Old Testament canon already existed in Jesus’ time. If one did exist, then we can embrace His canon with confidence. If not,

⁹²Ibid, p. 367-368.

⁹³Text from halakhah.com. See similar idea in: *1 Macc.* 4:46; 14:41, *Seder Olam Rabbah*, 30, *t. Sotah*, 13:2, *b. Yoma*, 9b, 21b; *b. Sanhedrin*, 11a, *b. Baba Bathra*, 12, *y. Ta’anith*, 2.1; *y. Makkoth*, 2.4–7 (from McDonald L. M., *The formation of the Christian Biblical canon*, p. 51, and Geisler, Nix, p. 206).

⁹⁴McDonald L. M., *The formation of the Christian Biblical canon*, p. 40, Harris R. L., *Inspiration and canonicity*, p. 185.

⁹⁵Beckwith, p. 277.

then our task of determining the contents of God's Old Testament revelation becomes much more difficult. Therefore, it is imperative to investigate the time when the Old Testament canon was closed.

a. At the Time of Ezra?

A longstanding tradition, held by some Church Fathers, declares that Ezra, along with the so-called "Great Synagogue," gave final definition to the Old Testament canon.⁹⁶ The Mishna puts it this way: "Moses received Torah at Sinai and handed it on to Joshua, Joshua to elders, and elders to prophets. And prophets handed it on to the men of the great assembly" (*m. Abot*, 1.1).

As mentioned above, some Church Fathers echoed this tradition, but the Reformers rejected it.⁹⁷ One must note an inconsistency in this view – the canonical book of Malachi was written after the time of Ezra. Additionally, notable figures, such as Josephus, Philo and the apocryphal writers, make no mention of this theory.⁹⁸

b. The Liberal View?

Herbert Ryle conducted the classic analysis of the canon from the liberal point of view in the 19th century.⁹⁹ Ryle, along with other liberals, believe that the Torah was completed in the seventh century BC, and that it was used as canonical Scripture only from the time of king Josiah in that same century (see 2 Kings 22:8). Furthermore, according to the classic liberal understanding of the Old Testament canon, the Prophets became canonical in 200 BC, and the Writings in 100 AD.

In refuting the liberal view, we can note several weak points. First, Israel unquestionably preserved documents containing the writings of Moses and the Prophets, the Psalms of David, the Proverbs of Solomon, etc.¹⁰⁰ The fact that they preserved these writings, made by the heroes of God's people, reveals that they valued and cherished them.¹⁰¹ What prevented Israel, then, from "canonizing" them earlier?

Second, the Old Testament abounds with citations of the Law of Moses¹⁰² and of the covenant that God made with Israel. Many of these citations were made *before* king Josiah's reign, that is, before the time when the Torah was supposedly completed and endorsed.¹⁰³ From the very beginning of Old Testament history, God continually summoned His people back to the standard of the Torah, which implies its early existence.

Finally, contrary to the liberal view on the composition of the Torah, Jesus and His apostles unwaveringly testified of its Mosaic authorship.¹⁰⁴ The authority of Jesus and His chosen representatives far exceeds the authority of any modern liberal scholar.

c. At the Council of Jamnia?

Many feel that the Old Testament canon was formalized at a council held in Jamnia (Palestine) at the end of the first century AD. Yet, all the information we possess about that council comes from the Mishna and Talmud. According to those sources, the participants discussed only the status of Ecclesiastes and Song of

⁹⁶Balge R. D. The Bible through the ages // Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly. Jan. 1991. P. 282.

⁹⁷Ryle, p. 250-251.

⁹⁸Ibid, p. 280.

⁹⁹Ibid.

¹⁰⁰Harris writes of an abundance of quotation in Qumran (second century BC) from the Psalms and Proverbs (Harris R. L. Inspiration and Canonicity, p. 140), yet, according to the liberal view, the section "Writings," which contained them, was not closed until 100 AD.

¹⁰¹Chapman, The canon debate, p. 275-276.

¹⁰²See Josh 1:8; 8:31-34; 22:2, 5; 23:6; Judg 3:4; 1 Kin 2:3; 8:53, 56; 2 Kin 14:6; 18:6; 22:8-11; 23:3; 2 Chr 17:9; Neh 8:1-3; 10:29; 13:1-3.

¹⁰³See Josh 23:16; Judg 2:1; 1 Kin 19:10, 14; 2 Kin 17:15, 35, 38; 18:12.

¹⁰⁴See Matt 8:4; Mark 7:10; 12:26; Luke 24:27, 44; John 1:17; 5:45-47; Acts 3:22; Rom 10:5; 2 Cor 3:15.

Solomon.¹⁰⁵ We are not informed that the rabbis discussed any other book or finalized a canon there. These are simply assumptions.¹⁰⁶

Harris insightfully comments that in subsequent canonical discussions, the rabbis never appeal to Jamnia, which one would expect if the canon was fixed there and then.¹⁰⁷ In fact, the debates over Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon, and Esther as well, continued until the end of the second century. Therefore, it is problematic to conclude that the canon was formally finalized at Jamnia.

d. Before the Time of Jesus?

Does the evidence suffice to show that a fixed Old Testament canon already existed at the time of Christ? Prominent Hebrew scholar Emmanuel Tov claims that the Hebrew biblical text was standardized (that is, other textual variants were removed) no later than the second century BC, and it remained in that form from then on.¹⁰⁸ This implies that prior to the standardization of the text, the books that required standardization were already acknowledged, that is, the Old Testament canon was closed.

We must also take into consideration the abundance of New Testament references to “Scripture.” This term was used both by Jesus (Matt 26:54; Luke 24:27), and by the Pharisees of His time (John 5:39). The term was employed in the synagogues of the Jewish diaspora as well (Acts 17:2, 11).¹⁰⁹ Clearly, in Jesus’ time there existed a concrete set of acknowledged holy books, that is, “Scripture.”

In addition, we must include the testimony of Josephus, mentioned earlier, who listed the 22 holy books acknowledged by the Jews. He also relates that this was not a new invention, but “during so many ages as have already passed, no one has been so bold as either to add anything to them, to take anything from them, or to make any change in them” (*Against Apion*, 1.42). He then adds, “But it becomes natural to all Jews, immediately and from their very birth, to esteem those books to contain divine doctrines, and to persist in them, and, if occasion be, willingly to die for them.” Finally, we recall the frequent mention of the Jews of that time that after the prophecies of Malachi, the work of the Spirit in inspiring Scripture ended.

It appears that evidence suffices to claim that when Jesus and the apostles speak of “Scripture,” they had in mind a specific, definite group of writings, which were known to all, the contents of which could not be altered.¹¹⁰

4. Jesus and His Apostles’ View

a. Their Use of the Hebrew Canon

Since Jesus is God and His disciples were handpicked by Him, we may consider their view on the contents of the Hebrew Bible accurate and authoritative. We will demonstrate that they considered the 24 books of the present Hebrew Bible (equal to the 39 books of the Protestant canon) to be inspired Scripture, and no others.

¹⁰⁵Bruce, p. 35; McDonald L. M., *The formation of the Christian Biblical canon*. – Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995. – P. 49; Lewis J. P. *Jamnia revisited* // McDonald L. M., Sanders J. A. *The canon debate*. – Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002. – P. 146-147. The Mishna describes a dispute concerning the canonicity of Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs (*Yadayim*, 3.5).

¹⁰⁶Lewis, p. 153.

¹⁰⁷Harris R. L., *Inspiration and canonicity*, p. 155.

¹⁰⁸Tov E. *The text of the Hebrew/Aramaic and Greek Bible used in the ancient synagogues* // *Hebrew Bible, Greek Bible, and Qumran: Collected essays*. – TSAJ 121. – Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008. – P. 177; noted in Gallagher E. L. *The Jerusalem temple library and its implications for the canon of scripture* // *Restoration Quarterly* 2015. 57:1. P. 46.

¹⁰⁹Beckwith, p. 92. Also see Jowers D. W. *The sufficiency of Scripture and the biblical canon* // *Trinity Journal*. – 2009. 30ns. C. 51; Bruce, p. 28-29; Robinson, Harrison, v. 1, p. 597.

¹¹⁰Also voicing this opinion: Newman R. C. *The Council of Jamnia and the Old Testament canon* // *Westminster Theological Journal*. 1975. 38(3). P. 346; Robinson, Harrison, v. 1, p. 597; Duffield, Van Cleave, p. 11.

First, we note that Jesus and His apostles often employed the term “Scripture” (for example, Matt 26:54; Jn 5:39; Acts 17:2, etc.). This indicates that they acknowledged a certain group of books to be inspired. Even in debates with their opponents, they appealed to “Scripture,” which shows that the Jews in general agreed as to the contents of the Hebrew canon.¹¹¹ Since the standard held to at the time of Jesus was acceptance of the 24 books listed earlier, we can confidently conclude that Jesus sanctioned this choice.

It is interesting to note Jesus’ words in Luke 24:44, where He delineated the sections of the Hebrew canon: “These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled” (the Psalms being the most prominent work in the “Writings”). This delineation confirms Jesus’ endorsement of the Hebrew Bible of His time. His disciples, of course, would follow His example. In addition, Dempster observes that Jesus explained to two of His disciples “the things concerning Himself in *all* the Scriptures” (Lk 24:27). The word “all” may imply that the canon was indeed closed at that time.¹¹²

Moreover, the New Testament contains references to all the Old Testament books except Esther, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Ezra-Nehemiah, Obadiah, Nahum and Zephaniah. The final three books, though, were found in the Hebrew book “Minor Prophets,” which the Jews considered one book. We can explain the absence of references to the others by assuming that the New Testament writers had no need to refer to them.¹¹³

b. The Use of Non-Canonical Books in the New Testament

It is true that the New Testament writers do glean material from non-canonical literature.¹¹⁴ We can highlight the following clear examples:

- Heb 11:35-38 from *2 Macc.* 6:18-7:42, *4 Macc.* 5:3-18:24 and *Martyrdom of Isaiah*, 5:1
- Jude 9 assumedly from a lost section from *The Testament of Moses* (this reference is missing in the parallel passage in 2 Pet 2)
- Jude 14-15 from *1 Enoch* 1:9 (this reference is missing in the parallel passage in 2 Pet 2)
- Acts 17:28; Tit 1:12; 1 Cor 15:33 from Greek poets.¹¹⁵

In addition, scholars sometimes posit that New Testament authors also drew more indirectly on intertestamental literature for certain thoughts or ideas (see details in Appendix B). However, concerning this last point, we must consider the following. Similarity in content does not automatically imply borrowing of material. Other reasons may explain the overlap: (1) both authors are independently expressing the same idea, (2) both authors drew from a common source, or (3) both authors may be reflecting a generally accepted principle. DeSilva suggests that such borrowing may occur more unconsciously, than consciously: “In many

¹¹¹Bruce, p. 41.

¹¹²Dempster S. G. *Torah, Torah, Torah* // Evans C. A., Tov E. *Exploring the origins of the Bible*. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2008. – P. 120.

¹¹³Robinson, Harrison, v. 1, p. 597.

¹¹⁴See Bruce, p. 51-52; Mounce W. D. *Pastoral Epistles*. – Dallas, TX: Word, Incorporated, 2000. – P. 550; Elliott J. K. *Manuscripts, the codex and the canon* // *Journal for the study of the New Testament*. 1997. 19(63). P. 117; Harrington D. J. *The Old Testament Apocrypha in the Early Church and today* // McDonald L. M., Sanders J. A. *The canon debate*. – Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002. – P. 200-201; deSilva D. A. *Introducing the Apocrypha*. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2002. – P. 22-25; Sundberg A. C. *The Old Testament of the Early Church*. – Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964. – P. 26-27.

¹¹⁵Charlesworth reveals the sources of these quotations: Acts 17:28 from Aratus (*Phenomena*, 5) and Cleanthes; Tit 1:12 from Epimenides (see Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, 1.14); 1 Cor 15:33 from Menander (*Thais*, 218). Charlesworth J. H. *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha and the New Testament*. – Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985. – P. 78.

cases, it could be asserted that the thought of an Apocrypha text has entered the Jewish culture and thus been carried less directly into the mind of the author.”¹¹⁶

Even if some New Testament authors did borrow material from intertestamental writers, it does not follow that they endorsed the inspiration of these works in total. Truth may indeed exist outside of Scripture, and its inclusion in Scripture confirms its validity. Even Paul at times quoted Greek poets, but he would never have considered their works, as such, to be inspired.¹¹⁷

However, unlike citations from canonical books, we do not see in any reference to non-canonical material the conventional formulations that refer to inspired books, like “it is written,” “Scripture says,” etc. According to rabbinic tradition, quotations from Scripture were preceded, in general, by such formulations.¹¹⁸

We encounter yet another difficulty in that the New Testament contains quotes designated as “Scripture,” but their sources are unknown. Such is the case in: Jn 7:38; Lk 11:49; 1 Cor 2:9; Matt 2:23; Jam 4:5; Eph 5:14. How can we explain this? The usual response is that here we are dealing with paraphrases or combinations of more than one Old Testament reference. In viewing these options, though, the reader may still come away unconvinced:

- Jn 7:38 from Isa 58:11 or Zech 14:8
- 1 Cor 2:9 from Isa 64:4¹¹⁹
- Eph 5:14 from Isa 26:19; 51:17; 52:1; 60:1¹²⁰

Even if a throughout explanation remains elusive, the apparent absence of these sources does not disturb our present understanding of the canon. A problem certainly would arise if the alleged sources for these quotations appeared.

c. Other Objections

Critics advance a number of other objections to the claim that Jesus and His apostles established the Old Testament canon for us. First, they feel that using Scripture (New Testament) to defend Scripture (Old Testament) is circular reasoning. Do we not need an outside source beside the Bible to confirm its inspiration? However, here we are appealing to the New Testament not as inspired Scripture, but as a reliable historical source for Jesus and His apostles’ view of the Old Testament canon.

We have good reasons to trust the historical reliability of the New Testament. First, is the abundance of ancient copies of the New Testament and the close agreement between their contents. This means that alteration of the New Testament’s contents over time is unlikely. Second, in many cases, archeology has confirmed the historicity of New Testament narrative. Third, the New Testament contains the testimony of eyewitnesses of the events it records.

¹¹⁶deSilva, p. 22.

¹¹⁷Dunbar, p. 307; Jannes and Jambres (2 Tim 3:8) are mentioned in *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* 1:3; 7:2; 40:6; *Damascus Document*, 5:18; *b. Menachos*, 85a and *Exodus-Rabbah*, but most of these instances were written after the New Testament, and some of them only partially overlap with 2 Tim 3:8 (See Mounce, p. 550; Grabbe L. The Jannes/Jambres tradition in Targum Pseudo-Jonathan and its date // *Journal of Biblical Literature*. 1979. 98(3). P. 393-401).

¹¹⁸For a confirmation of this point, see Green W. S. *Scripture in Classical Judaism* // Neusner J., Avery-Peck A. J., Green W. S. *The Encyclopedia of Judaism*. – New York, NY: Brill, 2000. – P. 1307. Beckwith also claims that the formulations “it is written,” “it is said,” or “He says” were used to indicate inspired books not only in the New Testament, but also in the writings of Qumran, Philo and the Mishna (Beckwith, p. 74).

¹¹⁹According to Sundberg’s research, Origen connected 1 Cor 2:9 with the *Apocalypse of Elijah* (see *Commentary on Matthew*, 27.9). Sundberg, *The Old Testament*, p. 26-27.

¹²⁰Sundberg claims that Jerome connected Eph 5:14 with an apocryphal book (see *Commentary on Ephesians*, 3.5.15). Epiphanius connected it with the *Apocalypse of Elijah* (see *Against heresies*, 1.3.42) (see Sundberg, *The Old Testament*, p. 26-27).

Throughout the New Testament we encounter one view – that Jesus and His apostles considered the Old Testament a reliable, inspired source of God’s revelation. Even liberal theologians, who often reject the historicity of the New Testament narrative, do not challenge the New Testament presentation of how Jesus and the apostles viewed Scripture. Liberals conventionally dispute the New Testament’s claim to miracles and end-time prophecies.

Other critics advance the idea that, in His use of Scripture, Jesus simply condescended to the conventional understanding of His audience, but in reality held a different view of the Old Testament. Yet, here we must acknowledge that we nowhere find any indication that Jesus held a different view. This “argument from silence” is unconvincing. In fact, even when Jesus was alone in the wilderness, being tempted by the devil, He appealed to the Old Testament as the Word of God (see Matthew, chapter 4). Additionally, in other cases where Jesus disagreed with His contemporaries, He did not hesitate to challenge their understanding, such as about order in the temple (see Jn 2:13-22) or working on the Sabbath (see Matt 12:1-8).

A third objection goes as follows: Jesus and His disciples held a false view of the canon. Such an idea is clearly mistaken. Jesus, being God in the flesh, would not be mistaken in His judgment. Even though He became man, His humanity did not introduce any imperfection into His being. Although Jesus submitted to the limitations of human nature, when He did not know a fact, He openly admitted it (see Matt 24:36). Everything that He knew, He knew precisely and accurately.¹²¹ Moreover, Jesus asserted that He always spoke the truth (Jn 8:45-46).

Still another challenge – Jesus supposedly cited Old Testament texts only to illustrate His teachings, but did not really believe in Old Testament historicity. Verkler wisely suggests that Jesus’ arguments become much more convincing if He was referring to real events in Old Testament history.¹²² For example, if Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were only legends, then how could Jesus cite Exodus 3:6 in defense of the teaching of the resurrection of the dead? How could He effectively move rebellious cities to repentance if the following will not occur: “The men of Nineveh will stand up with this generation at the judgment, and will condemn it because they repented at the preaching of Jonah” (Matt 12:41)?

Finally, some feel that the Gospels do not give us a true picture of Jesus of Nazareth, but simply a legendary figure created by the Early Church. Verkler responds that it is much more likely that the Early Church derived their understanding of Scripture from Jesus, than that the Early Church created a figure that echoed *their* view.¹²³ Also important – all the Gospel writers give the same account of Jesus’ attitude toward Scripture.

5. The Church’s Definition of the Canon

a. Early Lists of Canonical Books

After the New Testament period, we observe significant changes in the Church’s understanding of the Old Testament canon. Melito of Sardis (second century) composed the earliest enumeration of Old Testament books, which Eusebius preserved in his *Church History*:

Accordingly when I went East and came to the place where these things were preached and done, I learned accurately the books of the Old Testament, and send them to thee as written below. Their names are as follows: Of Moses, five books: Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Leviticus, Deuteronomy; Jesus Nave, Judges, Ruth; of Kings, four books; of Chronicles, two; the Psalms of David, the Proverbs of

¹²¹Geisler N. L. Christian apologetics. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1976. – P. 360.

¹²²Verkler H. A. Hermeneutics: Principles and processes of biblical interpretation. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1996. – P. 24-25 (page number from Russian edition).

¹²³Ibid, p. 25 (page number from Russian edition).

Solomon, Wisdom also, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Job; of Prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah; of the twelve prophets, one book; Daniel, Ezekiel, Esdras (*Church History*, 4.26.14).

If we assume that Jeremiah includes Lamentations and that Ezra includes Nehemiah, then the only difference from the Talmud (*b. Baba Bathra*, 14b) is the exclusion of Esther.¹²⁴

However, 20 years later, Origen released another listing, which Eusebius also preserved:

The twenty-two books of the Hebrews are the following:... Genesis... Exodus... Leviticus... Numbers... Deuteronomy... Jesus, the son of Nave... Judges... Ruth, among them in one book... First and Second of Kings, among them one, Samuel... Third and Fourth of Kings in one... Chronicles, the First and Second in one... Esdras, First and Second in one... the book of Psalms... the Proverbs of Solomon... Ecclesiastes... the Song of Songs... Isaiah... Jeremiah, with Lamentations and the epistle in one... Daniel... Ezekiel... Job... Esther... And besides these there are the Maccabees (*Church History*, 6.25.2).

Origen speaks of 22 books in the canon, but lists only 21. One may assume that he accidentally omitted the Minor Prophets. Immediately after the canonical books, Origen mentions the books of the Maccabees, but separates them from the canon. Unlike Melito, Origen includes Esther and the *Epistle of Jeremiah*.

We must seek to clarify the discrepancies between the canons of Melito and Origen with the listing found in the Talmud (*b. Baba Bathra*, 14b). Melito travelled to Palestine in order to accurately ascertain the Jewish canon. Origen claims to have related the canonical books “as the Hebrews have handed them down” (Eusebius, *Church History*, 6.25.1). Nonetheless, in light of: (1) the careful preservation of tradition by the Jews, (2) the tendency of the Church to expand the canon (see below), and (3) the differences between Melito and Origen themselves, we conclude that the Talmud contains the correct enumeration of the Old Testament canon among the Jews in the second century.

One must also wonder why no early Christian writer, with the possible exception of Jerome, mentioned the tripartite structure of the Hebrew canon, even though writers like Melito and Origen claimed to have received their information from the Jews.¹²⁵

Other Church Fathers claimed to have connections with Jews of their day as well. Yet, all of them (together with Josephus) speak of 22 canonical books, not the typical Jewish enumeration of 24. Even then, they did not always list the same 22 books. For example, Cyril of Jerusalem included in his canon of 22 books *1 Baruch* and the *Epistle of Jeremiah*, but Epiphanius of Salamis included *2 Baruch*, *2 Ezra*, *3 Ezra* and the *Epistle of Jeremiah*.¹²⁶ Clearly, the connection the Fathers had with the Jews did not result in a correspondence of canons, neither with the Jews, nor with one another.

b. The Septuagint Question

The Septuagint – the ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament – contains books absent in the Hebrew Bible. One must note, though, that no New Testament writer ever cited one of the non-canonical books of the Septuagint with the expression “it is written” or its equivalent. This indicates that not all the books in the Septuagint are necessarily canonical.

Along with this, we observe that from the earliest days of post-apostolic Christianity, the works of the Fathers abound in quotations from apocryphal and pseudepigraphical literature. As a result, a number of these

¹²⁴A question arises about what Melito meant by “Wisdom also.” F. F. Bruce believes that “Wisdom” refers the book of Proverbs (Bruce, p. 71). The Early Church characteristically referred to the Proverbs of Solomon as “Wisdom.” (see Eusebius, *Church History*, 4.22.8).

¹²⁵Harris R. L. Was the Law and the Prophets, p. 167.

¹²⁶Beckwith, p. 187-188.

works eventually found their way into the Old Testament canon of the Church. We ask, then, “What role did the Septuagint have in the formation of the Church’s expanded canon?”

We will begin by learning how the Jews viewed the Septuagint. As we saw earlier, the rabbis never welcomed intertestamental literature into the collection of inspired books. They recognized exclusively only the 24 books that correspond to the 39 books of the present Protestant canon. This conviction corresponds to the Jewish tradition that after Malachi, the line of divinely authorized prophets came to an end.

It is also significant that in his extensive literary career, Philo of Alexandria (first century AD) never cited an apocryphal or pseudepigraphical work. If an expanded canon existed in Alexandria (the place where the Septuagint was translated), one would expect Philo to cite such books. In addition, the Jews of Alexandria replaced the Septuagint with a new translation by Aquila, which contained none of these non-canonical books.¹²⁷

Moreover, when the Alexandrian Origen listed the books he believed to be accepted by the Jews of his time, he included only one non-canonical book – the *Epistle of Jeremiah*. In his letter to Africanus, he specifically mentions that the Hebrew Bible did not contain *Susanna*, *Bel and the Dragon*, and “thousands of other passages,” where the Septuagint differed from the Hebrew (*Africanus*, 2). Furthermore, Melito’s “Hebrew” canon was also free from additions. Finally, Jerome confirmed that the Jews rejected the Apocrypha, and Augustine related that they did not accept the *Books of Maccabees* or *Judith* as Holy Scripture.¹²⁸

Some scholars express doubt that the Septuagint, in its original form, ever contained apocryphal or pseudepigraphical works at all.¹²⁹ They list the following reasons. First, the oldest complete copies of the Septuagint that we possess date back only to the fourth-fifth centuries AD and were preserved not by Israel, but by the Church.¹³⁰ On the other hand, we do have a copy of Daniel (papyrus 967, in the collection of Chester Beatty), dated in the third century, that has *Susanna* and *Bel and the Dragon*.¹³¹ Nonetheless, we cannot specifically fix the date when the Apocrypha entered the Greek Old Testament. It is very possible that its inclusion occurred sometime between the first and third centuries AD. It was not the Jews who “flirted” with the Apocrypha, but the post-apostolic Church.

In confirmation of this thesis, we note that in various manuscripts of the Septuagint, the number of non-canonical books differs, and they are situated in various places. This creates the impression that these books were added to the corpus of Old Testament books by various scribes, who arranged them differently. In addition, together with deSilva, we note that the majority of apocryphal and pseudepigraphical books were written in the second century BC, yet the translation of the Septuagint only began in the third century BC. It is unlikely that books so recently composed would find their way into the original Septuagint.¹³²

So then, the evidence seems overwhelming that the Jews never acknowledged apocryphal or pseudepigraphical literature as Holy Scripture, neither in Palestine, nor in Alexandria. Not Israel, but the post-apostolic Church took the initiative to eventually canonize them.

Finally, Ryle notes that the majority of Old Testament canon lists, made by Christian writers, more or less follow the order of books found in the Septuagint.¹³³ This indicates that the Early Church borrowed from the Septuagint its order of Old Testament books as well.

c. The Church’s Expansion of the Hebrew Canon

¹²⁷Robinson, Harrison, v. 1, p. 595.

¹²⁸Augustine, *City of God*, 18.26, 36.

¹²⁹See Robinson, Harrison, v. 1, p. 595; Bruce, p. 45.

¹³⁰Bruce, p. 45; Harris R. L., *Inspiration and canonicity*, p. 144.

¹³¹<https://evangelicaltextualcriticism.blogspot.com/2010/06/for-general-orientation-to-this-series.html>; Harris R. L. Was the Law and the Prophets, p. 168; Harris R. L. Chronicles and the canon in New Testament times // *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*. 1990. 33(1). P. 83.

¹³²deSilva, p. 29.

¹³³Ryle, p. 224-228.

Although in their formal definition of the Old Testament canon, the early Church Fathers showed more restraint, in their theological treatises, even the earliest Fathers (back to Clement of Rome) widely and freely used non-canonical books, usually considering them only helpful for reading.¹³⁴ At the same time, they did occasionally refer to them as authoritative writings.

Here are a few examples. **Irenaeus** (2nd c.) borrows material from *1 Enoch* (see *Against Heresies*, 4.16.2) as well as from *Susanna* (ibid, 4.26.3). He quotes verbatim *Wisdom of Solomon*, 6.19 (ibid, 4.38.3) and *1 Baruch*, 4.36-5.9 (ibid, 5.35.1 - attributing these words to Jeremiah). In the ***Epistle of Barnabas***, 6.7 (2nd c.), *Wisdom of Solomon* is called "Scripture," and in *Barnabas*, 12.1, a non-canonical citation is attributed to some "prophet" (which some attribute to *1 Esdras*, 5.5). Similarly, in *Barnabas* chapter 16, a non-canonical citation is called "Scripture": "For the Scripture saith, 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the Lord will deliver up the sheep of His pasture, and their sheep-fold and tower, to destruction.'"

Clement of Alexandria (2nd c.), citing *4 Ezra*, 5.35, calls the author "prophet" (*Stromata*, 3.16). **Tertullian** (3rd c.) speaks of *1 Enoch* as Scripture (*On the Apparel of Women*, 1.3; *On the Resurrection of the Flesh*, 32?).¹³⁵ In the preface to **Cyprian's** (3rd c.) *Exhortation to Martyrdom, Addressed to Fortunatus*, Allert sees allusions to various apocryphal books.¹³⁶

Origen's (3rd c.) treatment of the Old Testament is especially interesting. On the one hand, in his enumeration of the Hebrew canon, he added only one book – the *Epistle of Jeremiah*. On the other hand, he stated that the Church in his day valued other non-canonical writings as well.¹³⁷ He personally considered as "Scripture" the *Ascension of Moses* (See *de Principiis*, 3.2.1) and *1 Enoch* (ibid, 4.1.35).¹³⁸ Origen justified his approval of certain apocryphal or pseudepigraphical books by claiming that by Divine Providence the Church became aware of them and found them useful.¹³⁹ He also suggested that the Jews concealed the apocryphal books, fearing they might somehow cause a scandal.¹⁴⁰

As far as concrete canonical lists, **Athanasius** (4th c.) included the entire Hebrew canon except Esther, and added *1 Baruch* and the *Epistle of Jeremiah* (*Festal Letter*, 39.5). **Gregory Nazianzen** excluded Esther as well.¹⁴¹ Athanasius' list is duplicated by **Cyril of Jerusalem** (4th c.)¹⁴² (*Catechetical lectures*, 4.35), and the **Council of Laodicea** (363), except that they included Esther.¹⁴³ **Hilary of Poitiers** (4th c.) included in his canon *Tobit*, *Judith*, and the *Epistle of Jeremiah*.¹⁴⁴ Another expanded canon is found in **Apostolic Canons** (4th c.), which includes *Judith* and *1-3 Maccabees*.¹⁴⁵

This lack of clarity in the Church's determination of the canon gave rise to a tripartite system for classifying books in the Early Church: canonical (inspired), ecclesiastical (useful for reading) and apocryphal (in the sense of "heretical"). Athanasius, Rufinus and Eusebius employed such a system.

¹³⁴Constantelos D. J. The Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical books: An Orthodox view // Kohlenberger J. R. The parallel Apocrypha. – Oxford: Oxford University, 1997. – P. xxviii.

¹³⁵Allert claims that still other Church Fathers considered some apocryphal books to be Scripture: Athanasius, Basil the Great, the Council of Ephesus (431), Cyril of Jerusalem, Gregory Nazianzen, Hippolytus, Dionysius of Alexandria (Allert, p. 177-185).

¹³⁶Ibid, p. 72-73.

¹³⁷Noted in Dempster, The Old Testament canon, p. 457.

¹³⁸Origen also related that not all the churches recognized *1 Enoch* as inspired (see *Against Celsus*, 5.54).

¹³⁹*Letter to Africanus*, 4.

¹⁴⁰Ibid, 9. Justin Martyr also claimed that the Jews removed certain verses from Scripture (*Dialogue*, 71-72).

¹⁴¹Sundberg, The Old Testament, p. 147. Nonetheless, Gregory considered *Judith*, 5.6 (see *Orations*, 45.15) and *Wisdom of Solomon*, 7.25 (see *Orations*, 29.16-17) to be Scripture.

¹⁴²Nonetheless, Cyril attributed *Wisdom of Solomon*, 22.5 to Solomon himself (*Catechetical Lectures*, 9.2) and, along with other passages from canonical books, quoted Sirach 3:21-22 (*Catechetical Lectures*, 6.4).

¹⁴³https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Council_of_Laodicea#Biblical_canon. This council also forbade the reading of non-canonical books during the worship service (Bruce, p. 80).

¹⁴⁴Noted in McDonald L. M., The formation of the Christian Biblical canon, p. 112-113.

¹⁴⁵*Apostolic Canons*, 85.

In the fifth century, the Church abandoned its original hesitancy to alter the Hebrew canon. This is especially notable in the teaching of **Augustine** (4th-5th c.). He added to the Hebrew collection the following: *Tobit, Judith, Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach, 1 Baruch, Epistle of Jeremiah, 1-2 Maccabees*, additions to Daniel (*Susanna, Bel and the Dragon, the Prayer of Azariah*) and additions to Esther (10:4-16:24).¹⁴⁶ Subsequent church councils in Hippo (393) and Carthage (397 and 419) confirmed Augustine's canon.¹⁴⁷

On the other hand, **Jerome** (4th-5th c.) firmly resisted the tendency to accept the Apocrypha, which resulted in a now famous debate with Augustine. Jerome studied in Palestine, learned the Hebrew tongue, and made a translation of the Old Testament from Hebrew to Latin. Because of his close association with the Jews, Jerome appreciated the importance of preserving the original Old Testament canon. In his introduction to the books of Kings (*Prologus galeatus*), Jerome listed only the 24 books of the Hebrew Bible.

Dempster gives his opinion on why the Church expanded the canon – the influx of Gentiles into the Church weakened ties with the Church's Jewish heritage.¹⁴⁸ Gallagher feels that the main reason for the Apocrypha's acceptance was that the Church increasingly employed the criteria of "catholicity" in determining the canon, which involved accepting books because of their wide usage among local congregations.¹⁴⁹ The Apocrypha, in fact, had become very popular.

d. Present Confessional Positions

1) Roman Catholic

Since the issuing of the official (Clementine) version of the Latin Vulgate translation in 1592, Catholics recognize the following apocryphal works as inspired Scripture: *Tobit, Judith, Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach, 1 Baruch, 1-2 Maccabees*, additions to Daniel (*Susanna, Bel and the Dragon, the Prayer of Azariah*) and additions to Esther.¹⁵⁰

The Catechism of the Catholic Church reveals how Roman Catholicism came to this determination: "It was by the apostolic Tradition that the Church discerned which writings are to be included in the list of the sacred books."¹⁵¹ Similarly, Catholic theologian Guido Terreni (13th-14th c.) comments, "From the church's authority the canonical books derive their power of authority. Through the church the books of the Bible were accepted as authoritative."¹⁵²

Catholics call these additional books "deuterocanonical." This does not imply that they are secondary in authority to the other writings, but secondary in a temporal sense in that they entered the canon later. In other words, they come behind the books of the Hebrew canon in time, but not in importance.¹⁵³

2) Eastern Orthodox

¹⁴⁶See *On Christian Doctrine*, 2.8.13. Also, Bruce, p. 96.

¹⁴⁷One must keep in mind here, that these councils were not Ecumenical (all-church) councils, but local ones. Nevertheless, in Sundberg's opinion, their determination may well have reflected the feeling of the entire Church (Sundberg, *The Old Testament*, p. 130-131). F. F. Bruce agrees, especially in regard to the Western Church (Bruce, p. 97).

¹⁴⁸Dempster, *The Old Testament canon*, p. 456.

¹⁴⁹Gallagher, *Hebrew Scripture*, p. 8.

¹⁵⁰Robinson, Harrison, v. 1, p. 594.

¹⁵¹Catechism of the Catholic Church, № 120.

http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p2s2c1a1.htm.

¹⁵²*Questio de Magisterio Infallibili*. Noted in Allison, p. 50.

¹⁵³Walden W. Luther: the one who shaped the canon // *Restoration Quarterly*. 2007. 49(1). P. 9;
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deuterocanonical_books#Eastern_Orthodoxy.

The question of Old Testament canon in the East is complicated by the fact that there is no universally recognized canonical list.¹⁵⁴ Much depends on the independent practice of the national Orthodox churches.

We observe this same lack of definition in the patristic period. Athanasius, for example, included *1 Baruch* and the *Epistle of Jeremiah* in his canon, yet excluded Esther. Cyril of Jerusalem and John of Damascus echo Athanasius, but include Esther. At the same time, aside from formal canonical lists, nearly all these Fathers refer in their writings to other non-canonical books as Scripture as well.

The canonical question arose during several church councils. The Synod of Jerusalem in 1672 approved *4 Ezra* (*3 Ezra* in the East), *Tobit*, *Judith*, *Maccabees*, *Wisdom of Solomon*, *Sirach*, *1 Baruch*, the *Epistle of Jeremiah*, *Susanna*, and *Bel and the Dragon*. The Council decreed: "For we judge these also to be with the other genuine Books of Divine Scripture genuine parts of Scripture."¹⁵⁵ Contrary to this decision, the Large Catechism of the Orthodox Church (1839) recognizes only the books of the Hebrew canon.¹⁵⁶

Metropolitan Ilarion enumerates for us the present understanding of the canon among Russian Orthodox. The following books are considered "non-canonical": *Tobit*, *Judith*, *Wisdom of Solomon*, *Sirach*, *2-3 Ezra*, *Epistle of Jeremiah*, *1 Baruch*, *1-3 Maccabees*, the *Prayer of Manassas*, additions to Esther, *Psalms 151*, *Susanna*, *Bel and the Dragon*, the *Prayer of Azariah*.¹⁵⁷

So then, Russian Orthodoxy, which usually follows the Septuagint, does not recognize some books included in Septuagint, namely *4 Maccabees* and the *Psalms of Solomon*. Yet, they add *3 Ezra* (*4 Ezra* in the West), which is absent in the Greek Old Testament. Also interesting is that the Greek Orthodox Church excludes *3 Ezra*, and *4 Maccabees* is added to the end of the canon, separate from the canonical books.¹⁵⁸

In Russian Orthodoxy, the term "non-canonical" is a technical term, designating books respected by the church, but not recognized as inspired. Consequently, they are added to the end of the Russian Bible in some editions.¹⁵⁹ Nonetheless, Ilarion comments, "For the Orthodox Church, the main criterion for defining the canonicity of a certain Old Testament book is its usage in the liturgy."¹⁶⁰ Constantelos confirms this claim: "The conscience and practice of the Church in history counts more than theological opinion."¹⁶¹

3) Reformation Faith

Luther considered the Apocrypha good and useful for reading, but not Scripture. Along with the reformer Zwingli, he placed them in an Appendix at the end of his translation of the Old Testament, thereby demonstrating their secondary status.¹⁶² In contrast to Luther, John Calvin held a very negative view. In his opinion:

The books commonly called the Apocrypha, not being of divine inspiration, are no part of the canon of the Scripture, and therefore are of no authority in the Church of God, nor to be in any otherwise approved, or made use of, more than any other human writing.¹⁶³

¹⁵⁴Constantelos, p. xxix; Filson, p. 90.

¹⁵⁵<http://www.crivoice.org/creeddositheus.html>

¹⁵⁶Filson, p. 95; Geisler, Nix, p. 269.

¹⁵⁷Иларион (Алфеев). Православие. – <http://www.hilarion.ru/materials/books>. – V. 1. – P. 224.

¹⁵⁸deSilva, p. 19; Elliott, p. 118.

¹⁵⁹https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deuterocanonical_books#Eastern_Orthodoxy

¹⁶⁰Иларион, v. 1, p. 224.

¹⁶¹Constantelos, p. xxix.

¹⁶²Noted in Filson, p. 74; deSilva, p. 38; Bruce, p. 102; Walden, p. 5; Balge, p. 285.

¹⁶³Noted in deSilva, p. 38.

Calvin, along with Luther, challenged the Catholic conviction that the Church has the right to establish the canon. The Reformers claimed that the Church's role is not to authorize biblical books, but to simply recognize their inherent inspired nature.¹⁶⁴

Several factors likely led to the Reformers' attitude toward the canon.¹⁶⁵ Due to the European Renaissance, interest in ancient languages arose, including Greek and Hebrew. Because of this, scholars began to look more critically at the official Bible of the time, the Latin Vulgate, discovering discrepancies between it and the texts in their original languages.¹⁶⁶ Consequently, people began to question the quality of the Vulgate, including the canon it proposed.

Also important is the observation that the teachings found in apocryphal and pseudepigraphical books sometimes run contrary to the gospel. A classic example is 2 *Maccabees* 12:44-45:

For if he had not expected the fallen to rise again, it would have been superfluous and silly to pray for the dead – and having regard to the splendour of the gracious reward which is reserved for those who have fallen asleep in godliness – a holy and pious consideration! Hence he made propitiation for the dead, that they might be released from their sin.

6. Conclusions

Summing up our discussion of the Old Testament canon, we can conclude that sufficient evidence exists to defend the claim that in the first Christian century there already existed a definite understanding among the Jews as to which books contained the true Word of God and were worthy of "canonization," however that concept was understood at that time. The list of canonical books can be found in the Talmud, tractate *Baba Bathra*, 14b. This is the "canon" that Jesus and disciples embraced and called "Scripture."

Even if we allow that uncertainty as to the canonicity of certain books existed among the Jews, it does not follow that the canon was still "open" or "undefined." The uncertainty of that time concerned (according to Melito and Origen) only the books of Esther and the *Epistle of Jeremiah*. If we include the debates mentioned in the Mishna (*m. Yadayim*, 3.5), the debated books included Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon as well. However, the subsequent debates about these works did not define, but simply clarified and confirmed their status as canonical or non-canonical books (for a discussion of these debates, see Appendix A).

Since the Lord Jesus and His apostles embraced the Hebrew canon, we can have firm confidence in the conviction that these books, and only these books, contain God's inspired Word, and are thereby qualified as "canonical."

Nonetheless, instead of faithfully preserving the Old Testament canon confirmed by Jesus and the apostles, the Early Church from the very beginning of the post-apostolic period gradually altered and distorted the proper understanding of the canon of the Old Testament. Consequently, the Church included in the role of holy books non-inspired works. Only at the time of the Reformation, and by means of it, was the Church able to correct this error.

Let us clarify that, even though the testimony of Jesus and the apostles is decisive to resolve this question, other factors support our conclusion as well. We noted the faithful determination of the canon by Israel, to whom were "entrusted the oracles of God" (Rom 3:2). In addition, we observe in the Jewish handling of the canon a stability and consistency that was lacking in early Christianity. Their stability and constancy strengthens our conviction that they properly preserved the pure Word of God.

¹⁶⁴Allison G. R. Historical theology: An introduction to Christian doctrine. – Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011. – P. 52-53; Sundberg, Bible canon, p. 353.

¹⁶⁵Sundberg, The Old Testament, p. 11.

¹⁶⁶Allison, p. 51.

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Chapter 3: The Search for God's Revelation, part 2

A. The New Testament Canon

1. New Scriptures on the Way

Having established that God's revelation before Christ is found in the 24 books of the Jewish canon (equal in content to the 39 books of the Protestant canon), we can now turn our attention discovering His revelation through Christ and the apostles.

The Old Testament itself gives us definite clues that a new set of inspired books were yet to be written, particularly in connection with the coming of the Messiah. Moses, for example, predicted that God would send another great prophet, whom Israel must heed (Deut 18:18). Jeremiah spoke of a new covenant, which God would establish with His people (Jer 31:31). At the very end of the Old Testament, the prophet Malachi foretold God's visitation to His people (Mal 4:5-6). The Messiah came in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, whose words and deeds brought new revelation from heaven.

Consequently, one may fairly assume that God's new revelation in Jesus the Messiah would be preserved in new inspired books. Harnack concurs that the New Testament arose due to "the supreme reverence in which the words and teaching of Christ Jesus were held."¹⁶⁷

It is curious to note, along with Filson, that as far as we know, the Lord Jesus personally wrote nothing and did not even commission His disciples to record His life history or teachings in written form.¹⁶⁸ Nonetheless, in light of the previous recording of divine revelation in the Old Testament, which Jesus valued and considered inspired, it is safe to assume that He expected His own words and deeds to be preserved in the same way. He claimed, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away" (Mk 13:31).

2. The Role of the Apostles

Unlike the Old Testament canon, Jesus gave us no indication as to exactly which books would comprise the New Testament. The New Testament, of course, was written after His ascension. At the same time, Harris insightfully comments, "The Lord Jesus did not, in prophecy, give us a list of the twenty-seven New Testament books. He did, however, give us a list of the inspired authors."¹⁶⁹ In other words, the Twelve Apostles (excluding Judas Iscariot and including Matthias, see Acts 1:16-26) were appointed and authorized by Jesus to preach and teach in His name.

The following passages confirm this claim. In Mark 3:14 we read, "(Jesus) appointed twelve, so that they would be with Him and that He {could} send them out to preach." He later commissioned them, "You shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth" (Acts 1:8) and, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you" (Matt 28:19-20).

Jesus even identified His mission with the mission of the disciples: "He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me," "As the Father has sent Me, I also send you" (Jn 20:21) and, "If they kept My word, they will keep yours also" (Jn 15:20).¹⁷⁰ The New Testament writers consistently appealed to the testimony of the apostles of Christ as authoritative sources of God's truth (Lk 1:1-4; 2 Pet 1:16-

¹⁶⁷Harnack A. von. The origin of the New Testament. – Covent Garden, W.C.: Williams & Norgate, 1925. – P. 7.

¹⁶⁸Filson F. V. Which books belong in the Bible? A study of the canon. – Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1957. – P. 101.

¹⁶⁹Harris R. L. Inspiration and canonicity of the Bible. – Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1957, 1969. – P. 234.

¹⁷⁰Dayton W. T. Factors promoting the formation of the New Testament canon // Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society. 1967. 10(1). P. 30-31; Jowers D. W. The sufficiency of Scripture and the biblical canon // Trinity Journal. 2009. 30ns. P. 53-54.

18; 3:2; Jn 21:24; Heb 2:3; Jude 17). The apostles are even spoken of as the foundation of the Church (Matt 16:18; Eph 2:20; Rev 21:14).

Jesus not only chose the Twelve Apostles, he also promised them special assistance from the Holy Spirit:

- The Holy Spirit “will guide you into all the truth” (Jn 16:13),
- The Holy Spirit “bring to your remembrance all that I said to you” (Jn 14:26),
- The Holy Spirit “will disclose to you what is to come” (Jn 16:13).

It is notable that these promises of help from the Spirit correspond to the three aspects of composing Scripture: teaching, history and prophecy.

When one reads the New Testament, it becomes obvious that the apostles understood their position of authority in the Church, given them by the Lord. They understood themselves to be speaking from God and expected the Church to submit to their instruction. For example, Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment” (1 Cor 14:37). Moreover, the apostle Paul claimed to have received inspiration from the Spirit and revelation from Him (1 Cor 2:10-13; Eph 3:4-5).¹⁷¹ He especially appealed to his apostolic authority in his letters to the Thessalonians (1 Thes 2:13; 4:2, 8; 2 Thes 2:15; 3:6, 14-15) and in his second letter to the Corinthians (2 Cor 10:5-6; 12:11-12; 13:10). Some of his letters he personally signed to show that they were genuine apostolic instruction (1 Cor 16:21; Gal 6:11; 2 Thes 3:17; Col 4:18).

Sometimes Paul directed that the entire church should read his letter (1 Thes 5:27), or that the recipient congregation should share it with another congregation (Col 4:16). Geisler and Nix comment on the importance of this directive: “This is a crucial passage, because it indicates that the authority of one epistle included a larger audience than just the one to which it was written.”¹⁷² In addition, those who opposed Paul's teaching were under a curse (Gal 1:8-9; 2 Thes 3:14-15). Even when Paul (and Peter also) greeted a congregation, they reminded the believers there of their authority, referring to themselves as “apostles.”

John spoke of the authority of the apostles in a similar way. Speaking of apostolic teaching in general (see 1 Jn 1:1-4), he writes: “We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us” (1 Jn 4:6). Loyalty to the apostles must exceed loyalty to local congregational leaders (3 Jn 5-10). John claims to give a faithful description of what he saw on Patmos (Rev 1:2-3), and warned those who would dare to alter the book's contents (Rev 22:18-19). James' authority is shown by the fact that his 108 verses contain 54 commands.¹⁷³ Peter placed the writings of the apostles on the same level as those of the prophets (2 Pet 3:2).¹⁷⁴

Not only did the New Testament writers appeal to their own authority, but they also sometimes spoke of the authority of other New Testament writings. For example, in 1 Tim 5:18, Paul refers to Luke 10:7 as Scripture: “For the Scripture says, ‘You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing’ (from Deut 25:4), and ‘The laborer is worthy of his wages’” (from Lk 10:7). In addition, in 2 Peter 3:16, Peter refers to Paul's writings as Scripture: “...as also in all {Paul's} letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as {they do} also the rest of the Scriptures.”

It is also significant that when we read the later New Testament books, we get the impression that their authors sought not so much to impart new revelation, as to preserve the revelation already given. Correspondingly, in such books as the Epistles of Jude, 2-3 John, 2 Peter, 2 Timothy and to the Hebrews, a

¹⁷¹Grudem W. A. Scripture's self-attestation and the problem of formulating a doctrine of Scripture // Carson D. A., Woodbridge J. D. Scripture and truth. - Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1992. - P. 46-47. Grudem adds that the pronoun “we” in 1 Cor 2:10-13 may refer to all the apostles.

¹⁷²Geisler N. L., Nix W. E. A general introduction to the Bible. - Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1986. - P. 287.

¹⁷³Henry C. F. H. God, revelation and authority. - Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books. - V. 4. - P. 135-137.

¹⁷⁴Grudem, p. 46-47.

prominent theme is apostasy from the faith. This shows that the first-century Church was deeply concerned about preserving the apostolic testimony.

In summary, at the end of the Old Testament we encounter an expectation for new canonical books to appear. The writing of such books would certainly accompany the coming of the Messiah, the Son of God, and would preserve His life and teachings. Jesus entrusted the preservation of His new revelation to His apostles, which they proclaimed both orally, and, along with their close associates, in written form. The apostles wrote with authority as from God Himself. They even began to refer to each other's writing as Scripture. We conclude, then, that all genuine New Testament books must be connected with the Twelve Apostles or their close associates.

This thesis finds further confirmation in the works of the post-apostolic Church Fathers, who ascribed to the apostles' writings special honor and authority, unlike their more modest regard for their own works.¹⁷⁵

3. The Role of Oral Tradition

In the early years of Christianity, not every congregation had access to all the New Testament books. There was a time in Church history when believers lacked a New Testament as we are privileged to possess it today. The Early Church relied on the Old Testament and the teaching of the apostles, passed on to new generations of believers both orally, and, as congregations possessed them, in individual New Testament books.

The basic teaching of the apostles, passed down as oral tradition, became known as the "rule of faith."¹⁷⁶ A summary of its contents can be found in the works of Tertullian (*Prescription against heretics*, 13) and Irenaeus (*Against heresies*, 3.4.2). Irenaeus related that this tradition was generally accepted throughout the Church (ibid, 1.10.2). Even in New Testament times, Paul spoke of the passing on of oral tradition (1 Cor 11:2; 15:3; 2 Thes 2:15; 3:6).

Since the post-apostolic Church existed at a time when the memory of the apostles' teaching was still fresh, it did not sense an urgent need to establish a written canon. On the other hand, if a congregation possessed a written work from one of the apostles, they cherished it and appealed to it as an authoritative source. From the beginning of church history, the writings of the Fathers abound in citations to the apostolic works that they possessed. So then, Christian truth existed in two forms: oral and written.

Eventually, the Church realized the need to treat the question of preserving apostolic teaching with greater care. Memory is not a reliable method to retain material in the long run. Irenaeus comments as follows:

We have learned from none others the plan of our salvation, then from those through whom the Gospel has come down to us, which they did at one time proclaim in public, and, at a later period, by the will of God, handed down to us in the Scriptures, to be the ground and pillar of our faith (*Against heresies*, 3.1.1).

At the same time, Irenaeus informs us that the apostles not only preserved their teaching in written form, but also entrusted it to the church leaders that succeeded them: "For they were desirous that these men should be very perfect and blameless in all things, whom also they were leaving behind as their successors, delivering up their own place of government to these men" (*Against heresies*, 3.3.1).

¹⁷⁵See 1 Clem. 5, 42, 47; Ignatius, *Magnesians*, 7, 13; Papias (see Eusebius, *Church history*, 3.39.4), Polycarp, *Philippians*, 6; Barnabas, 5, 8; Justin Martyr, *1 Apology*, 39, 66; Irenaeus, *Against heresies*, 3.1.1; 3.14.2-3; 3.5.1-2; Dionysius of Alexandria (see Eusebius, *Church history*, 4.23.12; Tertullian, *Prescription against heretics*, 21).

¹⁷⁶Bruce F. F. The canon of Scripture. – Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1988. – P. 150; McDonald L. M. The formation of the Christian Biblical canon. – Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995. – P. 17; Allison G. R. Historical theology: An introduction to Christian doctrine. – Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011. – P. 40.

Consequently, at that time, one could best discover God's truth in congregations, in which the apostles themselves served and preached. Irenaeus puts it this way: "For how stands the case? Suppose there arise a dispute relative to some important question among us, should we not have recourse to the most ancient Churches with which the apostles held constant intercourse, and learn from them what is certain and clear in regard to the present question?" (*Against heresies*, 3.4.1). Tertullian concurs (see *Prescription against heretics*, 21, 36 and *Against Marcion*, 4.5).

Unfortunately, a large segment of the Early Church embraced an extreme position in regard to oral tradition. Even in the fourth century, when the New Testament was already accessible to most if not all congregations, Basil the Great attempted to justify some non-biblical additions to the baptismal ceremony by appealing to oral tradition (see *On the Holy Spirit*, 27.66). To this day, the Catholic and Orthodox Churches rely on church tradition in this way.¹⁷⁷

On the other hand, only a quick glance at the teachings of Church Fathers reveals a marked deviation from the New Testament, that is, from apostolic teaching. If oral tradition faithfully preserved the apostolic doctrine after the New Testament canon was closed, then how can one explain the great divergence between these two supposed "channels" of God's revelation? It is clear that the oral preservation of gospel truths played only a temporary role, until the New Testament became accepted by the entire Church and available to individual congregations. In time, oral tradition eventually becomes distorted. It so occurred in the history of the Church.

4. The Canonical Process

a. The Beginning of the Canonical Process

Next, we will deal with the fascinating question of how the Church determined which books belong in the New Testament canon. Our goal here is not to determine definite criteria for establishing the canon – that will come later. For now, we simply wish to discover from a historical point of view the development of the canonical process in the Early Church and onward. Later, we will attempt to evaluate how correctly the Church defined the canon based on specific criteria for canonization.

Geisler and Nix make an interesting observation that even before the Gospels were written, the first disciples encountered the dilemma of deciding what material to preserve in writing from the total life and teachings of Jesus. The apostle John acknowledged, "Many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe..." (Jn 20:30-31). Similarly, Luke also needed to select limited material from his exhaustive research: "It seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write {it} out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus; so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught" (Luke 1:3-4).¹⁷⁸

Knox correctly notes that the canonical process began when the books, which were eventually included in the New Testament, were initially accepted as authoritative in the congregations to which they were originally addressed: "These books would have to have been received as prophetic by the first recipients for them to be received as prophetic by any."¹⁷⁹ The problem of canonization, then, is convincing other congregations, and eventually the entire Church, to receive these writings in the same way.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁷For example, see McDonnell K. The formation of the canon and the recognition of Scriptural authority as an ecclesiological process // *Mid-Stream*. 1999. 38(1). P. 14-15.

¹⁷⁸Geisler, Nix, p. 284-286.

¹⁷⁹Knox D. B. Problems of the canon // *The Reformed Theological Review*. 1977. 36(1). P. 10.

¹⁸⁰*Ibid*, p. 10.

At the start of the second century, in the patristic works, we see that the Fathers already refer to some New Testament books as Scripture. We encounter numerous examples where they introduce quotations from present New Testament writings with formulas appropriate only to Scripture.¹⁸¹

We will give special attention here to Irenaeus, whom Von Campenhausen calls “the first man to know and acknowledge a New Testament both in theory and in practice.”¹⁸² Irenaeus attributed Matthew 10:29-30 to the Lord Jesus (*Against heresies*, 2.26.2). He related that the apostles passed on to us the gospel “in the Scriptures” (ibid, 3.1.1), and that the Christian “rule of faith” was taken from “Scripture” (ibid, 1.9.4). He quoted Galatians 5:21 as Scripture (ibid, 1.6.3) and spoke in general terms of Acts, Luke and the epistles of Paul as “Scripture” (ibid, 3.12.9, 12).

Along with mentions of specific New Testament passages, in the patristic works, we observe an equalization of the New Testament with the Old.¹⁸³ For example, Irenaeus spoke of “the entire Scriptures, the prophets, and the Gospels” (*Against heresies*, 2.27.2; 2.35.4), and also of “two covenants” (ibid, 4.9.1; 4.28.1; 4.15.2). Furthermore, Irenaeus testified of the existence of a definite collection of authoritative books, consisting of the teaching of the prophets, the Lord, and the apostles, from which all doctrinal formulations must derive. In his rebuke of false teachers, he relates:

Such, then, is their system, which neither the prophets announced, nor the Lord taught, nor the apostles delivered, but of which they boast... they endeavour to adapt with an air of probability to their own peculiar assertions the parables of the Lord, the sayings of the prophets, and the words of the apostles, in order that their scheme may not seem altogether without support (*Against heresies*, 1.8.1).

Let us investigate the condition of canon in Tertullian’s time (early 3rd c.). He employed the terms “New Testament” and *instrumentum* to refer to a specific set of books.¹⁸⁴ He accused the Gnostic teacher Valentinus of perverting the “Scriptures.” He rebuked Marcion for making “an excision of the Scriptures as suited his own subject-matter,” in that the latter recognized only 10 epistles of Paul and a section of Luke’s Gospel (*Prescription against heretics*, 38). All this points to a recognition of a specific set of New Testament books, accepted in Tertullian’s day. Tertullian also related that even heretics acknowledged the priority of Scripture:

What sort of truth is that which they patronize, when they commend it to us with a lie? Well, but they actually treat of the Scriptures and recommend (their opinions) out of the Scriptures! To be sure they do. From what other source could they derive arguments concerning the things of the faith, except from the records of the faith? (*Prescription against heretics*, 14).

The well-known church historian, Adolf von Harnack, summarizes these observations:

At least as early as the last decade of the second century there existed in the Church of Carthage (not only for Tertullian) a second Canon of Holy Scripture comprising two divisions treated as equal in dignity

¹⁸¹For example, Polycarp (2nd c.) quoted Ps 4:4 and Eph 4:26 with the introductory formula “it is declared then in these Scriptures” (*Philippians*, 12.). In Barnabas 4.14 (2nd c.), Matthew 22:14 is directly quoted with the formula “it is written” (2.4). Eusebius informs us of persecuted believers in Gaul during the 2nd century, who called Revelation 22:11 “Scripture” (*Church history*, 5.1.58). He also cites Dionysius of Alexandria (2nd c.), who spoke of the “Lord’s writings” (*Church history*, 4.23.12).

¹⁸²Von Campenhausen, p. 203.

¹⁸³For example, Ignatius (2nd c.) placed the “Gospels and Apostles” on the same level as the Old Testament (*Philadelphians*, 5). Also, see *Smyrnæans*, 7 and *Philadelphians*, 8. While speaking of the order of the worship service, Justin Martyr (2nd c.) stated that together with the prophets (i.e. Old Testament), the Church read the “memoirs of the apostles,” i.e. the Gospels (*1 Apology*, 67.3). Also, Clement of Alexandria (2nd c.) spoke of the “Law and Prophets” in conjunction with the “Apostles” and the “Gospels” (*Stromata*, 6.11). Tertullian indicates that “the law and the prophets (the Church) unites in one volume with the writings of evangelists and apostles” (*Prescription against heretics*, 36).

¹⁸⁴Bruce, p. 182.

– Gospels and ‘Apostolus’... in all probability with the ‘Apostolus’ still open – open, that is, for genuine Apostolic works that might yet appear.¹⁸⁵

So then, from the very beginning of church history, there existed an informal recognition of certain books that faithfully preserved the apostolic teaching and possessed apostolic authority. The warnings of false teachings, present in the New Testament itself, testifies of an early awareness of true doctrine and its distinction from false teaching, which corresponds to the concept of “canonicity”.¹⁸⁶

This was not, of course, the concept of a “closed canon” that the church of the fourth century embraced. Nonetheless, from the earliest days of Christianity, there existed a “functional canon,” consisting of books that possessed apostolic authority. The “formal” canon, established in the fourth century, did not acknowledge inspired books as much as excluded books unworthy of that status.¹⁸⁷ The canon in the sense of an instrument for acknowledging inspired books existed from the Church’s beginning, yet not in its completed form. Therefore, B. B. Warfield can speak of an “increasing canon” in the Early Church.¹⁸⁸

b. The Use of Non-Canonical Books

One must acknowledge that the works of the Church Fathers contain many citations of non-canonical books. McDonald even relates that the citations from *1 Clement*, the *Pastor of Hermas*, the *Didache*, and the *Epistle of Barnabas* exceed in number the citations from some canonical books.¹⁸⁹

We even encounter some instances when early Christian writers cite passages from non-canonical books as Scripture. Irenaeus, for example, quoted the *Pastor of Hermas*, *Commandment 1*, with the formula “Scripture declared” (*Against heresies*, 4.20.2). Clement of Alexandria spoke of the Gospel of the Hebrews and (together with Origen) of the *Didache* as Scripture.¹⁹⁰ F. F. Bruce informs us that Cyprian once quoted the *Pastor of Hermas* (*Similitudes* 9.31.5) as Scripture.¹⁹¹ Finally, we may note some instances where Church Fathers cited “Scripture,” but the sources of the quotations are unknown (see *1 Clement*, 26, 46; *Barnabas*, 6:10; 7:4; 9:8).

Therefore, although the Early Church held to the concept of a specific set of authoritative books that contained the teaching of Jesus and the apostles, initially there was no universal agreement about the contents of that collection. Only in time, the Church was able to evaluate the quality of those books considered for canonicity, and confirm their actual apostolic origin

c. Further Developments

In Christian literature of the second-third centuries, we witness indications of which books were already considered canonical by the entire Church. From the time of Irenaeus (2nd c.), it was clear that only four Gospels were considered inspired: “It is not possible that the Gospels can be either more or fewer in number than they are. For, since there are four zones of the world in which we live, and four principal winds...”

¹⁸⁵Harnack, p. 208.

¹⁸⁶Dunbar D. G. *The Biblical canon* // Carson D. A., Woodbridge J. D. *Hermeneutics, authority and canon*. – Grand Rapids, MI: Academic Books, 1986. – P. 321-322.

¹⁸⁷For example, in the canon of Athanasius, after an enumeration of the canonical books, we encounter the statement: “Let no man add to these, neither let him take ought from these.” He then discusses the non-canonical books (Athanasius, *Festal letter*, 39).

¹⁸⁸Warfield B. B. *The Works of Benjamin B. Warfield: Vol. 1 - Revelation and inspiration* – New York, NY: Oxford Press, 1932; Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, 2008. – V. 1. – P. 452.

¹⁸⁹McDonald L. M. *Identifying Scripture and canon in the Early Church: The criteria question* // McDonald L. M., Sanders J. A. *The canon debate*. – Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002. – P. 433.

¹⁹⁰Bruce, p. 191, 194; Metzger B. M. *The canon of the New Testament*. – Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987. – P. 132-133.

¹⁹¹Bruce, p. 191, 194.

(*Against heresies*, 3.11.8). Origen also insisted on these four (*Homily on Luke 1*),¹⁹² as did Tertullian (*Against Marcion*, 4.5). Clement of Alexandria repeatedly quoted all four Gospels, and Tatian used these four to compile his harmony of the Gospels (*Diatessaron*).

Moreover, along with the four Gospels, the earliest books to earn canonical status were the epistles of Paul (except for the Epistle to the Hebrews). Early Christian writers copiously cite them. Even in the mid-first century, Peter could speak of “all his (Paul’s) letters” (2 Pet 3:16), which testifies of an already well-known collection of Paul’s writings that both Peter and his readers knew of.¹⁹³ The very oldest collection of all Paul’s epistles (except for the Pastoral Epistles) that we now possess is papyrus 46, copied in the early third century.¹⁹⁴

Additionally, several other works received early recognition by the Early Church: the Acts of the Apostles, 1 Peter and 1 John. Luke’s authorship of the Acts of the Apostles is confirmed by the Muratorian Canon (170 AD), the Anti-Marcionite prologue to Luke (2nd c.),¹⁹⁵ Origen (3rd c.),¹⁹⁶ and the book itself (cf. Luke 1:1-4 with Acts 1:1). Few doubt the apostolic origins of 1 Peter and 1 John.¹⁹⁷ According to McDonald’s research, “There has been a general agreement in the early churches from the third century regarding the authoritative, or scriptural, status of the four Gospels, Acts, Paul’s epistles, 1 Peter and 1 John.”¹⁹⁸ The remaining books experienced a more strenuous journey to canonization, namely Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, 2-3 John, Jude, and Revelation.¹⁹⁹ These works are discussed in more detail in Appendix A.

In the second century, an attempt was made to define a concrete New Testament canon. In the 18th century, the Italian historian Ludovico Antonio Muratori discovered an ancient document listing New Testament books. The document now bears the name the *Muratorian Canon*. It enumerates the following books:

- Gospels of Luke and John (Most likely, the first part of the document, listing the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, is lost. Luke is called the “third Gospel.”)
- Acts of the Apostles
- 13 Epistles of Paul
- General Epistles (Only Jude and 2-3 John are listed. Again, many propose damage to the document with loss of material listing the others.)
- Book of Revelation
- Wisdom of Solomon
- Apocalypse of Peter (with a note, that not all accept it)²⁰⁰

What exactly motivated the Church to establish a canon? Many think that the rise of false teachings in the second century (Marcion, Gnosticism, Montanism) compelled the Church to define the accepted books.²⁰¹ In

¹⁹²Hanson R. P. C. Origen’s doctrine of tradition. – London: SPCK, 1954. – P. 137.

¹⁹³Foster L. The earliest collection of Paul’s epistles // Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society. 1967. 10(1). P. 46; Meyer R. P. Canon of the NT // G. W. Bromiley. The international standard Bible encyclopedia. – Revised ed. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979–1988. – V. 1. – P. 603.

¹⁹⁴Bruce, p. 130. Balla feels that the Pastoral Epistles are absent due to damage to the document (Balla P. Evidence for an early Christian canon (second and third century) // McDonald L. M., Sanders J. A. The canon debate. – Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002. – P. 377.

¹⁹⁵Bruce, p. 154.

¹⁹⁶See Eusebius, *Church history*, 6.25.14.

¹⁹⁷Bruce, p. 259.

¹⁹⁸McDonald L. M., The formation of the Christian Biblical canon, p. 226.

¹⁹⁹Geisler, Nix, p. 298.

²⁰⁰https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muratorian_fragment.

²⁰¹At the same time, the second-century Fathers do not produce a list of authoritative books, which one would expect, if that was their means of refuting false teachings. See Allert C. D. A high view of Scripture. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2007. – P. 90-91, 105.

the third century, for example, Caius of Rome feared that the Montanists were creating a new Scripture (see Eusebius, *Church history*, 6.20.3).

Others feel that persecution of the Church forced it to determine which books were worth dying for. The Roman emperor Diocletian had ordered the destruction of the Christian Scriptures, as Eusebius records: “It was in the nineteenth year of the reign of Diocletian... that royal edicts were published everywhere, commanding that the churches be leveled to the ground and the Scriptures be destroyed by fire” (*Church history*, 8.2.4).

Filson proposes that the early Christians desired to preserve the apostolic teaching, since all the eyewitnesses of Jesus’ life had already passed into eternity. Therefore, they mimicked the Old Testament practice of preserving God’s revelation in written form.²⁰² One must also take into account the appearance in the first-second centuries of the codex, a book form, which allowed all the New Testament books to occupy a single volume.²⁰³

The fourth Christian century witnessed a definite movement to establish a New Testament canon. It is interesting to note that the “canon” of Irenaeus (2nd c.) was compiled not by Irenaeus himself, but by Eusebius (4th c.) from excerpts from Irenaeus’ writings (see *Church history*, 5.8.1-8). In fact, Eusebius’ enumeration is not exhaustive, but includes only the four Gospels, 1 John and Revelation. Nonetheless, according to the Harris’ research, Irenaeus quoted all the New Testament books, except Philemon and 3 John.²⁰⁴

We observe the same phenomenon in the “canon” of Origen, which Eusebius also assembled from the latter’s writings (see *Church history*, 6.15.3-14). The list includes the four Gospels, a reference to the Epistles of Paul in general, 1 Peter, 1 John, and Revelation. Origen expressed doubts about 2 Peter, 2-3 John and Hebrews. Metzger informs us, though, that in his *Homily on Joshua* 7:1, Origen listed all 27 New Testament books, yet Revelation is mentioned only in one Latin copy.²⁰⁵

The fourth century writers were active assembling their own canonical lists as well.²⁰⁶ First for our consideration is the compiler of the “canons” of Irenaeus and Origen – Eusebius of Caesarea (see *Church history*, 3.25.1-7; 3.3.1-6; 2.23.24-25). He accepted as canonical the following: the four Gospels, Acts, the Epistles of Paul, 1 John and 1 Peter. He reports disagreement among the churches about the status of Hebrews and Revelation. Other questionable books included James, Jude, 2 Peter, and 2-3 John. Yet, Eusebius definitely rejected the following: Apocryphal Gospels, Apocryphal Acts, *Pastor of Hermas*, *Apocalypse of Peter*, *Didache*, and *Epistle of Barnabas*.

Concerning Hebrews and Revelation, originally they were each acknowledged by only one part of the universal Church – Revelation in the West, and Hebrews in the East. It is assumed that the Eastern Church hesitated to embrace Revelation due to the Montanist movement, which advanced revelation through prophecy.²⁰⁷ Some also doubted John’s authorship, especially Dionysius of Alexandria, who noted discrepancies in literary style between Revelation and the other works of John.²⁰⁸

The Western Church wavered about endorsing Hebrews due to doubts about Pauline authorship. Tertullian, for example, attributed it to Barnabas (Tertullian, *On Modesty*, 20). On the other hand, the East accepted Paul’s authorship. Clement of Alexandria is an example (see Eusebius, *Church history*, 6.14.2-4). Yet, Origen had his doubts (see *Church history*, 6.15.11-14).

²⁰²Filson, p. 106-108.

²⁰³Hahneman G. F. The Muratorian Fragment and the origins of the New Testament canon // McDonald L. M., Sanders J. A. The canon debate. – Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002. – P. 415; Metzger, The canon of the New Testament, p. 109.

²⁰⁴Harris R. L. What books belong in the canon of scripture? // *Presbyterion* 1981. 7.1. P. 141. Geisler and Nix add that Irenaeus also does not cite James or 2 Peter (Geisler, Nix, p. 295).

²⁰⁵Metzger, The canon of the New Testament, p. 139; Kalin E. R. The New Testament canon of Eusebius // McDonald L. M., Sanders J. A. The canon debate. – Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002. – P. 389.

²⁰⁶Hahneman, p. 413.

²⁰⁷Aland K. Problem of the New Testament canon // *Contemporary studies in theology*. – London: A. R. Mowbray, 1962. – P. 20-21; Metzger, The canon of the New Testament, p. 104-105.

²⁰⁸Grant R. M. Literary criticism and the New Testament canon // *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*. 1982. 5(16). P. 40.

d. The Final Determination of the New Testament Canon

Most notable of the canons produced in the fourth century is Athanasius' 39th Festal Letter (367), where he listed all 27 present New Testament books without additions. Also significant is that in other fourth century lists from the East, we see the same enumeration with the exception of Revelation. It is excluded, for example, by Cyril of Jerusalem (*Catechetical lectures*, 4.36) and Gregory Nazianzen (*Theological verses*, 12). In the West, Jerome, Augustine and Rufinus listed the 27 New Testament books without exclusion.²⁰⁹ Nonetheless, Jerome acknowledged that some congregations disputed certain books, namely James, Jude, 2 Peter, Hebrews, 2-3 John, and Revelation. Augustine advised believers to rely more heavily on books accepted by the majority of congregations, especially the most prominent ones.

At about the time when Athanasius released his canonical list, several local church councils were held, at which a New Testament canon was recognized. The first of these took place in Laodicea in 360, where the present canonical books were included, except for Revelation (due to the hesitancy in the East to recognize it). Subsequent councils at Hippo (393) and Carthage (397 and 417) acknowledged all 27 books.

Although many attribute to these councils the authoritative establishment of the canon, Shedd wisely reminds us, "The New Testament canon was thus collected and adopted by the custom and usage of the churches, not by conciliar action."²¹⁰ Ferguson shares that opinion: "The councils of the church played little part in the canonization of scripture... their voice was a ratification of what had already become the mind of the church."²¹¹

Two final notes. The Roman Catholic Church issued a formal determination of the canon only in the 16th century at the Council of Trent, where they adopted the 27 books acknowledged at Hippo and Carthage.²¹² The Syrian Church often employed Titian's Gospel harmony (*Diatessaron*), and did not recognize the following books until the sixth century: 2 Peter, 2-3 John, Jude and Revelation.²¹³

e. The New Testament Canon in the Reformation Period

After many years of stability regarding the New Testament canon, none other than Martin Luther decided to challenge it. In his translation of the New Testament into German, he enumerated only 23 books. At the end of his translation, he added the following books without enumeration: James, Hebrews, Jude, and Revelation.²¹⁴ In time, though, he became more favorably inclined to the Book of Revelation.²¹⁵ Yet, he felt these four books were not worthy of inclusion with the "proper and certain main books of the New Testament."²¹⁶ His justification for marginalizing them was their presentation of Christ (Christology).²¹⁷ He felt so strongly about this that he stated,

²⁰⁹McDonald L. M. Lists and catalogs of New Testament collections // McDonald L. M., Sanders J. A. The canon debate. – Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002. – P. 591-597; Metzger, The canon of the New Testament, p. 234.

²¹⁰Shedd W. G. T. Dogmatic theology / A. W. Gomes, Ed. – 3rd ed. – Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Pub., 2003. – P. 149. Von Campenhausen agrees (Von Campenhausen, p. 172).

²¹¹Ferguson E. Factors leading to the selection and closure of the New Testament canon: A survey of some recent studies // McDonald L. M., Sanders J. A. The canon debate. – Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002. – P. 320.

²¹²Hoffman T. A. Inspiration, normativeness, canonicity, and the unique sacred character of the Bible // The Catholic Biblical Quarterly. 1982. 44. P. 447-469.

²¹³Bruce, p. 214-215.

²¹⁴Walden W. Luther: the one who shaped the canon // Restoration Quarterly. 2007. 49(1). P. 6.

²¹⁵Bryan C. The canon of Holy Scripture: An Anglican note // Sewanee Theological Review. 2002. 45:2. P. 162.

²¹⁶Aland K., Problem of the New Testament canon, p. 30.

²¹⁷Ridderbos H. N. The authority of the New Testament Scriptures / Trans. H. De Jongste // Kik J. M. Biblical and theological studies series. – Philadelphia, PA: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1963. – P. 4.

Whatever does not teach Christ is not apostolic, even though St. Peter or St. Paul does the teaching. Again, whatever preaches Christ would be apostolic, even if Judas, Annas, Pilate and Herod were doing it.²¹⁸

In addition, Luther considered a main qualification for canonicity to be the book's teaching on justification by faith. He held this position with tenacity, claiming to maintain it "even if you were to produce six hundred (passages of Scripture) in support of the righteousness of works and against the righteousness of faith."²¹⁹

Along with devaluing the above mentioned books, Luther expressed a preference for certain others, thus creating a third and higher "level" of canonicity: Gospel of John, First Epistle of John, First Epistle of Peter, Romans, Galatians, and Ephesians. Luther felt that these works "show you Christ and teach you all that is necessary and salvatory for you to know."²²⁰

Other scholars of Luther's time struggled with the question of canon as well. Contemporaries of Luther, Erasmus and Andreas Karlstadt, expressed doubts about the canonicity of Hebrews, James, 2-3 John, Jude, and 2 Peter.²²¹ One of Luther's primary antagonists, Thomas Cajetan, also challenged the authorship of these books, except for 2 Peter. The reformer Zwingli was hesitant about accepting Revelation, and John Calvin had doubts about the authorship of 2 Peter.²²²

5. Criteria for the Canonization of New Testament Books

Having surveyed the historical process by which the Church adopted the New Testament canon, we now face the issue of whether it correctly determined its contents. Were Luther and the other Reformers correct in challenging the canon? By which criteria can we make this assessment? Do we have in our present New Testament the books that truly belong there?

Traditionally, four cardinal criteria determine the canonicity of New Testament writings: apostolicity, antiquity, orthodoxy and catholicity (universality). We must examine the legitimacy of these criteria and, in light of our conclusions, suggest a delineation of the New Testament canon.

a. Apostolicity (Apostolic Authorship)

The primary criterion by which to judge the canonicity for any potential New Testament book is authorship by an apostle or a close associate. This idea derives from the key role the apostles, appointed by the Lord Himself, played in the preservation and propagation of Christ's life and teaching. We already highlighted their key role earlier in this Chapter. Who is more capable of passing on to us the truth of Christ than the apostles of Christ, authorized by Him, gifted and inspired by the Spirit of God?

Ridderbos objects that establishing the canon on the criterion of apostolic authorship would mean that the faith of the Church rests on historical research, which, in his opinion, weakens confidence in the canon.²²³ What Ridderbos overlooks, however, is that historicity is not a weak point in the defense of Christianity, but a strong, even essential one. The gospel itself, by which we are saved, is based on historical events – on the death of Jesus and His resurrection from the dead.

²¹⁸Metzger, *The canon of the New Testament*, p. 243.

²¹⁹Thomas T. C. *Luther's canon: Christ against Scripture* // *Word & World* 8.2. 1988. P. 142.

²²⁰*Ibid*, c. 149. Also see Metzger, *The canon of the New Testament*, p. 242-243.

²²¹Metzger, *The canon of the New Testament*, p. 240-241.

²²²David P. H. *The Catholic Epistles as a canonical Janus: a New Testament glimpse into Old and New Testament canon formation* // *Bulletin for Biblical Research*. 2009. 19(3). P. 415; Bruce, p. 299-300.

²²³Ridderbos, p. 36.

In Shedd's words, "The canonicity of a book means its right to a place in the collection of inspired writings; and this depends upon the fact that it was composed by an inspired man or under his direction."²²⁴ Here, it is important to note that the apostles' *teaching* is considered authoritative. This means that if a work written in apostolic times by an associate of an apostolic under his direction and with his approval faithfully reflects the apostolic teaching, it could potentially find itself among the canonical books.²²⁵

In connection with apostolic authorship, as was stated earlier, acceptance of the Epistle to the Hebrews in the Early Church depended on the assumption of its apostolic authorship. F. F. Bruce further comments,

The fortunes of the letter to the Hebrews provide a further example of the importance attached to apostolic authority (if not authorship). Those who (like the church at Alexandria) accepted this letter as the work of Paul recognized it without more ado as canonical.... Those who (like the well-informed members of the Roman church) knew that the work was not Paul's, esteemed it highly as an edifying document... but did not accept it as apostolic.²²⁶

The situation with the Book of Revelation parallels that of Hebrews, except that this time the Eastern Church doubted the book's canonicity. In particular, Dionysius of Alexandria expressed doubts about its authorship by the apostle John.²²⁷ Cyril of Jerusalem and Gregory Nazianzen excluded it from their canons. The Eastern Church (with the exception of Athanasius) did not recognize Revelation until the end of the first Christian millennium.²²⁸

We already indicated other books, whose canonicity was originally doubted: James, 2 Peter, 2-3 John, and Jude. Again, one of the reasons for this hesitation was the questionable authorship of these works. For example, Eusebius relates the Early Church's quandary about who wrote the Epistles of James and Jude:

These things are recorded in regard to James, who is said to be the author of the first of the so-called catholic epistles. But it is to be observed that it is disputed; at least, not many of the ancients have mentioned it, as is the case likewise with the epistle that bears the name of Jude, which is also one of the seven so-called catholic epistles. Nevertheless we know that these also, with the rest, have been read publicly in very many churches.²²⁹

Guthrie comments on the possible reasons 2 Peter struggled for recognition. According to Guthrie, Jerome related that in his day some doubted Petrine authorship of the letter due to differences in style from Peter's first epistle. Guthrie also feels that the Early Church may have wavered on works allegedly written by Peter, since some known forgeries were in already circulation, such the *Apocalypse of Peter*.²³⁰ The Second and Third Epistles of John encountered difficulty in that the author calls himself "the Elder." In the second century, Papias mentioned the existence of an "Elder John" in distinction from the apostle John.²³¹

These observations compel us to look into the question of pseudonymity, i.e., authoring a work in the name of another, especially an apostle. Unfortunately, church history is marred by not a few examples of this practice. Some contemporary scholars feel that this practice was permissible in its time, as long as the book's

²²⁴Shedd, p. 146.

²²⁵See Von Campenhausen, p. 254.

²²⁶Bruce, p. 258.

²²⁷See Eusebius, *Church history*, 7.25.7-8.

²²⁸Charlesworth J. H. Writings ostensibly outside the Canon // Evans C. A., Tov E. Exploring the origins of the Bible. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2008. – P. 59. The Eastern Church also objected to Revelation's teaching of a future earthly messianic kingdom (see Bruce, p. 259).

²²⁹Guthrie reports that some objected to Jude's usage of non-canonical books in his epistle (Guthrie D. New Testament introduction. – 4th ed. – Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1996. – P. 902).

²³⁰Guthrie, p. 808-809.

²³¹Ibid, p. 881-882.

contents met the New Testament standard. Often, those who defend this position do so to justify the view of liberal theologians that some recognized New Testament books were indeed pseudonymic, namely the Pastoral Epistles, 2 Peter and others).

However, the Early Church did not share this view. Amphilochius, bishop of Iconium (4th c.), for example, spoke of pseudonymic books as “compositions of demons.”²³² Cyril of Jerusalem insists, “There are the four Gospels only, for the rest have false titles and are mischievous (*Catechetical lectures*, 4.36). In Bruce’s opinion, “It is doubtful if any book would have found a place in the canon if it had been *known* to be pseudonymous.”²³³

We can cite specific instances, where the Early Church rejected pseudonymic works. A certain presbyter from Asia wrote the *Acts of Paul*, claiming to be Paul himself, and was subsequently dismissed from his post (see Tertullian, *On baptism*, 17). Serapion, bishop of Antioch, (190-203), wrote concerning the Gospel of Peter, “For we, brethren, receive both Peter and the other apostles as Christ; but we reject intelligently the writings falsely ascribed to them, knowing that such were not handed down to us” (see Eusebius, *Church history*, 6.12.3). Eusebius relates that in his time, many wavered about the *Pastor of Hermas* due to doubts that the author was really the coworker of Paul by that name (See Rom 16:14; *Church history*, 3.3.6). Eusebius also wrote,

We have felt compelled to give this catalogue in order that we might be able to know both these works and those that are cited by the heretics under the name of the apostles, including, for instance, such books as the Gospels of Peter, of Thomas, of Matthias, or of any others besides them, and the Acts of Andrew and John and the other apostles (*Church history* 3.25.6).

Defenders of pseudonymity in the Early Church appeal to the presence of the practice in Jewish intertestamental books and in Greco-Roman literature. They question why Christian writers would not mimic this style? Schnabel responds, “The device of pseudonymous writings was not as generally accepted as is often assumed: both in the Greek and in the Roman world there was a marked concern for the authenticity of the classical traditions.”²³⁴

Lea directs our attention to Paul’s warning not to receive letters falsely written in his name (2 Thes 2:2).²³⁵ In addition, at times Paul would personally sign his letters to distinguish them from forgeries (1 Cor 16:21; Gal 6:11; 2 Thes 3:17; Col 4:18). Baker adds the thought that if a writing contains false information (pseudonymity), then it cannot be inspired by God.²³⁶

In conclusion, we must make a necessary qualification to our conclusion of the primacy of apostolic authorship for canonization. The fact is that the Church could not always determine with confidence the apostolic authorship of some of the books we now accept as canonical. In addition, some books were in circulation that claimed to have close ties with apostolic figures, such as the *Epistle of Barnabas*, the *Apocalypse of Peter*, and the *Pastor of Hermas*. Therefore, there were cases where secondary, supplemental criteria were brought into play.

b. Antiquity

²³²Adler W. *The Pseudepigrapha in the Early Church* // McDonald L. M., Sanders J. A. *The canon debate*. – Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002. – P. 211.

²³³Bruce, p. 261. Clark adds that some early Christian writers objected to the usage of their names for pseudonymic works: Origen, Jerome, and Dionysius of Corinth (Clark K. D. *The problem of pseudonymity in biblical literature and its implications for canon formation* // McDonald L. M., Sanders J. A. *The canon debate*. – Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002. – P. 457).

²³⁴Schnabel E. *History, theology and the biblical canon: an introduction to basic issues* // Themelios. January 1, 1995. P. 19. Ehrman concurs (Ehrman B. D. *Lost Christianities*. – Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003. – P. 10).

²³⁵Lea T. D. *The early Christian view of pseudepigraphic writings* // *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*. 1984. 27(1). P. 75.

²³⁶Noted in Clark, p. 462.

The first of our “supplemental criteria” is antiquity (date of writing). To consider a writing for canonicity, it must have been written during the life of one of the Twelve Apostles (that is, in the first Christian century), who could verify its fidelity to the gospel. This criterion, then, derives from the criterion of apostolic authorship and is a natural consequence of it.

c. Orthodoxy

Our second supplemental criterion, “orthodoxy,” also derives from our primary criterion – apostolic authorship. If a given book was truly written by an apostle or close associate of one, its teaching would certainly agree with the teachings of other Spirit-led apostles. In the Early Church there existed a standard of apostolic teaching, expressed both by the “rule of faith,” and by already accepted apostolic writings. This enabled the Church to evaluate the quality of books aspiring to canonicity. The criterion of orthodoxy operates on the principle that neither the Early Fathers, nor contemporary conservative scholars allow the claim that the Bible contains contradictions.

In general, the criterion “orthodoxy” is a negative criterion in the sense that it is useful, not so much to approve acceptance of a book, as to justify its rejection. A book that contains true teaching, yet lacks apostolic roots, would nonetheless not qualify for canonicity. Nicole concurs, “Orthodoxy is a purely negative criterion. Nothing that violates it can be viewed as canonical: Orthodoxy is necessary, but it is far from sufficient. Thousands of books have been written that are orthodox but not canonical.”²³⁷

We note an example of this criterion in use by Eusebius in the fourth century. In evaluating spurious works, he writes, “...the character of the style is at variance with apostolic usage, and both the thoughts and the purpose of the things that are related in them are so completely out of accord with true orthodoxy that they clearly show themselves to be the fictions of heretics” (*Church history*, 3.25.7).

d. Catholicity (Usage in the Church)

1) In the Early Church

Catholicity refers to the acceptance a given book by Christian congregations.²³⁸ In the Early Church, this criterion for canonicity grew in popularity over time. We see clear evidence of it in the third century, when Dionysius of Alexandria was ready to recognize the Book of Revelation because of its acceptance by the churches and true prophetic character, even though he doubted its apostolic authorship.²³⁹ Another native Alexandrian, Origen, also highly valued this criterion.²⁴⁰

Tertullian supported the idea of catholicity by claiming that true apostolic teaching is best perceived by those congregations, where the apostles themselves served, “Now, what that was which they preached – in other words, what it was which Christ revealed to them – can, as I must here likewise prescribe, properly be proved in no other way than by those very churches which the apostles founded in person” (*Prescription against heretics*, 21).

We find support in the writings of Irenaeus as well: “Wherefore it is incumbent to obey the presbyters who are in the Church,—those who, as I have shown, possess the succession from the apostles; those who, together with the succession of the episcopate, have received the certain gift of truth” (*Against heresies*, 4.26.2). Similarly, in the fourth century Eusebius spoke of “ecclesiastical tradition” as a criterion for acknowledging a canonical book (*Church history*, 3.25.6).

²³⁷Nicole R. The canon of the New Testament // Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society. 1997. 40(2). P. 201.

²³⁸This principle has its most classic expression in the words of Vincent of Lérins (5th c.), that we must accept that “which has been believed everywhere, always, by all” (Text from wikipedia.org).

²³⁹See Eusebius, *Church history*, 7.25.1-27.

²⁴⁰Aland K., Problem of the New Testament canon, p. 21.

Moreover, in the fifth century, Augustine and Jerome ventured to consider a book canonical even without any confirmation of its apostolic origin.²⁴¹ Augustine voices his support for the superiority of the criterion of catholicity in the following excerpt:

Now, in regard to the canonical Scriptures, he must follow the judgment of the greater number of catholic churches; and among these, of course, a high place must be given to such as have been thought worthy to be the seat of an apostle and to receive epistles (*On Christian doctrine*, 2.8.12).

McDonald theorizes that “catholicity” involved not only references to certain books in the works of early Christian writers, but also the use of these books in congregational worship.²⁴² If churches regularly gave a certain writing a place in the worship service, then it was well on the way to acceptance as canonical.

2) In Liberal Theology

The criterion of catholicity dominates the views of liberal theologians, as well as those of Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox. A representative of liberal theology, James Barr, believes that in church history, the formation of the canon was a gradual process, and that the canon is “a product of the church.”²⁴³ Liberals, however, do not take seriously the evidence presented earlier, that from the very beginning, in its determination of canonicity, the Church valued most of all apostolic authorship. The Church did not rely on its own authority to establish the canon, but on the authority of the apostles.

Brevard Childs advanced another variation of liberal thought. He urged believers to accept the present biblical canon simply because they belong to the Church. The Church is the fellowship of believers, and so it is a natural expression of the believer’s identification with it to accept its canon.²⁴⁴ He writes, “The status of canonicity is not an objectively demonstrable claim but a statement of Christian belief.”²⁴⁵ His approach, however, undermines objectivity in determining the canon. If the canon is determined by people’s preference, then it loses its authority as the Word of God.

3) In Roman Catholicism

In Roman Catholicism, the biblical canon of Old and New Testaments was officially established in the 16th century at the Council of Trent. Catholic author K. McDonnell offers the following resume of the Church’s ability to recognize inspired Scripture (a view shared by Eastern Orthodoxy as well): “The church, as the body of Christ in history commissioned by Christ and empowered by the Spirit, recognizes the apostolic teaching in the documents that come out of her own history, and makes an authoritative determination of what belongs to the canon and what does not.”²⁴⁶

Chapman, however, denies that the Catholic Church holds to a one-sided view on canonization, where the only factor is catholicity. He cites the following from the First Vatican Council:

These books the church holds to be sacred and canonical not because she subsequently approved them by her authority after they had been composed by unaided human skill, nor simply because they

²⁴¹Bruce, p. 227, 232.

²⁴²McDonnell K., p. 19.

²⁴³Barr J. *Holy Scripture: Canon, authority, criticism*. – Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1983. – P. 27.

²⁴⁴Noted in Piper J. *The authority and meaning of the Christian canon: A response to Gerald Sheppard on canon criticism* // *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*. 1976. 19(2). P. 88. Filson concurs (Filson, c. 42). Also see Clark, p. 460

²⁴⁵Childs B. S. *Biblical theology in crisis*. – Philadelphia, PA, Westminster, 1970. – P. 99.

²⁴⁶McDonnell K., p. 9.

contain revelation without error, but because, being written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they have God as their author, and were as such committed to the church.²⁴⁷

Nonetheless, Catholic writer T. Hoffman emphasizes the irreplaceable role that the Church plays in defining canon: “It is the church's decision, and this alone, not some inherent component of inspiration or normativeness, that is the ultimate reason why a book is or is not canonical.”²⁴⁸

So then, although Catholicism recognizes the inspired nature of Scripture, at the same time, it also holds that the Church, in particular, its clergy, possesses an intuitive and exclusive ability to recognize true canonical works and define their proper interpretation. This is a distinguishing mark between Catholic faith and Protestantism.

4) In Eastern Orthodoxy

Eastern Orthodoxy often appeals to Paul’s words that the Church is the “pillar and support of the truth” (1 Tim 3:15b). Does this imply that the Church has the right to determine the biblical canon?

On closer examination, we note that Paul did not claim that the Church is the *source* of truth, but that it is truth’s *pillar and support*. The Greek scholar William Mounce notes that the terms “pillar” and “support” stand without the definite article, which indicates that the Church is not truth’s *exclusive* pillar and support, but one among others.²⁴⁹

We also note that 1 Timothy 3:15b was written by an apostle. Just previous to this passage, Paul writes about his authority over the Church: “I am writing these things to you, hoping to come to you before long; but in case I am delayed, *I write* so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God” (1 Tim 3:14-15a). It follows that if an apostle has authority to determine the status of the Church in relation to God’s truth, then the apostle has greater authority than the Church in doctrinal matters. We, then, must listen to the apostles over the Church.

Finally, it is imperative to understand that the phrase “pillar and support” does not necessarily describe the present condition of the Church, but rather its calling and function. God’s intention is for the Church to faithfully preserve and propagate His truth, similar to His appointing the temple as a “house of prayer” in the Old Testament. Yet, God’s people of that time turned the temple into a “robbers’ den” (Matt 21:13). Therefore, fulfilling the function of being a “pillar and support of the truth” does not happen automatically, but depends on the Church’s response to God’s calling. This is why Paul found it necessary to instruct Timothy as to how he should “conduct himself in the household of God.”

5) Evaluation and Conclusions

Those who prioritize the criterion of apostolic authorship and the secondary criteria of antiquity and orthodoxy look on catholicity from a different perspective. Scaer expresses it well, “Canonicity may be defined as the church's recognition of the apostolic character of certain writings.”²⁵⁰ Catholicity, in fact, is not necessary in cases where apostolic origin is without doubt. It only has a place in the case of books with uncertain authorship.²⁵¹

²⁴⁷Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith, chapter 2; taken from Chapman S. B. The canon debate: what it is and why it matters // Journal of Theological Interpretation. 2010. 4(2). P. 289.

²⁴⁸Hoffman, p. 463.

²⁴⁹Mounce W. D. Pastoral Epistles. – Dallas, TX: Word, Incorporated, 2000. – P. 223.

²⁵⁰Scaer D. P. Apostolicity, inspiration, and canonicity: opinion of the department of Systematic Theology // Concordia Theological Quarterly. 1980. 44(1). P. 48.

²⁵¹Murray also affirms this (Murray R. How did the Church determine the canon of Scripture? // Heythrop Journal. Jan. 1, 1970. P. 121).

We affirm that, in relation to more questionable books, the Church was able to discern the inspired and apostolic character of genuine New Testament works. One can assume that Spirit-filled believers are able, to some degree, to perceive the activity of that same Spirit in inspiring a true canonical book. Knox sees confirmation of this claim in how Paul attributed to prophets in Corinth this perceptive ability: “If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord’s commandment” (1 Cor 14:37).²⁵²

However, we refrain from supporting the Catholic-Orthodox position that the Church or its clergy possess the inherent ability to unerringly define the biblical canon and all its contents. As we have already asserted, the criterion of catholicity is required only when a book’s authorship is in doubt. It does not involve some special mystical ability, given by God to the Church, but is simply the result of the natural spiritual perceptiveness of the people of God in general in recognizing His truth.

So then, a book’s acceptance into the canon depends not on the endorsement of the Church, but on its apostolic connection. The Church’s endorsement only serves as a confirmation of apostolic authorship in cases where that was difficult to substantiate historically.

We may add that the canonical status of more doubtful books can be confirmed not only by the criterion of catholicity, but also by the historical research of competent scholars, who, on the basis of the book’s contents itself, can often unveil the books authorship without an appeal to the criterion of catholicity. A good example of such a resource is *New Testament Introduction* by Donald Guthrie.

e. Conclusions

In summary, we can safely conclude that the most essential and reliable criterion for recognizing the New Testament canon is apostolic authorship. This view derives from the key role that the apostles, authorized by the Lord Himself, played in the preservation and transmission of His life and teaching. As mentioned before, who is more capable of passing on to us the truth of Christ than the apostles of Christ, authorized by Him, gifted and inspired by the Spirit of God? The criteria of antiquity and orthodoxy stem from the criteria of apostolicity and depend upon it. The criterion of catholicity is a supplement criterion in those cases, when apostolic authorship is in question.

In conclusion, it is needful to say a word about the view of John Calvin, who felt that the primary criterion for New Testament canonization was the inner witness of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of believers.²⁵³ He describes his view thus:

Let it therefore be held as fixed, that those who are inwardly taught by the Holy Spirit acquiesce implicitly in Scripture; that Scripture, carrying its own evidence along with it, deigns not to submit to proofs and arguments, but owes the full conviction with which we ought to receive it to the testimony of the Spirit (*Institutes*, 1.7.5).

Although we do not wish to undervalue the role of the Spirit in confirming truth in the hearts of believers, nonetheless, the weakness of this view is clear – subjectivity. Without objective criteria, people tend to lean towards personal opinions, which reflect not so much the work of the Spirit, as much as personal preference.

Although we acknowledge the role of the Spirit in the context of catholicity (see above), at the same time, we refrain from considering catholicity or the witness of the Spirit the *primary* criteria for canonicity. If, on the basis of convincing historical evidence, one is able to demonstrate the apostolic origin of a certain work, then it is worthy of acceptance independent of the subjective experience of an individual. So then, canonicity

²⁵²Knox, p. 14.

²⁵³Metzger and Ridderbos inform us that Calvin also gave place to the historical confirmation of the canon (Metzger, *The canon of the New Testament*, p. 245; Ridderbos, p. 11).

operates, whenever possible, on objective criteria. Yet the Spirit does indeed give subjective confirmation of a proper determination of a truly canonical work.

6. Determination of the New Testament Canon

Having established that apostolic authorship determines canonicity, we recognize as well that not all the New Testament books were written by the Twelve. Only three of their number penned inspired books: Matthew, Peter and John. How should we regard the other New Testament writers, especially Paul, who wrote about half of the New Testament? Paul claimed that he received his commission and his understanding of the gospel directly from the Lord through a vision (Gal 1:11-12). In the strength of his personal revelation and apostolic gifting, Paul considered himself “not in the least inferior to the most eminent apostles” (2 Cor 11:5). As a recipient of divine revelation (Eph 3:3-6), he considered himself one of the foundational apostles of the Church (Eph 2:20).

Unlike the Twelve, though, Paul received his calling through a personal, subjective encounter with Jesus. Can we therefore accept his claims? We resolve this dilemma by appealing to Galatians chapter 2, where Paul records that he submitted his teaching to the apostles in Jerusalem, and they endorsed his teaching and ministry. In addition, Peter spoke of his teachings as Holy Scripture (see 2 Peter 3:15-16). Geisler and Nix add the thought that the miracles Paul performed also confirm his apostolic authority (see 2 Cor 12:12).²⁵⁴

It appears that the authority to write Scripture can extend to those not belonging to the Twelve, in this case, to the apostle Paul. It is important to note that we base this conclusion not only on Paul’s claim to be a teacher of truth, but also on the confirmation that he received from other apostles, who were authorized by the Lord Himself.

In Galatians chapters 1 and 2, we notice another interesting fact: James, the brother of the Lord through Mary, is also called an apostle (Gal 1:19), even one of the “pillars of the Church” (Gal 2:9). Paul later relates that James received a special visitation from the Lord after His resurrection (1 Cor 15:7). In this context, Paul again indicates James’ apostolic status (1 Cor 15:5-7). Therefore, in the strength of his personal encounter with the Lord and acknowledgement by the apostles in Jerusalem and Paul, nothing prevents us from recognizing James, the brother of the Lord, as an inspired author of Holy Scripture.²⁵⁵

What about the other Gospel writers, i.e., Mark and Luke? The Church Fathers repeatedly mention that Mark wrote his gospel under the direction of Peter (see Irenaeus, *Against heresies*, 3.1.1; Tertullian, *Against Marcion*, 4.5, Clement of Alexandria in Eusebius’ *Church history*, 6.14.6-7; 2.15.1-2; and Origen in *Church history*, 6.25.5). Most remarkable is the testimony of Papias, bishop of Hierapolis (early 2nd c.):

This also the presbyter said: “Mark, having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately, though not indeed in order, whatsoever he remembered of the things said or done by Christ. For he neither heard the Lord nor followed him, but afterward, as I said, he followed Peter, who adapted his teaching to the needs of his hearers, but with no intention of giving a connected account of the Lord’s discourses, so that Mark committed no error while he thus wrote some things as he remembered them. For he was careful of one thing, not to omit any of the things which he had heard, and not to state any of them falsely.” These things are related by Papias concerning Mark (Eusebius, *Church history*, 3.39.15-16).

²⁵⁴Geisler, Nix, p. 226.

²⁵⁵Some feel that the writer of the Epistle of James was James the son of Alphaeus, one of the Twelve (see discussion in B Harris R. L., *Inspiration and canonicity*, p. 261-263). Although the evidence is sufficient to confirm the authorship of James, the brother of the Lord, the former view does not nullify our thesis that all New Testament books were written by apostles or their coworkers, but is fully consistent with it.

We can justify Luke's inclusion among inspired writers in the following way. Some Church Fathers stated that, like Peter's supervision of Mark's Gospel, Luke wrote under Paul's direction. Irenaeus wrote, "Luke also, the companion of Paul, recorded in a book the Gospel preached by him" (*Against heresies*, 3.1.1). Eusebius relates Origen's understanding of the question: "And the third by Luke, the Gospel commended by Paul, and composed for Gentile converts" (*Church history*, 6.25.6). In the Muratonian Canon (180 AD) we read: "After the resurrection of Christ Luke, the physician, whom Paul had taken along with him as a legal expert, wrote (the record) down in his own name in accordance with (Paul's) opinion."²⁵⁶ Origen concurs in *Commentary on Matthew*, 6.25, as does Tertullian in *Against Marcion*, 4.5.²⁵⁷

Concerning Jude, most likely he was the brother of James and half-brother of Jesus through Mary (see Mark 6:3). We assume that his close ties with the apostolic circle in Jerusalem confirms that his epistle faithfully represents the apostolic teaching.²⁵⁸ In fact, his epistle is almost a duplicate of the 2nd chapter of Peter's second epistle, which he likely borrowed from. This gives further confirmation that his teaching reflects the apostolic standard of truth. When Jude addresses his audience in the epistle, he styles himself as "a bond-servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James," thus indicating his connection with the apostolic circle.

Jowers feels that Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 9:5 make a close connection between the brothers of the Lord, including Jude, and the apostles: "Do we not have a right to take along a believing wife, even as the rest of the apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas?"²⁵⁹ Finally, both Origen (*de Principiis*, 3.2.1) and Tertullian (*On the Adornment of Women*, 2.1.3) call the epistle writer the "apostle Jude."

In Tertullian's work *Against Marcion*, we discover an interesting claim that the apostles' associates had authority to produce Gospel material. He writes:

We lay it down as our first position, that the evangelical Testament has apostles for its authors, to whom was assigned by the Lord Himself this office of publishing the gospel. Since, however, there are apostolic men also, they are yet not alone, but appear with apostles and after apostles; because the preaching of disciples might be open to the suspicion of an affectation of glory, if there did not accompany it the authority of the masters, which means that of Christ, for it was that which made the apostles their masters. Of the apostles, therefore, John and Matthew first instill faith into us; whilst of apostolic men, Luke and Mark renew it afterwards (*Against Marcion*, 4.2).

It seems strange that only three of the Twelve Apostles wrote New Testament material, and that men outside of that number wrote the majority of the New Testament text. This may be due to the literary ability of the writers. In all likelihood, the earliest disciples of Jesus (with the exception of Matthew) were simple, uneducated men. The bulk of the New Testament was written by Luke and Paul, who were well educated and wrote well.

We may also assume that the First Epistle of Peter, written in excellent Greek, was penned by Silvanus at Peter's dictation (see 1 Pet 5:12). Similarly, the Gospel of Matthew may have been translated into Greek from an Aramaic original.²⁶⁰ From these observations, we may conclude that God, in general, chose competent individuals, who could clearly express His truth in excellent Greek. It is not so important that the Twelve wrote the New Testament themselves, as it is that their testimony and teaching was faithfully preserved.

²⁵⁶Bruce, p. 159.

²⁵⁷Noted in Harris R. L., *Inspiration and canonicity*, p. 252, 256.

²⁵⁸Some feel that the writer of the Epistle of Jude was Judas, the son of James, one of the Twelve (see discussion in Harris R. L., *Inspiration and canonicity*, p. 261-263). Although the evidence is sufficient to confirm the authorship of Jude, the brother of James, the former view does not nullify our thesis that all New Testament books were written by apostles or their coworkers, but is fully consistent with it.

²⁵⁹Jowers, p. 58.

²⁶⁰Papias concurs (see Eusebius, *Church history*, 3.39.16).

Thus, based on the criterion of apostolic authorship, we are able to confirm the New Testament canon of 27 books presently acknowledged by all Christian confessions. Their inclusion is also confirmed by the criterion of antiquity, since they were all composed in the first century, and by the criterion of orthodoxy, since their teachings do not introduce contradictions that cannot be resolved by careful exegetical work. For a detailed discussion of the more disputed books, both canonical and non-canonical, and to what degree they meet the criteria for canonization, see Appendix A.

B. The Canon's Completeness

1. Is the Canon Closed?

For hundreds of years, the Scriptures stand unchanged and unchallenged, with the exception of debates that still continue about the status of the Apocrypha in the Old Testament. Yet, the question arises, "Can we still add books to the canonical list, or remove books already in that number?"

Some feel that in light of the concept of "progressive revelation," we may yet allow an open canon. "Progressive revelation" means that in the course of biblical history, God progressively reveals His truth to His people. Some ask, "Why must this process end?" and, "Why can there be no new biblical revelation?" This view, however, undervalues the key role that apostles play in formation of the canon. The Bible speaks of them as the foundation of the Church (Eph 2:20; Rev 21:14). Biblical revelation is not given to all, but only to authorized to receive it – the apostles. In our day, we lack such individuals.

The famous German theologian, Karl Barth, favored an open canon for the following reason. In the past, God always gave His revelation to imperfect people. So, why can He not continue to do so today?²⁶¹ On the other hand, those who embrace the doctrine of the full inspiration of Scripture do not share Barth's opinion that the Scripture writers' perception of God's revelation was faulty.

Filson asserts, "It is the living Church... that in each generation must make the decision to keep or change the canon."²⁶² On the one hand, Filson correctly states that canonization rests on specific criteria, and therefore we cannot totally exclude the possibility that previous generations of believers may have erred in their determinations. This is why we include an evaluation of disputed books in Appendix A. On the other hand, Brunner comments, "We cannot lightly ignore the canonical decisions of the Early Church," and feels that we would likely come to the same conclusions.²⁶³ In support of the present canon, others appeal to the stability of the New Testament canon over time.²⁶⁴ Metzger adds the thought that those who wish to change the canon must examine their motives for doing so.²⁶⁵

Smith claims that the contemporary Church has the right not so much to reexamine the canonicity of any particular book, as to reexamine the *criteria* of canonicity, which may lead, of course, to an alteration in its contents.²⁶⁶ One cannot object that the choice of canonical books should be based on the best, most reliable criteria. For that very reason, we gave detailed treatment to the accepted criteria for canonicity in this chapter and found them adequate.

A theoretical problem arises if we were to discover another genuine apostolic writing. Would we include it in the canon of Scripture? It is true that a previously undiscovered apostolic writing would indeed meet the criteria for canonicity discussed above. On the other hand, Ridderbos makes the fair point that the canon is the

²⁶¹Noted in Shore M. H. The canon: open or closed? Open: a living witness // Word & World. 2009. 29(4). P. 420.

²⁶²Filson, c. 134. Similar view in Brunner E. Revelation and reason. – Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1946. – P. 131, and Brueggemann D. A. Brevard Childs' canon criticism: An example of post-critical naiveté // Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society. 1989. 32(3). P. 315.

²⁶³Brunner, p. 132.

²⁶⁴Dunbar, p. 359.

²⁶⁵Metzger, The canon of the New Testament, p. 273-274.

²⁶⁶Smith T. C. Canon & authority of the Bible // Perspectives in Religious Studies. 1974. 1(1). P. 52-53.

foundation of Christian faith. It follows that “...sooner or later the limits of this would be established and the canon would be closed.”²⁶⁷ It is unwise to unearth a foundation already laid. For the Church to be properly built, God would certainly have laid the foundation at the beginning of church history. Geisler and Nix add the thought, “It seems highly unlikely that God would have inspired a book He did not preserve.”²⁶⁸

Finally, in regard to the closing of the canon, we must touch on Revelation 22:18-19: “I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book.” Although these verses are located in the last chapter of the last biblical book, and although God, in his foreknowledge, knew that these verses would be at the end, formally, they apply only to the Book of Revelation.

2. Is There Unity in the Canon?

Theologians and serious students of the Bible have long noted that within the biblical canon we encounter not only variations in genre, expressing God’s truth, but also various perspectives, from which the biblical authors write. In other words, the unified Judeo-Christian faith embraces variety in its expression, depending on the given author. Consequently, we often hear expressions like the “theology of John,” the “theology of Isaiah,” the “theology of Luke,” etc. In the words of Barr, “It is, I think, now agreed among most biblical theologians that there is a plurality of theologies within the Bible.”²⁶⁹

How does this observation affect our understanding of the biblical canon? In the presence of such variety, can we still speak of unity? Brevard Childs presents us with an example of an extreme view. He feels that the canon “did not attempt a final formulation of its message” or establish “one doctrinal position.” Instead, “The canon provides for innumerable fresh combinations of its witness.”²⁷⁰ Käsemann even feels that the New Testament contains “irreconcilable theological contradictions.”²⁷¹

Those who hold to the full inspiration of Scripture, however, believe that behind the human writers of Scripture stands the Holy Spirit, who inspired them all. Therefore, there is an inherent unity in Scripture. In fact, the canon can only exist because of its inherent unity. Its existence implies that all the books it contains are in sufficient agreement to make up a whole. We also recall that one of the criteria for canonicity is orthodoxy, which means that all canonical books agree doctrinally.²⁷²

If the Bible contains both unity and diversity, then how are we to understand the relationship between them? Although we must insist on the overall unity of canon, in the practical application of God’s truth, we may allow variety. Miles writes, “The diversity of Scripture not only affords us a richer and more nuanced picture of God, it also honors and addresses the complex reality of the people of God.”²⁷³

Beeby comments that various voices in Scripture “can speak to all sorts and conditions of men and women in all sorts and conditions of human joy and anguish. At times we must hear one voice more than others.”²⁷⁴ Metzger concurs that at various times various sections of Scripture may be more relevant to some.²⁷⁵ Sanders adds that variety in the biblical text brings balance to the Christian life. Some biblical principles provide a

²⁶⁷Ridderbos, p. 47.

²⁶⁸Geisler, Nix, p. 217.

²⁶⁹Barr J. Unity within the canon or after the canon // Helmer C., Landmesser C. One Scripture or many? Canon from biblical, theological, and philosophical perspectives. – Oxford: Oxford Press, 2004. – P. 152.

²⁷⁰Childs B. S. The New Testament as canon: An introduction. – Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1984. – P. 29-31.

²⁷¹Käsemann E. Essays on New Testament themes / Trans. W. J. Montague // Studies in Biblical theology. – Naperville, IL: Alec R. Allenson, Inc., 1964. – P. 100.

²⁷²Noted in Schnabel, p. 19-20.

²⁷³Miles C. A. A canon within the canon?: No: proclaim the whole counsel of God // Word & World. 2006. 26(4). P. 439.

²⁷⁴Beeby H. D. No loose canon // International review of mission. 2000. 89(355). P. 579-580. Also, see Filson, p. 133.

²⁷⁵Metzger, The canon of the New Testament, p. 279.

balance for others.²⁷⁶ At the same time, Metzger reminds us that the canon limits that variety. It is not permissible to believe anything at all or do anything at all.²⁷⁷

3. Is There a Canon within the Canon?

In the previous section, we discussed the relationship of unity and variety in the biblical canon. The search for a unifying factor, though, can lead to the formation of what has been called a “canon within the canon.” This means that some biblical books or Scriptural principles may take priority over others. The result, then, is that some biblical books are interpreted in the light of these key books or key principles.

Throughout the history of the Church, we witness many attempts to form this “canon within a canon.” Dunn even asserts, “*All Christians have operated with a canon within the canon.*”²⁷⁸ He continues, “All Christians operate on the principle of interpreting the unclear passages by means of the clear; but, of course, a passage which gives a clear meaning to one is precisely the unclear passage for another, and vice-versa.”²⁷⁹ Dunn gives the following examples.²⁸⁰ For Catholics, the central passage is Matthew 16:17-19. For Protestants – the early epistles of Paul. For Eastern Orthodox – the writings of John. For Pentecostals – the Book of Acts. For some liberals – either the historical Jesus, or the kerygma of the Church.

Some object to this practice. They fear that creating a canon within the canon will lead to its formation by personal preference.²⁸¹ It creates a “one-sided gospel.”²⁸² Miles summons us to preach “the whole purpose of God” (Acts 20:27).²⁸³ Kurt Aland calls us to include the whole Bible witness in our theology: “This road will be long and laborious and painful. But it must be trodden if the present situation is to be overcome.”²⁸⁴

Taking this counsel into consideration, it nonetheless seems appropriate, in the search for a unifying principle, to respect the historical nature of the question. Earlier we addressed the issue of “progressive revelation,” which means that God progressively reveals His truth to His people in the context of canonical history. Without question, the New Testament presents a more advanced understanding of God’s plan than the Old Testament does. This does not nullify the importance and significance of the Old Covenant, but nonetheless, one must admit the historical development between them in resolving any apparent conflict between the Testaments.

Moreover, some are willing to admit theological development between the Gospels and the Epistles. We note that Jesus ministered in the context of the Old Testament. At that time, He had not yet accomplished His redemptive mission. He informed His disciples, “I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear {them} now. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth” (Jn 16:12-13), and only after His resurrection, “He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures” (Lk 24:45). Again, we do not minimize the role of the Gospels in the unfolding of God’s plan; nevertheless, we also take into account the aspect of “progressive revelation.”

Kline comments on this point, “Although the New Testament canon is the currently normative canon for the church, it contains in the Gospels certain directives for the company of Jesus’ disciples which were applicable only within the old covenant order.”²⁸⁵

²⁷⁶Sanders J. A. Canon and community: A guide to canonical criticism // Tucker G. M. Guides to biblical scholarship. – Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1984. – P. 46-47. Also, see Harnack, p. 159-160.

²⁷⁷Metzger, The canon of the New Testament, p. 282.

²⁷⁸Dunn J. D. G. Unity and diversity in the New Testament. – Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1979. – P. 374.

²⁷⁹Ibid, p. 375.

²⁸⁰Ibid.

²⁸¹Scullion J. Actualization, inspiration, canonicity // New Theology Review. 2002. 15(1). P. 437; Gnuse R. The authority of the Bible. – New York: Paulist Press, 1985. – P. 91.

²⁸²Metzger, The canon of the New Testament, p. 279.

²⁸³Miles, p. 437. Also, see Keck L. E. Scripture and canon // Quarterly Review. January 1, 1983. P. 17-18.

²⁸⁴Aland K., Problem of the New Testament canon, p. 32.

²⁸⁵Kline M. G. Canon and covenant: Part III // Westminster Theological Journal. 1970. 33(1). P. 70.

An even more controversial topic is the suggestion that theological development occurs within the Epistles of the Apostles. Were some of the New Testament authors more “advanced” in their understanding of God’s plan than others were? Upon reading the New Testament text, one receives that impression.

In the Book of Acts and the Epistle to the Galatians, for example, we observe some tension between the apostles in Jerusalem and the apostle Paul. Although the apostles in Jerusalem fully endorsed Paul’s teaching and ministry, at the same time, they speak of his gospel as the “gospel to the uncircumcised,” and of their own gospel as the “gospel to the circumcised” (Gal 2:7-9). It seems that the “gospel to the circumcised” contained elements deemed unnecessary for the Gentiles. This becomes clear in the decree of the Jerusalem Council, which designates a special order for Gentile believers (see Acts 15:19-20).

It seems, though, that Paul was not comfortable with this distinction between believers, since he taught that Christ “made both {groups into} one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall” (Eph 2:14). Therefore, when Peter, Barnabas and other Jewish believers, at the “coming of certain men from James,” distanced themselves from Gentile believers in Antioch, “fearing the party of the circumcision,” Paul rebuked Peter publicly, because “they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel” (Gal 2:12-14).

In addition, when Paul came to Jerusalem, James and the elders feared the reaction of the believing Jews, since they were “zealous for the Law” (Acts 21:20). Therefore, it does not surprise us to see in James’ epistle an emphasis on good works and personal righteousness. Although we affirm that James’ theology is correct, nonetheless, Paul’s theology certainly presents us with a more thoroughgoing apprehension of God’s plan. Guthrie comments on James,

His outlook was correspondingly limited. The full freedom of the gospel had not yet reached him. He lived in an age of transition. It is not surprising, therefore, to find him the author of an epistle in which many of the cardinal Christian doctrines are not mentioned.²⁸⁶

Nonetheless, as is often mentioned, the Epistle of James introduces a healthy balance in the relationship of faith and works when he writes, “I will show you my faith by my works” (Jam 2:18). With this qualification, Paul would heartily agree. He himself spoke of “faith working through love” (Gal 5:6).

Therefore, although we hesitate to suggest a “canon within the canon,” it seems advisable to assert that the most fruitful guiding principle in examining the canon as a whole and for resolving any apparent conflicts within it is the principle of “progressive revelation.” According to that principle, we look at the canon as a gradual assimilation of God’s revelation by the biblical writers over time, but without contradiction between them.

C. Conclusions

In summarizing our investigation of the biblical canon, we recall the wise words of Harris, which contain the key to our solution of the canon debate: “The Lord Jesus did not, in prophecy, give us a list of the twenty-seven New Testament books. He did, however, give us a list of the inspired authors.”²⁸⁷

Concerning the Old Testament, the Lord Jesus did indeed “give us a list” of Old Testament books – the 24 books of the Hebrew canon, which both He and His apostles considered God’s inspired Word. In the case of the New Testament, the Lord gave us “a list of the inspired authors.” All genuine canonical New Testament books must be connected with the ministry of the Twelve Apostles or their close associates. Geisler and Nix echo this thought:

²⁸⁶Guthrie, p. 732.

²⁸⁷Harris R. L. Inspiration and canonicity, p. 234.

In a real sense, Christ is the key to the inspiration and canonization of the Scriptures. It was He who confirmed the inspiration of the Hebrew canon of the Old Testament; and it was He who promised that the Holy Spirit would direct the apostles into all truth.²⁸⁸

Unfortunately, in regard to the Old Testament, certain Church Fathers did not take Jesus' example seriously, but freely used apocryphal and pseudepigraphical works, some of which eventually found their way into the canon endorsed by the Church. Only through the Reformation did the Church succeed in restoring the true Old Testament canon.

Concerning the New Testament, by means of the primary criterion of apostolic authorship and the secondary criteria of antiquity, orthodoxy and catholicity, the Church successfully discovered and confirmed the New Testament canon. Yet even here, some early Christian writers deviated from the norm. In the fifth century, Jerome and Augustine substituted catholicity for apostolic authorship as the primary criterion for canonicity.

The existence of the canon is very valuable for the Church. From it, the Church draws its doctrine and even its self-definition. It enables the Church to recognize false teachings and practices and, thereby, prevent the distortion of Christian faith.²⁸⁹ Without the canon, the Church could not fulfill its mission. Believers must know exactly what to preach to the world and teach in the congregations. God's people know these things by appealing to the biblical canon. The canon gives the Church guidance not only for its missions, but also for proper behavior and church order.

If God's people are directed by a written standard, i.e., the canon, no individual can dominate them, since every member, leaders included, must submit to the "constitution" of the Church – the canon of Holy Scripture.²⁹⁰

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²⁸⁸Geisler, Nix, p. 207.

²⁸⁹Harnack concurs (Harnack, p. 138-139).

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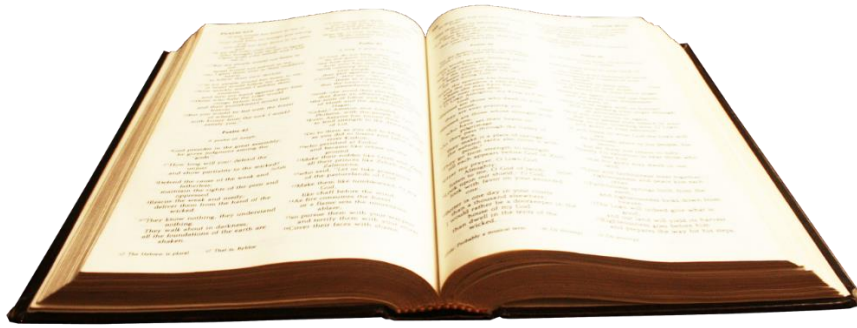


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## II. The Nature of Scripture

### Chapter 4: It's Greek to Me – The Original Autographs

God gave His revelation to the biblical writers, who preserved it in written form. Nonetheless, in the course of time, the original documents, or “autographs,” produced by the biblical writers, have perished. All that remain are multiple copies of these originals.

This presents a dilemma for interpreters of the Bible, since the ancient copies of both Old and New Testaments differ from one another, at least in details. Which of these copies is the most accurate and reliable? Can we know for certain what God had at one time revealed? Are we able with the aid of these copies to restore the original biblical books? In order to resolve this dilemma, the discipline of “textual criticism” arose. We define textual criticism as the analysis of ancient Hebrew and Greek texts with the goal of rediscovering the originals, penned by the biblical authors.

On the one hand, the importance of this science is obvious. If we desire to accurately interpret a biblical passage, we must know what words the text actually contains. On the other hand, textual variants usually have little effect on doctrinal questions, since the variants do not usually concern important doctrinal points, but rather more minor details in the text. In addition, we never base a doctrine on a single (possibly errant) passage of Scripture, but compare multiple passages in its determination. So then, we can use nearly any ancient biblical text without seriously compromising the essentials of Christian faith.

How then, can we attempt restoring the original autographs? There are two components to this analysis. First, we must determine which copies of the originals are, in general, most reliable. The process of evaluating the quality of biblical manuscripts is called the “external criterion.” Second, we can often identify the correct textual variant by comparing the existing variants with one another. This is the “internal criterion.” Our plan in this chapter is to employ this two-stage approach toward the solution of the text-critical question.

#### A. Textual Criticism of the Old Testament<sup>291</sup>

##### 1. External Criterion

In order to evaluate textual variants by means of the external criterion, one must first know which manuscripts are available for study. Then, one must evaluate the quality of these manuscripts according to certain principles.

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<sup>291</sup>A valuable resource in composing this chapter was Emanuel Tov's *Textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible*. – Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1992.



## a. Existing Manuscripts of the Old Testament

What kind of copies of the Old Testament are actually available to us for evaluation? There exists both manuscripts written in Hebrew, and ancient translations in various languages. In this section, instead of the conventional term “Old Testament,” we will employ the Jewish designation “Tanakh.” This term is an abbreviation for the three components of the Hebrew canon: Law (*Torah*), Prophets (*Nevi'im*), and Writings (*Ketuvim*).

### 1) Ancient Hebrew Manuscripts

#### Masoretic Text

The most well-known source for the restoration of the original autographs of the Tanakh is the Masoretic Text (henceforth abbreviated “MT”). It was written in Hebrew, although some passages are in a related Near Eastern tongue – Aramaic.<sup>292</sup> Yet, even when the language is Hebrew, the text was written in Aramaic (square) script. This is due to the fact that during the Babylonian exile, the native tongue of the Jews changed from Hebrew to Aramaic, the latter being the conventional language of the other Near Eastern peoples.<sup>293</sup> Eventually, the biblical text was correspondingly changed from the original “Paleo-Hebrew” script to the square, Aramaic figures, likely in the period from the fourth to the second centuries BC.<sup>294</sup> The Hebrew spelling and grammar was preserved, only the script changed. Nonetheless, occasionally the personal name of God, Yahweh (יהוה), is still encountered in Paleo-Hebrew. So then, most of the MT is in the Hebrew language, yet written in Aramaic script.

Where did the designation “Masoretic” originate? The Masoretes were a group of Hebrew scribes, who labored from 500 BC to approximately 1000 AD.<sup>295</sup> They are famous for their scrupulous attention to careful reproduction of the biblical text. They strictly refrained from altering the text. If they felt that the text they were coping was in error, they made no change in the text itself, but wrote corrections between the lines or in the margins. They employed a special system to indicate corrections to the text called “*qere-ketiv*.” *Ketiv*, which means “written,” indicates the literal reading of the text being copied. *Qere*, which means “read,” is the correction found in the margin. So then, in the places where the Masoretes made corrections, the reader should not read the *ketiv* variant, but the *qere* version.<sup>296</sup>

Another method for introducing corrections was the use of elevated letters. If the scribe felt that a certain word was missing, he would insert the letter slightly elevated from the other letters. We note an interesting example in Judges 18:30, where an inserted, elevated “n” in the consonantal text for “Moses” (מֹשֶׁה) changed the reading to “Manasseh” (מְנַשֶּׁה).<sup>297</sup> The “elevated letter” was used for other purposes as well. In Psalm 80:13, an elevated letter marks the median letter in the entire Psalter, and in Leviticus 11:42 – the median letter in the entire Torah.<sup>298</sup> A special mark in Leviticus 10:16 indicates the median word in the Torah. Clearly, the Masoretes were highly concerned with minor details in the text.

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<sup>292</sup>Jer 10:11; Ezra 4:8-6:18; 7:12-26; Dan 2:4b-7:28

<sup>293</sup>According to an unlikely rabbinic legend, God gave the square figures to Moses on Sinai, but Israel changed them, and these figures were restored during the time of Ezra (see Würthwein E. The text of the Old Testament – 2nd ed. / Trans. Rhodes E. F. – Grand Rapids, MI : Eerdmans, 1995. – P. 2).

<sup>294</sup>Würthwein, p. 3. When Jesus spoke in Matthew 5:18 of the letter *yod*, this demonstrates the use of the square, Aramaic figures in the first century AD (Brotzman E. R. Old Testament textual criticism. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1994. – P. 38).

<sup>295</sup>Brotzman, p. 49.

<sup>296</sup>Würthwein, p. 16-17.

<sup>297</sup>Ibid.

<sup>298</sup>Ibid, p. 19.

The designation “Masoretic Text” refers to a large group of documents (about 6000), whose contents are nearly identical, and which have been endorsed by the Jewish community for many generations. The oldest complete copy of the Tanakh made by the Masoretes comes from the tenth century. It is thought that about that time, one text type was chosen as a standard, and the other variants were destroyed.<sup>299</sup> This means that the nearly 6000 Masoretic manuscripts originate from a single, standard text type, chosen in the tenth century. This is why their contents are nearly identical, and why we can speak of the entire group as one “Masoretic Text.”

The most widely accepted representatives of the MT are the Aleppo Codex and the Leningrad Codex, both of which date from the tenth to the eleventh centuries AD.<sup>300</sup> Both texts are part of the Ben-Asher tradition, named after the most respected of the Masoretes – Aaron ben Asher.<sup>301</sup> For many years, rabbinic scholars used the Leningrad Codex as the standard, since the Aleppo Codex, which had been the standard in the Middle Ages, had been lost. In 1958, however, the manuscript was rediscovered, but the Torah and part of the Writings were missing.<sup>302</sup> A project is now underway at the Jerusalem University to create a new standard Hebrew text, based on both the Aleppo and Leningrad Codices.<sup>303</sup> Besides the Aleppo and Leningrad Codices, other Hebrew versions are employed for comparison, but carry less weight than the former two in deciding between textual variants.

Let us look further at the work of the Masoretes. They divided the text into words, inserting spaces between them.<sup>304</sup> Before that time, the entire text was written without spaces, and the rabbis memorized the word divisions. The division of the text into verses preceded the work of the Masoretes (2nd-5th c. AD), and the numeration of verses and chapters followed (14th-16th c. AD).<sup>305</sup> Furthermore, prior to the Masoretes, the text contained only consonants, and the rabbis memorized the pronunciation. In the eighth century, the Masoretes added vowels to the text in the form of dots and dashes below or above the consonants. The Masoretes also added indicators for division of the text into paragraphs, as well as accent marks for intonation. Finally, they created para-textual apparatuses, called *Massorah*, for cataloging other details in the text.<sup>306</sup>

### Dead Sea Scrolls

Another highly valuable resource for restoring the original Hebrew autographs is the Dead Sea Scrolls. Among this collection are documents written in Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, and even Paleo-Hebrew. The Dead Sea Scrolls are much more ancient than the Masoretic manuscripts, having been written about 200 years before Christ. They were prepared by a Jewish religious community at Qumran in the Wilderness of Judea. It is highly likely that this community belonged to the Jewish sect of “Essenes,” who separated themselves from other Jews, considering themselves more holy and spiritual than others.

The Qumran community faithfully preserved the text of the Tanakh. Unlike the writers of the Samaritan Pentateuch, which we will discuss later, the Qumran community did not introduce into the text their own unique doctrines. Upon discovering the Qumran texts, scholars were amazed that many of the documents were nearly identical to the MT, which speaks both to the quality of the Masoretes’ work, and to the reliability of the Hebrew text transmitted from antiquity.<sup>307</sup>

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<sup>299</sup>Ibid, p. 11.

<sup>300</sup>The Leningrad Codex is located in St. Petersburg, Russia. It is designated by the letter L.

<sup>301</sup>Würthwein, p. 36-37.

<sup>302</sup>Brotzman, c. 60; Würthwein, c. 36; [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aleppo\\_Codex](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aleppo_Codex)

<sup>303</sup>[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hebrew\\_University\\_Bible\\_Project](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hebrew_University_Bible_Project)

<sup>304</sup>At the same time, Brotzman claims that in some Qumran documents, spaces between words are present, which challenges the idea that there were no such cases before the Masoretes (Brotzman, p. 40-41).

<sup>305</sup>Brotzman, p. 45; Würthwein, p. 21.

<sup>306</sup>Tov, p. 72ff.

<sup>307</sup>Gleason Archer claims that the two Isaiah scrolls found at Qumran correspond to the Masoretic Text by ninety-five percent. The remaining differences are generally matters of variant spellings and miscopying (Archer G. A survey of Old Testament introduction, p.

The community at Qumran not only copied texts, but also gathered various texts from other parts of Palestine. Thus, the Qumran collections includes material from numerous books, both canonical and non-canonical. Two hundred documents contain biblical texts, but most are just fragments, except for one entire copy of the Book of Isaiah. Also interesting is that the Qumran collection contains all the books of the Tanakh, except Esther. The non-canonical books include apocalyptic, pseudepigraphical, and sectarian books, the latter devoted to the unique teachings of the Qumran community. Finally, we note some commentaries on biblical books, namely on Isaiah, Habakkuk, and Nahum.<sup>308</sup>

The text types found at Qumran break down as follows. Forty percent correspond to the present MT and are called proto-Masoretic manuscripts.<sup>309</sup> The MT is a continuation of this line. The entire copy of Isaiah, found in cave 1, is a proto-Masoretic document.<sup>310</sup> Only five percent of the Qumran collection correspond to the Samaritan Pentateuch or the Septuagint.<sup>311</sup> The remaining biblical manuscripts are unique to Qumran. It seems that Qumran produced its own text type, distinct from the more traditional textual traditions.

Let us recap the fascinating history of the Qumran discovery. The community is located about 30 kilometers from Jerusalem on the banks of the Dead Sea. Rising behind the Qumran settlement are high cliffs with many caves, in which the documents were found.

The first discovery, in cave 1, was made in 1947 by Muhammed edh-Dhib, his cousin Jum'a Muhammed, and Khalil Musa.<sup>312</sup> While shepherding sheep, one of the above individuals tossed a rock into cave 1 and heard something breaking inside. Entering the cave, they discovered vessels containing seven documents, including the entire Isaiah scroll. The vessels in the caves resembled others found later in excavation of Qumran, which confirmed the origin of the manuscripts. The excavations also revealed a scriptorium at Qumran, where the documents were produced.

The youths sold three scrolls to a merchant in Bethlehem, who, in turn, sold them to Eleazar Sukenik of the Jerusalem University: the so-called Second Isaiah Scroll, fragment of a hymnbook, and the War Scroll, which predicts a future war between the sons of light and darkness. The remaining four books they sold to a different merchant, who sold them, in turn, to a local Orthodox priest: the First Isaiah Scroll, Genesis Apocryphon, relating fictional stories of biblical heroes, the Community Rule, and a Commentary on Habakkuk. The priest advertised these documents in the Wall Street Journal, where Sukenik's son noticed it, and these scrolls were subsequently obtained for the Jerusalem University as well. All seven scrolls from the original cave 1 discovery are now kept at the "Shrine of the Book" in Jerusalem.

After the initial discovery, archeologists continued the search for more manuscripts and were richly rewarded. In cave 4 alone, they found 15,000 fragments from more than 580 scrolls. Cave 11 yielded a scroll describing how to rebuild the Jerusalem temple. Other documents gave additional history to the narrative in 1 Samuel 11, instructions on finding treasure in Palestine, additional commandments and laws, and documents with references to a "pierced Messiah" and the "Son of God."

### Samaritan Pentateuch

The third classification of Hebrew manuscripts are those containing the Samaritan Pentateuch (henceforth abbreviated "SP"), done by the inhabitants of Samaria. Since the Samaritans recognize only the Torah as the Word of God, they preserved and copied only that section of the Tanakh. They created their version of the Torah in the second century BC, and the oldest copy still in existence comes from the 10th-12th century AD.

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19, from Henry, C. F. H. God, revelation, and authority. – Waco, TX: Word Books, 1976-1983; Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1999. – V. 4. – P. 247.

<sup>308</sup>Brotzman, p. 92.

<sup>309</sup>Brotzman says 60% (Ibid, p. 94).

<sup>310</sup>Würthwein, p. 33.

<sup>311</sup>Brotzman, p. 94

<sup>312</sup>Dead Sea Scrolls - Wikipedia.

The work is in Hebrew, and the text is consonantal, i.e., without vowels. Some copies are in the Paleo-Hebrew script. Translations exist in Arabic, Aramaic and Greek.<sup>313</sup> The SP differs from the MT in many instances, but most of them concern only variations in spelling. More significant are those places where the SP and the Septuagint agree against the reading in the MT, but for the most part, these also concern mainly differences in spelling.<sup>314</sup>

On the other hand, the SP does contain instances where the text was obviously altered in order to support the unique doctrinal views of the Samaritans. For example, the Samaritans believe that God visited Israel not on Mount Sinai, but on Mount Gerizim, and they consequently established the latter as the proper place of worship. Therefore, in Exodus chp. 20, Deuteronomy chp. 5, and Deuteronomy 27:4, “Gerizim” replaces the word “Sinai.”<sup>315</sup> In addition, in the Book of Deuteronomy, the “place which He will choose” is identified as Mount Gerizim.

## 2) Ancient Translations

Before entering a discussion of various ancient translations of the Tanakh, we must note that the use of translations for reconstructing the original Hebrew text is complicated by the fact that we cannot precisely determine which words stood behind the translation in the Hebrew text. Even if the translations were made from a Hebrew text more accurate than the ones we possess today, we still face the issue of how to read the translation back into the original Hebrew.

### Septuagint

The most well-known and significant ancient translation of the Tanakh is its primary Greek translation – the Septuagint (henceforth abbreviated LXX). Disagreements exist about how this translation came about. According to a legendary account found in the non-canonical book *The Letter of Aristeas*, the King of Egypt invited 72 Jewish translators to create a quality Greek translation of the Tanakh for his library. The 72 translators allegedly worked independently, but all produced the exact same translation. Against this legend is the fact that we observe in different parts of the LXX different literary styles, which indicates the involvement of several translators for a single text.<sup>316</sup> Others postulate that the LXX is an amalgamation of several already existing translations. Still others are ready to accept that the LXX was produced at one time, but not according to the legend of Aristeas.

The LXX was produced in the third century BC, starting with the Torah. Fragments still exist from the second century BC (15 verses from Deuteronomy).<sup>317</sup> The library of Chester Beatty (in Dublin, Ireland) is famous for ancient copies of the LXX on papyrus, including the only copy of the Book of Daniel that does not derive from the translation of Theodotion (see below). The oldest complete copies of the LXX date from the 4th-5th centuries AD: Codex Vaticanus, Codex Sinaiticus, and Codex Alexandrinus.

One important feature of the LXX, which we discussed in Chapter 2, is the presence of apocryphal books.<sup>318</sup> Additionally, the order of books in the LXX differs from the Hebrew Bible, and most Bible translations, including the English, follow the LXX order.<sup>319</sup>

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<sup>313</sup>Brotzman, p. 66.

<sup>314</sup>Ibid, p. 67

<sup>315</sup>Ibid, p. 68.

<sup>316</sup>Würthwein, p. 53.

<sup>317</sup>Ibid, p. 71.

<sup>318</sup>It is very possible that the Early Church introduced them into the LXX. See the discussion of this point in our discussion of the canon of Scripture.

<sup>319</sup>It is thought that the LXX divides the books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles in two because these books in Greek could not fit on a single scroll (Brotzman, p. 39-40).

In comparing the LXX with the MT, we note a close correspondence between them in the translation of the Torah. Some books, however, demonstrate a more freehand style: Job, Daniel, Proverbs, and Isaiah. Moreover, the LXX versions of Job and Jeremiah are much shorter than in the MT. In light of the findings at Qumran, we now understand that the LXX translators used a different Hebrew text than the Masoretes did.<sup>320</sup>

In time, the Jews felt the need to revise the Greek Old Testament. There were two reasons for this. First was the desire to conform the Greek text more closely to the Hebrew. Second, the LXX was widely used by early Christians to convert Jews to Messiah Jesus. Unbelieving Jews blamed, in part, the poor quality of the LXX translation for this defection.<sup>321</sup>

Attempts were made to improve the Greek translation in various ways. Some tried to revise the existing LXX, others created totally new translations (see below). One revision is found in Origen's work the *Hexapla*. This work provided six options for viewing the Tanakh, organized into six columns:<sup>322</sup>

1. Hebrew text of the Masoretic type,
2. transliteration of the Hebrew text,
3. translation of Aquila (see below),
4. translation of Symmachus (see below),
5. Septuagint according to Origen,
6. translation of Theodotion (see below).

The fifth column presents us with a version of the LXX that differs from all other existing copies and represents either a revision by Origen himself, or his reproduction of the work of another unknown scholar. Other revisions were the Kaige revision (1st c. AD) and one done by Hesychius of Alexandria (4th c. AD).<sup>323</sup>

The revision of Lucian of Antioch (4th c. AD) is important in that part of the original LXX was lost, and subsequent copyists used the translation of Theodotion for the missing parts. Yet, Lucian's revision differs in these places from other copies, which leaves the impression that the original LXX might be preserved in Lucian's version.

The LXX itself was translated in different languages, namely: Old Latin, Coptic, Armenian, Arabian, and Ethiopian. Study of these ancient translations can shed light on the original contents of the LXX.

### Other Greek Translations

Unlike those who attempted to revise the LXX, others sought to produce a new Greek version of the Tanakh directly from the Hebrew. We highlight here the work of Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion.

Aquila lived and labored in the second century BC. He produced a new Greek translation of the Tanakh from the Hebrew in 130 AD. His goal was to provide an alternative to the supposed Christian-distorted LXX. Along with others, he felt the early success of Christianity among the Jews was due to inaccuracies in the LXX. In his translation, he strictly followed the Hebrew (proto-Masoretic) text. Origen included Aquila's translation in his *Hexapla*.<sup>324</sup>

Symmachus lived and labored in the second-third centuries AD and translated the Tanakh from Hebrew in 170 AD. His translation follows the MT for the most part, but with some variation. He wrote in an eloquent

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<sup>320</sup>Würthwein, p. 53.

<sup>321</sup>For example, in Isaiah 7:14, the LXX translates the Hebrew word עַלְמָה (*alma*, i.e. "young woman") with the Greek term παρθενος (*parthenos*, i.e. "virgin"), which supports the doctrine of the virgin birth of Jesus.

<sup>322</sup>Ibid, p. 57.

<sup>323</sup>Brotzman, p. 77; Würthwein, p. 54. Aland notes the different geographic locations for the different LXX revisions: Lucian in Antioch, Origen in Palestine, and Hesychius in Alexandria. See Aland K., Aland B. The text of the New Testament. – 2nd ed. / Trans. by Erroll F. Rhodes. - Eerdmans, 1981. – P. 66.

<sup>324</sup>Würthwein, p. 55.

Greek style. His goal was not only accuracy in translation, but also ease in reading.<sup>325</sup> Origen included Symmachus' translation in his *Hexapla* as well.<sup>326</sup>

Theodotion lived and labored in the first century BC. Some think his work is based on the work of an earlier scholar, whom they call "Kaige-Theodotion." His is also a translation from the Hebrew and follows the MT for the most part, but with some variation. It was included in Origen's *Hexapla*. As we noted earlier, later copyists of the LXX likely used Theodotion's translation to fill in the missing sections of the original LXX. In particular, the Book of Daniel in the present LXX is likely from Theodotion.

### Targums

A further source for reconstructing the original Tanakh is the Aramaic Targums, written, of course, in Aramaic – a language closely related to Hebrew. After their Babylonian captivity, Israel's native tongue changed from Hebrew to Aramaic. In order to accommodate the Scriptures to the new language, the Targums were created. The word itself means "explanation." We see this accommodation in action in Nehemiah 8:8, where the leaders of Israel "read from the book, from the law of God, translating to give the sense so that they understood the reading."

For the most part, the Aramaic translation was made orally. Not until the first century BC was the Targum translation written. The oldest existing copy dates from the first century AD. Targums exist for all the canonical books except for Daniel and Ezra-Nehemiah.<sup>327</sup> The Targums show a tendency to paraphrasing, interpretation and expansion of material. In addition, we see less instances of anthropomorphism.<sup>328</sup>

The most celebrated of the Targums are the following. The Targum of Onkelos contains the Torah and was written after the Masoretic tradition with some paraphrasing. The Torah Targum of Pseudo-Jonathan was also used, but could not rival the Targum of Onkelos.<sup>329</sup> Targum Jonathan contains the early and latter prophets. Several other Targums contain the Writings, but none of them have established themselves as standards.<sup>330</sup>

### Vulgate

The Vulgate is a Latin translation of the Tanakh. Jerome produced it in the fifth century. Its contents resemble the Masoretic Text, yet we do not know exactly which text type Jerome used for his translation.<sup>331</sup> Augustine objected to Jerome preferring the Hebrew text to the LXX for his translation. Some Church Fathers, including Augustine, thought the LXX inspired.<sup>332</sup> Brotzman claims that later copies of the Vulgate may not faithfully represent the work of Jerome, since the later copies contain insertions from the Old Latin translation.<sup>333</sup>

### Peshitta

The Peshitta is a translation of the Tanakh in Syriac. It was made in the first or second centuries AD from either a Hebrew or Aramaic original.<sup>334</sup> The oldest copy available to us dates from the early sixth century. The

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<sup>325</sup>Ibid, p. 56-57.

<sup>326</sup>Würthwein, p. 55.

<sup>327</sup>Brotzman, p. 71.

<sup>328</sup>Ibid, p. 80.

<sup>329</sup>Ibid, p. 71.

<sup>330</sup>Ibid, p. 72-75.

<sup>331</sup>Würthwein, p. 97.

<sup>332</sup>Ibid, p. 96.

<sup>333</sup>Brotzman, p. 83.

<sup>334</sup>Ibid, p. 81.

Peshitta resembles the MT, but not as closely as the Targums or the Vulgate do. It is thought that the Peshitta translators sometimes altered the text to more closely approximate the New Testament quotations of passages taken from the LXX.<sup>335</sup>

### Arabic

The last translation we will comment on is the Arabic one, made in the ninth century. It closely resembles the MT. A different Arabic version also exists, based not on the Tanakh, but on the LXX and Peshitta.<sup>336</sup>

### **3) Conclusions**

Brotzman (along with others) suggests the following scheme for understanding the relationships between various versions of the Tanakh.<sup>337</sup> Three lines of tradition derived from the original autographs: Babylonian, Palestinian, and Egyptian. The various texts and versions discussed above belong to one of these three traditions.

- The Babylonian text became the proto-Masoretic, then the Masoretic Text. From the proto-Masoretic were produced the Targums, the Vulgate, the Peshitta, the Arabic translation, and the translations of Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion.
- The Palestinian text became the Samaritan Pentateuch.
- The Egyptian text became the basis for the Septuagint, from which translations were made into Old Latin, Coptic, Armenian, Arabic, and Ethiopic.

The goal, then, of analyzing the texts of the Babylonian tradition is to reconstruct the original text of that tradition. The goal of studying the texts of the other traditions is similarly to uncover their original texts. At the same time, we keep in mind that the Babylonian tradition, more than likely, is closer to the original Tanakh, than the Palestinian or Egyptian traditions are (see discussion below).

#### **b. Evaluation of the Manuscripts**

Now that we have some insight into which manuscripts are available for the restoration of the original text, what remains is to evaluate their quality. Catholics and Protestants feel that the text type closest to the autographs is the MT. The following reasons support this view. First, the MT is not a translation, but a Hebrew text. This means that we do not have to guess which Hebrew words stand behind the translations. Second, the Jews, to whom God “entrusted” His word (see Rom 3:2), endorse the MT. Third, the reliability of the MT is confirmed by the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls. The contents of the proto-Masoretic text type found there is nearly identical to that of the MT produced a thousand years later. Finally, some scholars hold the view that the LXX, SP, and Targums were not made for scholarly study, but just for public reading.<sup>338</sup>

The Eastern Orthodox hold to a different view. According the Orthodox tradition, the LXX provides us the purest version of the Tanakh. They believe that God inspired not only the authors of the Tanakh, but also the translators of the LXX, who actually improved the original text under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Augustine also defended this position:

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<sup>335</sup>Ibid.

<sup>336</sup>Würthwein, p. 104.

<sup>337</sup>Brotzman, p. 45, 84.

<sup>338</sup>Würthwein, p. 66; Brotzman, p. 68, 74.

But although the Jews acknowledge this very learned labor of (Jerome) to be faithful, while they contend that the Septuagint translators have erred in many places, still the churches of Christ judge that no one should be preferred to the authority of so many men (*City of God*, 18.43).

Assuming the divine inspiration of the LXX translators, Augustine explains the difference between the LXX and the Hebrew text as follows:

For the same Spirit who was in the prophets when they spoke these things was also in the seventy men when they translated them, so that assuredly they could also say something else, just as if the prophet himself had said both, because it would be the same Spirit who said both; and could say the same thing differently, so that, although the words were not the same, yet the same meaning should shine forth to those of good understanding; and could omit or add something, so that even by this it might be shown that there was in that work not human bondage, which the translator owed to the words, but rather divine power, which filled and ruled the mind of the translator (*City of God*, 18.43).

The Orthodox defend their view with the following arguments. First, the Early Church always used the Greek text, which indicates its supremacy. Second, the great majority of the New Testament citations of the Old come from the LXX. On the other hand, one must consider that the native tongue of the Early Church was, in general, Greek. Naturally, early Christians would use a text written in their native language, and New Testament authors would cite quotations from the Old Testament text, with which their audience was most familiar, that is, the LXX. We concur, therefore, with the Catholic-Protestant view of the superiority of the MT.

Ernst Würthwein, author of *The text of the Old Testament*, suggests the following progression of manuscripts in order of their value for reconstructing the original:<sup>339</sup>

1. Masoretic Text
2. Samaritan Pentateuch
3. Dead Sea Scrolls
4. Septuagint
5. translation of Aquila
6. translation of Symmachus
7. translation of Theodotion
8. Peshitta
9. Targums
10. Vulgate
11. Old Latin translation
12. Coptic translation
13. Ethiopian translation
14. Arabic translation
15. Armenian translation

Although the MT provides us with the purest text type, there are cases when we must make corrections to it. We can consider an emendation when: (1) the variant in the MT is unacceptable because it creates a logical impossibility or fails to satisfy the “internal criterion” (see below), or (2) several other texts types agree against the MT variant. We will examine one example where it is necessary to correct the MT. In the MT of Judges 11:34, we read about the daughter of Jephthah:

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<sup>339</sup>Würthwein, p. 114.



וְרַק הִיא יְחִידָה אֵין־לּוֹ מִמֶּנּוּ בֶן אִוֶּבֶת

Now she was his one {and} only child; besides him he had no son or daughter.

The error is obvious. For this passage, however, the LXX, the Peshitta, and the Targums have the correct variant – “besides her.”

## 2. Internal Criterion

Next, we must analyze textual variants in light of the so-called “internal criterion.” Before entering that discussion, though, we will briefly touch on how mistakes in copying might occur. First, the transition from the paleo-Hebrew to the square Aramaic script could have led to misreading one letter for another. Second, some Hebrew letters look very similar, which could have led to confusion as well. Third, a copyist’s handwriting may not always have been clear. Fourth, the copyist may have been working with a damaged document. In addition, before the introduction of vowels into the text, the copyist memorized the vowels, and memory slips could have resulted in errors. Finally, some texts lacked spaces between words, and even after their insertion, they may have been too small to notice.

We define the internal criterion as follows. When we encounter variations between biblical texts, we give preference to one or the other based on certain principles. First, we give preference to the shortest option. This is because, as a rule, a scribe will more likely add words to a text, rather than remove them. Second, we prefer the variant that is hardest to understand. Again, a scribe will more likely try to clarify a difficult passage than complicate a clear one. Third, we respect the biblical author’s style of writing and the context of the passage. Thus, we prefer the option that is consistent with both. Fourth, there are some well-known errors that copyist make that, when observed, make the option that contains them suspect. Some of the errors are unintentional, while others are intentional.<sup>340</sup>

The following errors are considered unintentional. One such unintentional error is an omission due to homeoteleuton. When certain words are repeated later in the text, the copyist may unintentionally skip over the words in between the identical segments. For example, in Leviticus 4:25 the words מִזְבֵּחַ הָעֹלָה (“altar of burnt offering”) are repeated twice:

וְלָקַח הַכֹּהֵן מִדָּם הַחַטָּאת בְּאֶצְבָּעוֹ וְנָתַן עַל־קַרְנֹת מִזְבֵּחַ הָעֹלָה וְאֶת־דָּמּוֹ יִשְׁפֹּךְ אֶל־יְסוֹד מִזְבֵּחַ הָעֹלָה

Then the priest is to take some of the blood of the sin offering with his finger and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering; and {the rest of} its blood he shall pour out at the base of the altar of burnt offering.

In one Hebrew manuscript (the “Cairo Codex”), the words וְאֶת־דָּמּוֹ יִשְׁפֹּךְ אֶל־יְסוֹד (“and {the rest of} its blood he shall pour out at the base of the”) are missing, likely due to the repetition of the phrase “altar of burnt offering.” We discover another example in Isaiah 4:5-6:

וַיִּבְרָא יְהוָה ... עָנָן יוֹמָם (וְעָשָׁן וְנֹגֶה אֵשׁ לְהַבָּה לַיְלָה כִּי עַל־כָּל־כְּבוֹד חֲפָה: וְסִכָּה תִהְיֶה לְצִל־יוֹמָם)  
מִחֹרֵב וּלְמַחֲסֶה וּלְמִסְתוֹר מִזֶּרֶם וּמִמְקָר:

Then the LORD will create... a cloud by day, even smoke, and the brightness of a flaming fire by night; for over all the glory will be a canopy. There will be a shelter to {give} shade from the heat by day, and refuge and protection from the storm and the rain.

<sup>340</sup>Examples from Brotzman, p. 112-115; Würthwein, p. 109-112.

One manuscript from Qumran (1QIsa) omits the phrase, “even smoke, and the brightness of a flaming fire by night; for over all the glory will be a canopy. There will be a shelter to {give} shade from the heat,” due to the repetition of the word יוֹמָם (“by day”) before and after it.

“Dittography” refers to an instance where, for some reason, a copyist duplicates a letter, word, or phrase. In 2 Kings 15:16, we observe the unnecessary use of the definite article in the word הַהָרוֹתִיָּה (“pregnant women”). It is very possible that the scribe simply duplicated the first letter of the word הָרוֹתִיָּה. In Isaiah 30:30 of the Qumran document 1QIsa, the word הַשְׁמִיעַ (“cause His voice of authority to be heard”) appears twice, while in the MT – only once.

On the other hand, the opposite can also occur – reduction of an intended duplication. For example, in the MT of Numbers 14:34, we read, יוֹם לְשָׁנָה יוֹם לְשָׁנָה (“a day for a year, a day for a year”), while in other manuscripts, the expression is found only once: יוֹם לְשָׁנָה (“a day for a year”). If the MT is correct here, we have an example of reduction.

The following example shows how a copyist can confuse similar letters in a text. In the MT, for example, Genesis 10:4 reads:

וּבְנֵי יוֹן אֶלִישָׁה וְתַרְשִׁישׁ בְּתִים וְדָדָנִים

The sons of Javan {were} Elishah and Tarshish, Kittim and Dodanim.

In the SP and LXX, however, we find:

וּבְנֵי יוֹן אֶלִישָׁה וְתַרְשִׁישׁ בְּתִים וְרֹדָנִים

The sons of Javan {were} Elishah and Tarshish, Kittim and Rodanim.

The variation is caused by confusion of the letters ד and ר.

Also, observe in the MT of Isaiah 28:21:

בְּהִרְפֹּצִים יָקוּם יְהוָה

For the LORD will rise up as Mount Perazim

While in the Qumran scroll 1QIsa we read:

בְּהִרְפֹּצִים יָקוּם יְהוָה

For the LORD will rise up on Mount Perazim

The variation is caused by confusion of the letters כ and ב.

It is assumed that copyists not only worked independently, but also sometimes copied from dictation. The following example shows that a copyist could confuse similar sounds, like לָא (lo) and לוֹ (lo), in Psalm 100:3:

דָּעוּ כִּי־יְהוָה הוּא אֱלֹהִים הוּא־עָשָׂנוּ וְלֹא אֲנַחְנוּ

Know that the LORD Himself is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves.

דָּעוּ כִּי־יְהוָה הוּא אֱלֹהִים הוּא־עָשָׂנוּ וְלוֹ אֲנַחְנוּ

Know that the LORD Himself is God; It is He who has made us, and we are His.

A scribe might also confuse the order of letters (metathesis). In various manuscripts of Numbers 15:35, we encounter different forms of the verb רָגַם (“to stone”), once in the infinitive רָגֹם, and once in the imperative רָגֹם. We note another interesting example in Isaiah 32:19:

וּבְרֹד בְּרֹדֶת הַיָּעַר וּבִשְׁפֹּלָה תִשְׁפֹּל הָעִיר: MT

And it will hail when the forest comes down, and the city will be utterly laid low.

וּבְרֹד בְּרֹדֶת הַיָּעַר וּבִשְׁפֹּלָה תִשְׁפֹּל הַיָּעַר: Qumran (1QIsa)

And it will hail when the forest comes down, and the forest will be utterly laid low

Next, we must consider mistakes caused by omission of a letter. In the MT of Isaiah 5:8, we see, בֵּית בֵּית ("house to house"), but in 1QIsa – בֵּית בֵּית ("house house").

We mentioned earlier the issue of spacing between words. Although the ancients may well have had word separation in their texts, there are still instances where the word division seems incorrect. Jeremiah 2:21 may be best translated not:

וְאֵיךְ נִהְפַכְתָּ לִי סוּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן נִכְרִיָּה

How then have you turned yourself before Me into the degenerate shoots of a foreign vine?

but:

וְאֵיךְ נִהְפַכְתָּ לְסוּרֵיָה גֶפֶן נִכְרִיָּה

How then have you turned yourself into the degenerate shoots of a foreign vine?

In Amos 6:12, we should probably read בְּבָקָרִים instead of בָּבָקָרִים. The translation would then be, "Do horses run on rocks? Or does one plow the sea with oxen?" and not, "Do horses run on rocks? Or does one plow them with oxen?"

Next, we will mention changes in the text likely made intentionally. Sometimes scribes seek to correct what they perceive to be mistakes in the text. For example, in Habakkuk 1:12, we read, "Are You not from everlasting, O LORD, my God, my Holy One? We will not die." Yet, evidence also exists in support of the variant "Are You not from everlasting, O LORD, my God, my Holy One? You will not die." If the latter is correct, we may explain the discrepancy by assuming that the copyist could not conceive of God dying and therefore emended the text.

Another similar intentional emendation is the "euphemism." Job 2:9 may be an example. Literally, the verse reads, "Then his wife said to him, 'Do you still hold fast your integrity? Bless (ברך) God and die!'" It is very possible that the original text read, "Curse (קלל) God and die!" Yet, to avoid repeating such an offensive statement, the scribe may have changed the word קלל ("curse") to the euphemism בָּרַךְ ("bless"). Another possible instance of euphemism is Isaiah 13:16, where the *ketiv* reads תִּשְׁגְּלֶנָּה ("raped them"), but the *qere* reads תִּשְׁכְּבֶנָּה ("laid with them").

Other types of intentional emendations include omission of material (17 instances can be cited), possible addition of material, and replacing a rare word with a more common one.

### 3. Conclusions

In light of the methodology discussed above, we arrive at the following recommendations for resolving variants in the Tanakh text. First, the MT is preferred as the best representative of the original autograph. At the same time, we may consider correcting the MT under the following conditions: (1) if the MT version is illogical or is ruled out by the internal criterion, or (2) when several other text types agree against the MT variant.

Würthwein also offers the following helpful guidelines:

1. even if the MT makes sense, it may not necessarily reflect the original,
2. we have to consider which variant best explains the appearance of the other(s),
3. if the MT is less acceptable logically or contextually than other texts, the other texts maybe just represent attempts to “fix” the MT,
4. if neither the MT, nor other texts appear acceptable, we may suggest an emendation.

We conclude this section by mentioning one more approach to resolving textual variants, suggested by the eminent textual critic Emanuel Tov. He believes the MT to be the most reliable text, followed by the LXX and the SP. Yet, unlike others, Tov places great weight on the intuitive acumen of the scholar. He expounds his position as follows: “The upshot of this analysis, then, is that to some extent textual evaluation cannot be bound by any fixed rules. It is an art in the full sense of the word, a faculty which can be developed, guided by intuition based on wide experience. It is the art of defining the problems and finding arguments for and against the originality of readings.”<sup>341</sup>

## **B. Textual Criticism of the New Testament<sup>342</sup>**

### **1. External Criterion**

#### **a. Existing New Testament Manuscripts**

Before we can analyze the variants in New Testament manuscripts, we must first survey the manuscripts available for analysis and then determine their quality based on certain features. Happily, over 5400 Greek manuscripts of the New Testament exist, yet most of them are only fragments. Interestingly, they all differ from one another, at least in details.<sup>343</sup> We do have access, though, to 50 complete Greek New Testament texts.

The most valuable text types are the papyri, written, as you might guess, on papyrus. In all, we possess 88 such documents, and all of them are fragments. They are designated by the letter:

Ⲑ

Our oldest papyri date to the early second century, namely: (1) papyrus 52 (John Rylands fragment), which contains four verses from the 18th chapter of John’s Gospel; and (2) papyrus 66, which contains the entire Gospel of John. Two other notable collections are that of Chester Beatty and the Bodmer papyri. They contain nearly all of the New Testament books:<sup>344</sup>

Chester Beatty:

Ⲑ45 (Gospels and Acts)

Ⲑ46 (Paul)

Ⲑ47 (Revelation)

Bodmer papyri:

Ⲑ66 (Gospel of John)

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<sup>341</sup>Tov, p. 309-310.

<sup>342</sup>A valuable resource in composing this chapter was Bruce Metzger’s *The text of the New Testament: its transmission, corruption, and restoration*. – 3rd ed. – New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1992.

<sup>343</sup>Fee G. D. *Modern textual criticism and the revival of the Textus Receptus* // *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*. 1978. Vol. 21. P. 23.

<sup>344</sup>Greenlee J. Harold. *Introduction to New Testament criticism*. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964. – P. 34-36.

ⲡ 72 (Jude and Peter)

ⲡ 74 (Acts, fragments of the General Epistles)

ⲡ 75 (Gospel of Luke)

Some other Greek manuscripts fall into the classification of uncials. They are not as old as papyri, yet are nonetheless very valuable for textual criticism. They are distinguished by type of paper (parchment) and style of writing (all capital letter). We have access to 260 such documents. They are designated by capital letters in Latin, Greek, Hebrew (in one case), or numbers beginning with zero. Leading manuscripts in this group include the fourth century Codex Sinaiticus (Ⲱ), and Codex Vaticanus (B), and the fifth century Codex Alexandrinus (A), Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus (C), Codex Bezae (D), and Codex Washingtonianus (W).

Minuscules are a third text type, still younger than uncials and therefore not as highly valued for reconstruction of the original New Testament. They are also written on parchment, but unlike uncials, contain only small letters. They are designated by numbers not beginning with zero.<sup>345</sup> Among minuscules, number 33 is highly valued. Certain groups of minuscules have a single designation, like *f* 1 and *f* 13. One group consists of thousands of nearly identical later manuscripts under the designation the “Majority Text.” It is indicated by the abbreviation *Byz* (i.e., Byzantine text) or by the letter:

Ⲛ

In our attempt to restore the New Testament original, one may also consider the testimony of lectionaries, i.e., books used in the churches for conducting the liturgy. They sometimes contain quotations from the New Testament. Yet, their testimony is not as weighty due to their late date (fragments from the 6th century, entire versions from the 8th).<sup>346</sup> They all fall into the Byzantine family of texts (see below). Many copies exist – over 2000. They are designated by the letter *l* or the abbreviation *Lect*.

The Church Fathers also quote verses from the New Testament. This source is valuable in the sense that the works of some date back to the late first-early second centuries. In addition, we know the location of their ministry and, consequently, to which textual family their writings belong (see below).<sup>347</sup> On the other hand, since in many cases the Fathers likely quoted from memory, one cannot take their testimony as determinative of the correct variant.

Scholars also take into consideration the variants located in ancient translations of the New Testament. We have access to thousands such copies. The process of translation from the Greek began at the end of the second century. The following are considered:

- Old Latin (lat)
- Vulgate (vg)
- Coptic (sa, bo or co)
- Syriac (syr)
- Armenian (arm)
- Ethiopian (eth)
- Gothic (goth)
- Georgian (geo)
- Old Slavonic (slav)

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<sup>345</sup>Ibid, p. 44.

<sup>346</sup>Ibid.

<sup>347</sup>Ibid, p. 54-55.

All of the above translations were done from a Greek text, except for Armenian (from Syriac), Georgian (from Armenian), Ethiopian (from Syriac), and Vulgate (from Old Latin).<sup>348</sup> Outstanding among the Old Latin are documents k, b, a, c, ff, and i.<sup>349</sup> The Vulgate is the official version of the Roman Catholic Church, which edited the Latin text in 1979 for greater conformity to the Greek.<sup>350</sup>

## **b. Evaluation of manuscripts**

Knowing which manuscripts we have to work with in reconstructing the New Testament original, it is important to determine which are most reliable. This discussion can be simplified by defining two approaches: the supremacy of the *Textus Receptus*, or of the Nestle-Aland version.

### **1) History of *Textus Receptus***

In the 16th century, the scholar Erasmus took several manuscripts from the Majority Text in order to unite them into a standard Greek New Testament text. His goal at that time was to improve the quality of the accepted Catholic version of his day – the Vulgate.

However, the quality of Erasmus' work is questionable in light of the manuscripts he employed. They were late manuscripts of the Byzantine textual family, which is considered by many to be the lowest quality texts. Specifically, he used the following manuscripts:<sup>351</sup>

- minuscule 2a: Gospels, XII c., Byzantine
- minuscule 2ap: Acts and all Epistles, XII c., Byzantine
- minuscule 1: NT without Revelation, XII c., Byzantine-Alexandrian (yet, he used this one sparingly)<sup>352</sup>
- minuscule 2816: Acts and all Epistles, XV c., Byzantine
- minuscule 2817: Epistles of Paul, XI c., Byzantine
- minuscule 817: Gospels, XII c., Byzantine
- minuscule 2814: Revelation up to 22:16, XII c., Byzantine
- a Latin text for the end of Revelation

In addition to the above-named resources, Erasmus borrowed several verses from the Vulgate, which were absent in his Greek texts, namely Acts 8:37, Acts 9:6a, and 1 John 5:7.

After Erasmus, other scholars continued and further developed his work. In that line stood the brothers Elzevir, who named the product *Textus Receptus*, that is, the "Received Text." It became the source for the King James Version of the New Testament, and served as the standard Greek text for many years.

### **2) History of the Nestle-Aland Version**

Toward the end of the 19th century, a new approach to reconstruction of the New Testament original arose in connection with the discovery and use of more ancient Greek texts found over the last 150 years, namely papyri and uncials. The new Greek standard based on these documents is known as the Nestle-Aland version, now in its 28th edition.

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<sup>348</sup>Aland, p. 191.

<sup>349</sup>Ibid, p. 189.

<sup>350</sup>Ibid, p. 190.

<sup>351</sup>See Brandt Pierre-Yves. Manuscripts grecs utilise's par Erasme pour son e'dition du Novum Instrumentum de 1516.

<sup>352</sup>Greenlee, p. 70.

This new approach involves the classification of ancient New Testament documents into four groups or “families”: Alexandrian, Western, Caesarean, and Byzantine.<sup>353</sup> The groups are determined by the presence of similar textual variants in all texts of that group. Additionally, if the variants found in the Church Fathers overlap with one group or another, one can determine where that group of manuscripts originated. For example, manuscripts that correspond to quotations by Alexandrian Fathers go into the Alexandrian textual family.<sup>354</sup>

What characterizes the Alexandrian textual family? Adherents to this approach to textual criticism consider it to be the purist and most accurate group of texts. The designation “Alexandrian” comes from the fact that most of these documents were found in Egypt in the course of the last 200 years. The most valued documents in this family are Codex Vaticanus (B) and Codex Sinaiticus (Ⲛ). Many quotations from Church Fathers enter this group, as well as nearly all the papyri.

The Western textual family received its designation from the fact that this was the text used by the Western Church in North Africa and Western Europe. The most prized representative of this group is Codex Bezae (D). This group is unique in that the text is often expanded and paraphrased. We will highlight the following examples:<sup>355</sup>

#### **Acts 6:10**

Usual translation: But they were unable to cope with the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking.

Version in Codex Bezae: ...who were unable to cope with the wisdom, which was in him, and the Spirit with which he was speaking, because they were being refuted by him with great boldness. Therefore, being unable to oppose the truth...

#### **Luke 6:4**

Usual translation: ...how he entered the house of God, and took and ate the consecrated bread which is not lawful for any to eat except the priests alone, and gave it to his companions?

Version in Codex Bezae: ...how he entered the house of God, and took and ate the consecrated bread which is not lawful for any to eat except the priests alone, and gave it to his companions? The same day, observing someone working on the Sabbath, He said to him, “Friend, if you know what you are doing, you are blessed. But if you do not know, you are cursed and are a transgressor of the Law.”<sup>356</sup>

Since the Western scribes tended to add material to the text, if the Western variant is shorter than texts from other textual families, that may have great significance. It may (but not necessary) represent the original reading. Let us look at the following examples:<sup>357</sup>

#### **Luke 23:39**

Usual translation: One of the criminals who were hanged {there} was hurling abuse at Him, saying, “Are You not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!”

Version in Codex Bezae: One of the criminals was hurling abuse at Him.

#### **Luke 24:6-7**

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<sup>353</sup>Aland, however, relates that not all manuscripts (in particular, minuscules) have been classified (Aland, p. 24).

<sup>354</sup>Greenlee, p. 60-61. At the same time, Aland admits that strict criteria for separating manuscripts by textual families are not established (Aland, p. 332).

<sup>355</sup>Greenlee, p. 88.

<sup>356</sup>Metzger B. M. A textual commentary on the Greek New Testament. – 2nd ed. – London; New York: United Bible Societies, 1994. – P. 117.

<sup>357</sup>Greenlee, p. 88.

Usual translation: He is not here, but He has risen. Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee, saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.

Version in Codex Bezae: Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee, saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.

The third textual family is the Caesarean, so named because of its use in the churches of Palestine. Yet, at the present time, textual critics hesitate to employ this classification, but assign manuscripts once considered Caesarean to other groups.<sup>358</sup>

The fourth and final textual classification is the Byzantine family of texts. Eighty percent of all Greek New Testament manuscripts are in this group. The designation “Byzantine” derives from discovery of these texts in Byzantine churches and monasteries, which means that the Greek speaking church used them. Some feel this text type originated in Antioch, where there existed a center for ministerial training.<sup>359</sup> Some also assume that after the reign of Constantine the Great, the Eastern Church sensed the need for standardizing the Greek text. This process is thought to have occurred from the fourth to the eighth centuries. From that time on, the Byzantine text type became dominant. The Majority Text (and, consequently, *Textus Receptus*) are major contributors to this group.

The supporters of the Nestle-Aland text characterize the Byzantine family as follows. First, the Byzantine text frequently contains merging of material found in the Alexandrian and Western families. This may well indicate the earlier existence of those families, since later Byzantine copyists apparently combined them in their versions. It is also claimed that Byzantine scribes simplified and adapted material.<sup>360</sup> Additionally, Byzantine texts sometime exhibit harmonization of parallel passages. For example:

#### **Luke 6:48**

The best Alexandrian manuscripts:

διὰ τὸ καλῶς οἰκοδομηθῆσθαι αὐτήν.

because it had been well built

The Majority Text:

τεθεμελίωτο γὰρ ἐπὶ τὴν πέτραν.

for it had been founded on the rock (likely borrowed from Matt 7:25)

#### **Mark 4:15**

The best Alexandrian manuscripts:

τὸν ἐσπαρμένον εἰς αὐτούς.

which has been sown in them

The Majority Text:

τὸ ἐσπαρμένον ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ αὐτοῦ.

what has been sown in his heart (likely borrowed from Matt 13:19)

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<sup>358</sup>Aland, p. 66.

<sup>359</sup>Ibid, p. 65. Gordon Fee proposes that the Byzantine text was the text of John Chrysostom, and that when he moved from Antioch to Constantinople, he introduced this text to the church there (Fee, p. 30).

<sup>360</sup>Ibid, p. 91.



Scholars continue to discuss exactly when the Byzantine family of texts first appeared. Most feel that this took place in the mid-fourth century. This is because we find no Greek texts of that type before that time.<sup>361</sup> In addition, there are no quotations that correspond to that group in the works of the early Fathers.

How did the Nestle-Aland text arise? Johann Bengel (1687-1752), whom Aland considers the father of textual criticism, first proposed the idea of dividing texts by textual families: African and Asian texts.<sup>362</sup> After him, Selmer proposed the groups: Alexandrian, Western, and Eastern. Then, Johann Griesbach suggested: Alexandrian, Western, and Byzantine.<sup>363</sup> The first to produce a Greek text differing from *Textus Receptus* was Karl Lachmann in 1831.<sup>364</sup>

Modern textual criticism came into its own, however, due to the contributions of Constantine Tischendorf (1815-1874) along with Brooke Westcott and Fenton Hort, who gathered ancient New Testament documents and advanced the principles by which modern textual criticism operates.<sup>365</sup> Tischendorf released eight editions of a critical edition of the Greek New Testament text,<sup>366</sup> from 1841 to 1882, while Westcott and Hort released their version in 1881-1882.<sup>367</sup> Among all the ancient manuscripts, Tischendorf gave preference to Codex Sinaiticus, and Westcott and Hort – Codex Vaticanus.<sup>368</sup> Westcott and Hort created four textual families: Alexandrian, Natural (i.e., Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus), Western, and Syrian.<sup>369</sup>

The Nestle edition began with the scholar Eberhard Nestle (1851–1913). He created his critical text in 1898 by comparing the work of Tischendorf with that of Westcott-Hort and Weiss.<sup>370</sup> Over the subsequent 80 years, his text, in general, was not altered.<sup>371</sup> The 13th edition of 1927 by Nestle's son included an expanded critical apparatus with more discussion of significant textual variants.<sup>372</sup>

In 1979, Kurt Aland became the editor of Nestle's text. In conjunction with other textual scholars, including Bruce Metzger and his wife Barbara Aland, he composed a new critical Greek text by comparing ancient textual witnesses of the autographs. They also added more detail to the critical apparatus. The new text was released as the 26th edition of the now "Nestle-Aland" text by the United Bible Society.

### **3) *Textus Receptus* or Nestle-Aland: which is better?**

There exist essentially two opinions for evaluating the quality of New Testament manuscripts: the traditional approach, which champions the Byzantine text family and *Textus Receptus*, and the modern approach supporting the Nestle-Aland text, based mostly on Alexandrian and Western witnesses.

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<sup>361</sup>The oldest manuscripts that testify to the existence of this text type are part of uncials A and W along with some quotations from Church Fathers. The first "complete representatives" of this textual family appear in the eighth-ninth centuries, namely in codices E, F, G, H, M and  $\Omega$  (Fee, p. 25, 28).

<sup>362</sup>Aland, p. 9-11.

<sup>363</sup>Greenlee, p. 73-74.

<sup>364</sup>Ibid, p. 75.

<sup>365</sup>Ibid, p. 78. One example of Tischendorf's work is when, while visiting a monastery on Mount Sinai, he noticed how the nuns were feeding the stove with pages from an ancient text. He discovered it to be a fourth century uncial that is now one of the primary sources for the restoration of the original New Testament and the Old Testament Septuagint – Codex Sinaiticus.

<sup>366</sup>The "critical edition of the New Testament" is a combination of all ancient copies of the New Testament, using those variants in the "critical text" which have the best support from external and internal criteria. The goal of producing a critical edition is the reconstruction of the original New Testament. The "critical text," therefore, is not any certain copy of the New Testament passed down from antiquity, but a combination of the best variants from various existing manuscripts that are felt to trace back to the original. Moreover, the "critical edition" contains an apparatus, which shows variants for disputed passages that differ from the ones chosen for the "critical text" and the textual support for those other variants.

<sup>367</sup>Greenlee, p. 76.

<sup>368</sup>Aland, p. 13-14.

<sup>369</sup>Greenlee, p. 79-81.

<sup>370</sup>Ibid, p. 94.

<sup>371</sup>Aland, p. 26.

<sup>372</sup>Ibid, p. 20.

Supporters of the traditional approach insist that the Majority Text always provides the correct textual variant. Adherents of the traditional approach defend their positions with the following arguments. First, they claim that no Byzantine manuscript dates earlier than the fourth century because all the early copies disappeared due to overuse. They also note that we can ascribe some early witnesses, such as quotations in the Fathers and parts of some papyri, to the Byzantine text type.<sup>373</sup>

On the other hand, supporters of the modern approach object that similarities between the Early Fathers/papyri and Byzantine variants are rare. The presence of some overlap between them does not prove the antiquity of the Byzantine family in its entirety. Furthermore, as Fee observes, if the churches in Northern Africa, Western Europe and Palestine used Alexandrian, Western and Caesarean texts respectively, then who “overused” the Byzantine texts types supposedly present there from the beginning?<sup>374</sup>

Also in support of their view, “traditionalists” note that the great majority of our ancient Greek texts belong to the Byzantine textual family. Therefore, it is assumed that the Church preserved these manuscripts because it knew them to be superior. The abundance of these manuscripts also shows God’s endorsement of them. In addition, the large quantity of Byzantine manuscripts demonstrates that this group was copied over a longer period of time, which indicates that they trace back to the original New Testament documents.

However, adherents of the modern approach offer an alternative explanation for the abundance of documents of the Byzantine text type. First, the Eastern Church copied, distributed and preserved the Byzantine texts in abundance because the native tongue of Eastern Europe was Greek. In other parts of the Church, for example in Rome, congregations used the Latin translation and had little use for the Greek text. This explains the relative paucity of the Western text type. Along with that, Palestine and North Africa, where the Caesarean and Alexandrian texts dominated, came under the control of Muslims. As a result, Christianity and the Christian Scriptures decreased. This explains the paucity of the Caesarean and Alexandrian texts.

In response to the claim that the Church preserved the Byzantine text because of its superiority, one must keep in mind that the Church preserved all the text types, which is why we have copies of them today. The “Church” in its entirety did not preserve the Byzantine group, but only the Eastern Church, because they spoke and read Greek. In distinction, the Western Church preferred the Vulgate, which is based on the Western text type. Therefore, it is improper to claim that the “Church” preferred or preserved the Byzantine text. When one claims that the abundance of Byzantine manuscripts proves God’s endorsement of them, this fails to notice that God preserved the other text types as well and has greatly blessed modern translations based on them.

The suggestion that the larger number of Byzantine manuscripts shows that they were copied for a longer period time also fails, in that this would be the case only if nothing prevented the copying and distribution of the other text types. Yet, we have earlier demonstrated that this was not the case.

Moreover, Gordon Fee advances other convincing rebuttals of the traditional view.<sup>375</sup> First, if the largest number of manuscripts indicates the most reliable text, then we should so esteem the Vulgate, which boasts nearly eight thousand ancient copies – far more than the Majority Text – and has been in circulation longer as well. Second, if the Majority Text is always correct, then how can one justify the *Textus Receptus*’ inclusion of Acts 8:37 and 1 John 5:7, which are not supported by the Byzantine family of texts?

Another argument in favor of the traditional view goes as follows – the closer harmony between texts in the Byzantine family confirms their greater reliability. Fee makes the following response. First, in the early years of Christianity, the Church was not as concerned about precise copying of manuscripts, as it was later.<sup>376</sup> Correspondingly, we observe more variants in the earlier (non-Byzantine) text types. Second, from the fourth century on, copying was done on a more professional level by trained scribes, which reduced the number of

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<sup>373</sup>An example is papyrus 66 (Fee, p. 27).

<sup>374</sup>Ibid, p. 28.

<sup>375</sup>Ibid, p. 23-30.

<sup>376</sup>As we stated in Chapter 3, in the early years, the Church operated substantially on oral tradition from the apostles. Only later, when the written text became the standard, did the Church apply greater care to manuscript copying.

copying errors. Third, instead of dispatching newly copied manuscripts to far off locations, they were used more locally, which allowed for errors to be discovered and corrected by comparing documents.

Some “traditionalists” also make this objection to the Nestle-Aland version. They claim that Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus were prepared by heretics in Alexandria in order to undermine the teaching of Christ’s deity. In support, they point to the tendency to write “Jesus” instead of “Jesus Christ.”

However, the combination “Jesus Christ” or “Christ Jesus” appears 174 times in the Nestle-Aland version. If heretics in Alexandria had plotted to deny Christ’s Deity, they did a very poor job of it. In addition, all the New Testament passages that Christian apologists used in defense of Christ’s Deity have the same thrust in Nestle-Aland. Consider the following examples:

### **Jn 1:1-3**

Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος. 2 οὗτος ἦν ἐν ἀρχῇ πρὸς τὸν θεόν. 3 πάντα δι’ αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἓν. ὃ γέγονεν

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.*

### **Col 1:15-19**

15 ὃς ἐστὶν εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου, πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως, 16 ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκτίσθη τὰ πάντα ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, τὰ ὀρατὰ καὶ τὰ ἀόρατα, εἴτε θρόνοι εἴτε κυριότητες εἴτε ἀρχαὶ εἴτε ἐξουσίαι· τὰ πάντα δι’ αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν ἔκτισται· 17 καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν πρὸ πάντων καὶ τὰ πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ συνέστηκεν, 18 καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν ἡ κεφαλὴ τοῦ σώματος τῆς ἐκκλησίας· ὃς ἐστὶν ἀρχή, πρωτότοκος ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν, ἵνα γένηται ἐν πᾶσιν αὐτὸς πρωτεύων, 19 ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ εὐδόκησεν πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα κατοικῆσαι

*15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. 16 For by Him all things were created, {both} in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities--all things have been created through Him and for Him. 17 He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. 18 He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. 19 For it was the {Father's} good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him.*

### **Col 2:9**

ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ κατοικεῖ πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα τῆς θεότητος σωματικῶς,  
*For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form.*

### **Phil 2:6-7**

6 ὃς ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων οὐχ ἄρπαγμόν ἠγήσατο τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ, 7 ἀλλὰ ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν μορφὴν δούλου λαβών, ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος· καὶ σχήματι εὐρεθεὶς ὡς ἄνθρωπος.  
*Who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, {and} being made in the likeness of men.*

### **Heb 1:3**

ὃς ὡς ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης καὶ χαρακτήρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ.  
*And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature.*

### **Tit 2:13**

προσδεχόμενοι τὴν μακαρίαν ἐλπίδα καὶ ἐπιφάνειαν τῆς δόξης τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

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

**Rom 9:5**

ὧν οἱ πατέρες καὶ ἐξ ὧν ὁ Χριστὸς τὸ κατὰ σάρκα, ὁ ὧν ἐπὶ πάντων θεὸς εὐλογητὸς εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας, ἀμήν.  
*whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.*

It is interesting to note that in the following instances, the Nestle-Aland version (and the Alexandrian manuscripts it is based on) actually reinforces Christ's Deity more than the *Textus Receptus*.

**1 Pet 3:15**

Nestle-Aland: κύριον δὲ τὸν Χριστὸν ἀγιάσατε ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν.

*but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts*

Textus Receptus: κυριον δε τον θεον αγιασατε εν ταις καρδιαις υμων.

*but sanctify God as Lord in your hearts*

**Jn 1:18**

Nestle-Aland: Θεὸν οὐδεὶς ἑώρακεν πώποτε· μονογενὴς θεὸς ὁ ὧν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς ἐκεῖνος ἐξηγήσατο.

*No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained {Him.}*

Textus Receptus: θεον ουδεις εωρακεν πωποτε ο μονογενης υιος ο ων εις τον κολπον του πατρος εκεινος εξηγησατο.

*No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained {Him.}*

We conclude that the Nestle-Aland text, based on older manuscripts with less evidence of adaptation, more closely reflects the original autographs and is the preferred text. Those places where the *Textus Receptus* may seem to emphasize Christ's Deity more are attempts by later scribes to add to the biblical witness more instances of that teaching.<sup>377</sup>

#### **4) Resolving textual variants**

In spite of our positive assessment of the Nestle-Aland text, we must refrain from passively accepting its resolution of the textual variants without critical evaluation on our part. The serious student of the Bible will, with the help of the critical apparatus supplied in the Nestle-Aland version, examine which texts support which variants and, in line with principles of modern textual criticism, determine for himself/herself the most appropriate reading. Let us review those principles.

In evaluating the quality of manuscripts, first we look at their date of composition. As a rule, the older the document, the closer it is to the autograph. Second, the geographic distribution is important. If one variant has support from manuscripts belonging to two or three textual families, it is preferred to variants with only one-family support, since the text was used by a greater segment of the Church. Third, we note the quality of the textual families that support one variant or another. The most reliable texts, in general, are the Alexandrian ones, then Western, then Caesarean, then Byzantine.

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<sup>377</sup>Fee, p. 24.

A listing of ancient New Testament manuscripts with information about their date of composition and textual type (textual family) is available through the following resources: Aland K., Aland B. *The text of the New Testament*; Greenlee J. H. *Introduction to New Testament criticism*; Holmes M. W. *New Testament textual criticism* in McKnight S. *Introducing New Testament interpretation*; Geisler N. L., Nix W. E. *A general introduction to the Bible*. Another very useful resource is Bruce Metzger's *A textual commentary on the Greek New Testament*, where the Nestle-Aland committee explains the rationale of their choices of textual variants.

## 2. Internal Criterion

Along with determining the quality of the manuscripts containing textual variants, we must also examine the variants themselves according the "internal criterion." As mentioned in our discussion of Old Testament textual criticism, this analysis consists of the following steps.

First, we give preference to the shortest option. This is because, as a rule, a scribe will add words to a text, not remove them. Second, we prefer the variant that is hardest to understand. Again, a scribe will more likely try to clarify a difficult passage than complicate a clear one. Third, we respect the biblical author's style of writing and the context of the passage. Thus, we prefer the option that is consistent with both. Fourth, there are some well-known errors that copyist make that, when observed, make that option suspect. Some of the errors are unintentional, while others are intentional.<sup>378</sup>

We will examine examples of unintentional errors commonly encountered in the text. One such phenomenon is an omission due to homeoteleuton. When certain words are repeated later in the text, the copyist may unintentionally skip over the words in between the identical segments. For example, in some copies of Luke 14:27-27, verse 27 is omitted.

26 Εἴ τις ἔρχεται πρὸς με καὶ οὐ μισεῖ τὸν πατέρα ἑαυτοῦ καὶ τὴν μητέρα καὶ τὴν γυναῖκα καὶ τὰ τέκνα καὶ τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς καὶ τὰς ἀδελφὰς ἔτι τε καὶ τὴν ψυχὴν ἑαυτοῦ, οὐ δύναται εἶναί μου μαθητής. 27 ὅστις οὐ βαστάζει τὸν σταυρὸν ἑαυτοῦ καὶ ἔρχεται ὀπίσω μου, οὐ δύναται εἶναί μου μαθητής.  
26 If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. 27 "Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.

The copyist omitted verse 27 because he overlooked the repetition of "cannot be My disciple."

The last part of 1 John 2:23 was omitted likely for the same reason:

πᾶς ὁ ἀρνούμενος τὸν υἱὸν οὐδὲ τὸν πατέρα ἔχει, ὁ ὁμολογῶν τὸν υἱὸν καὶ τὸν πατέρα ἔχει.  
Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also.

Several manuscripts omit parts of Matthew 5:19-20 due to homeoteleuton:

19 ὃς ἐὰν οὖν λύσῃ μίαν τῶν ἐντολῶν τούτων τῶν ἐλαχίστων καὶ διδάξῃ οὕτως τοὺς ἀνθρώπους, ἐλάχιστος κληθήσεται ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τῶν οὐρανῶν. ὃς δ' ἂν ποιῇ καὶ διδάξῃ, οὗτος μέγας κληθήσεται ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τῶν οὐρανῶν. 20 Λέγω γὰρ ὑμῖν ὅτι ἐὰν μὴ περισσεύσῃ ὑμῶν ἡ δικαιοσύνη πλεῖον τῶν γραμματέων καὶ Φαρισαίων, οὐ μὴ εἰσέλθῃτε εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῶν.  
19 Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others {to do} the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches {them,} he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 20 For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses {that} of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

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<sup>378</sup>Examples from Greenlee, p. 63-68.

Dittography occurs when a copyist mistakenly repeats a letter, word, or phrase. Possibly, this occurred in Acts 19:34, where Codex Vaticanus repeats the expression “great is Artemis of the Ephesians” twice. This may also explain the variation in 1 Thessalonians 2:7, where the final letter ν is repeated at the beginning of the next word. Instead of ἐγενήθημεν ἥπιοι, “proved to be gentle,” some documents (which are actually superior from the vantage point of the external criterion) have ἐγενήθημεν νήπιοι, “proved to be children.” Some feel that this is instead a case of haplography, where a duplicate was reduced to a single instance.<sup>379</sup>

The next example shows that a copyist can confuse similar letters in the text (Acts 15:40).

ΠΑΥΛΟΣ ΔΕ ΕΠΙΛΕΞΑΜΕΝΟΣ ΣΙΛΑΝ

*But Paul chose Silas*

ΠΑΥΛΟΣ ΔΕ ΕΠΙΔΕΞΑΜΕΝΟΣ ΣΙΛΑΝ

*But Paul received Silas*

In this instance the letters Λ (*lambda*) and Δ (*delta*) look nearly the same, yet they produce words with very different meanings.

Also consider 1 Tim 3:16:

ΟΣ ΕΦΑΝΕΡΩΘΗ ΕΝ ΣΑΡΚΙ

*He who was revealed in the flesh*

ΘΣ ΕΦΑΝΕΡΩΘΗ ΕΝ ΣΑΡΚΙ

*God was revealed in the flesh (ΘΣ is an abbreviation for θεός, i.e., “God”).*

In the following examples, we observe mistakes in word division. In antiquity, the Greek text was written without spaces between words. Therefore, copyists at times failed to divide the words properly. Here are some examples:

#### **1 Tim 3:16**

ὁμολογοῦμεν ὡς μέγα ἐστὶν τὸ τῆς εὐσεβείας μυστήριον

*As we confess, great is the mystery of godliness*

or

ὁμολογουμένως μέγα ἐστὶν τὸ τῆς εὐσεβείας μυστήριον

*Indisputably, great is the mystery of godliness*

#### **Mk 10:40**

ἀλλ’ οἷς ἡτοίμασται

*but those for whom it has been prepared*

or

ἄλλοις ἡτοίμασται

*it has been prepared for others*

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<sup>379</sup>Metzger, A textual commentary, p. 562.

It is assumed that copyists not only worked independently, but also sometimes copied from dictation. The following examples show that a copyist could confuse similar sounds. The vowel omicron (ο) sounds similar to the vowel omega (ω). A different word meaning, though, can result from their confusion, as in Rom 5:1:

Δικαιωθέντες οὖν ἐκ πίστεως εἰρήνην ἔχομεν πρὸς τὸν θεὸν διὰ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.  
*Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*

Δικαιωθέντες οὖν ἐκ πίστεως εἰρήνην ἔχων πρὸς τὸν θεὸν διὰ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.  
*Therefore, having been justified by faith, let us have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,*

Additionally, in some manuscripts Rev 1:5 reads:

τῷ ἀγαπῶντι ἡμᾶς καὶ λούσαντι ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν.  
*To Him who loves us and washed us from our sins*

While others copyists wrote not the diphthong ου, but the similar sounding υ:

τῷ ἀγαπῶντι ἡμᾶς καὶ λύσαντι ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν.  
*To Him who loves us and released us from our sins*

1 John 1:4 also presents us with two variants:

καὶ ταῦτα γράφομεν ἡμεῖς, ἵνα ἡ χαρὰ ἡμῶν ᾗ πεπληρωμένη  
*so that our joy may be made complete*

καὶ ταῦτα γράφομεν ἡμεῖς, ἵνα ἡ χαρὰ ὕμῶν ᾗ πεπληρωμένη  
*so that your joy may be made complete.*

Again, two words sound very similar: ἡμῶν (*hemon*, i.e. “our”) and ὕμῶν (*humon*, i.e. “your”).

Our final example is Mark 14:31, which is actually quite humorous:

ἐὰν δέη με συναποθανεῖν σοι, οὐ μὴ σε ἀπαρνήσομαι.  
*{Even} if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!*

In document D, though, we read not με, but μή:

ἐὰν δέη μή συναποθανεῖν σοι, οὐ μὴ σε ἀπαρνήσομαι.  
*If {I} do not have to die with You, I will not deny You!"*

A scribe might also confuse the order of letters or words (metathesis). In Mark 1:5, we encounter manuscripts with three different options for word order in the phrase “and all were being baptized”:

πάντες καὶ ἐβαπτίζοντο  
καὶ ἐβαπτίζοντο πάντε  
καὶ πάντες ἐβαπτίζοντο

Mark 14:65 occasioned an inversion of letters β and λ:

καὶ οἱ ὑπηρέται ῥαπίσασιν αὐτὸν ἐλάβον  
*And the officers received Him with slaps.*

καὶ οἱ ὑπηρέται ῥαπίσασιν αὐτὸν ἐβαλον  
*And the officers threw Him with slaps.*

In Acts 13:23, if the letters ρ and ι are transposed in the word σωτηρίαν (“salvation”), we get σωτήρα ιν, which means “Savior Jesus” (ιν is an abbreviation for Jesus).

A common error is for a copyist to unconsciously insert into the verse being copied words from a parallel passage that came to mind. This occurred in Col 1:14, where the Majority Text contains words taken from Eph 1:7:

Eph 1:7: ἐν ᾧ ἔχομεν τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν διὰ τοῦ αἵματος αὐτοῦ, τὴν ἄφεσιν τῶν παραπτωμάτων  
*In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses*

Col 1:14 ἐν ᾧ ἔχομεν τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν, τὴν ἄφεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν  
*in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins*

Col 1:14 (Majority Text) ἐν ᾧ ἔχομεν τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν διὰ τοῦ αἵματος αὐτοῦ, τὴν ἄφεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν.  
*in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.*

We may also mention the addition to Acts 7:37 from Deut 18:15:

Acts 7:37 (Nestle-Aland text): God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brethren.

Deut 18:15: The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him.

Acts 7:37 (*Textus Receptus*): God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brethren, you shall listen to him.

Next, we may examine intentional changes made to the text by copyists. Sometime a copyist may attempt to correct what he perceives to be a grammatical mistake in the text. In Revelation 1:4, we see the following grammatical mistake:

χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ ὧν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος  
*Grace to you and peace, from Him who is and who was and who is to come.*

The problem here is that the preposition ἀπο (*apo*) must take the genitive case. Yet, here the nominative case (ὧν) follows the preposition. In other manuscripts, likely written later, we see attempts to correct this “error” and place the relative pronoun after the preposition in the genitive:

χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ τοῦ ὧν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος;  
χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ θεοῦ ὧν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος;



In the following example (Rom 4:11), we assume that the scribe considered the accusative case (περιτομήν) more appropriate than the genitive (περιτομῆς):

καὶ σημεῖον ἔλαβεν περιτομῆς  
*and he received the sign of circumcision*

καὶ σημεῖον ἔλαβεν περιτομήν  
*and he received circumcision as a sign*

In Romans 8:2, a copyist may have thought that, in light of the previous verses, Paul was talking about himself and therefore employed the word με (me) instead of σε (you):

ὁ γὰρ νόμος τοῦ πνεύματος τῆς ζωῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ ἠλευθέρωσέν σε ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου τῆς ἁμαρτίας καὶ τοῦ θανάτου.  
*For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.*

ὁ γὰρ νόμος τοῦ πνεύματος τῆς ζωῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ ἠλευθέρωσέν με ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου τῆς ἁμαρτίας καὶ τοῦ θανάτου.  
*For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and of death.*

In some cases, the scribe attempted to correct an apparent historical error. Mark 1:2 reads, “As it is written in Isaiah the prophet.” After that introduction, though, Mark quotes a verse not from Isaiah, but from Malachi. Therefore, in an attempt to introduce a correction, a later copyist wrote, “As it is written in the prophets.”

In John 19:14, we read that it was the “sixth hour” when Pilate turned Jesus over to crucifixion. In another manuscript, however, it was the “third hour.” This latter scribe was apparently influenced by the statement in Mark 15:25: “It was the third hour when they crucified Him.”

Harmonization is the attempt to approximate one passage with its parallel. A classic example is when certain scribes wrote out the entire Lord’s Prayer, as recorded in Matthew 6, in the Gospel of Luke as well. Yet, the earliest manuscripts give us an abbreviated form of the prayer in Luke.

In addition, in the best manuscripts of Matthew 19:17 we read, “And He said to him, ‘Why are you asking Me about what is good? There is {only} One who is good; but if you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments.’” Other copyists, though, harmonized this verse with Mark 10:18 and wrote, “And Jesus said to him, ‘Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone; but if you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments.’”

Another instance of harmonization is Hebrews 12:20, where we read, “For they could not bear the command, ‘If even a beast touches the mountain, it will be stoned.’” In the Majority Text, we encounter the additional words “or shot through,” taken from the source of the quotation in Exodus 19:13.

Sometime we see evidence that a scribe added material to the text. The Majority Text of Matthew 6:4-6 adds the word “openly.” Galatians 6:17 exists in several expanded forms:

τὰ στίγματα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ  
*the brand-marks of Jesus.*

τὰ στίγματα τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ  
*the brand-marks of the Lord Jesus.*

τὰ στίγματα τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ

*the brand-marks of Lord Jesus Christ.*

τὰ στίγματα τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ  
*the brand-marks of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Most likely, the original version read simply, “The brand-marks of Jesus.”

Finally, according to the best textual witnesses, the following clause of the Lord’s Prayer is likely an addition: “For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.”

Some additions were obviously made to promote certain doctrines. A clear example is Romans 14:17, where the original read, “For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.” Minuscule № 4, however, reads, “For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and asceticism and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.” Other examples include:

addition to 1 John 5:7-8: “For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one”

addition to Mark 9:29: “and fasting”

addition to Rom 8:1: “who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit”

addition to 1 Cor 6:20: “and in your spirit, which are God’s.”

A scribe may not only attempt to advance a certain teaching, but also to “correct” a theological error perceived by him. An interesting example is Luke 2:14, which conventionally reads, “Now His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover.” A certain scribe, though, wished to defend the doctrine of Christ’s virgin birth and so wrote, “Now Joseph and Mary went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover.”

Romans 4:19 was possibly altered for theological reasons as well: “Without becoming weak in faith he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah's womb,” became, “Without becoming weak in faith he did not contemplate his own body, now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah's womb.”

Moreover, we observe instances where a copyist combines two varying texts to create a “hybrid.” In Acts 20:28, some versions read τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ θεοῦ (“the church of God”), while others read τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ κυρίου (“the church of the Lord”). A later copyist combined the variants to give τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ κυρίου καὶ τοῦ θεοῦ (“the church of the Lord and God”).

Another example of combination is found in Luke 24:53, where we encounter the following variants:

καὶ ἦσαν διὰ παντὸς ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ εὐλογοῦντες τὸν θεόν.  
*and were continually in the temple thanking God*

καὶ ἦσαν διὰ παντὸς ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ αἰοῦντες τὸν θεόν.  
*and were continually in the temple praising God*

Again, a later scribe combined the two:

καὶ ἦσαν διὰ παντὸς ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ αἰοῦντες καὶ εὐλογοῦντες τὸν θεόν.  
*and were continually in the temple praising and thanking God*

### 3. Conclusions

When deciding between textual variants in the New Testament, we employ the methodology described in our discussion of external and internal criteria. At the same time, we recognize that a single factor alone, whether taken from the examination of external or internal criteria, does not decide the question for us. We look at all the factors that make up these criteria, weigh the evidence for and against the existing variants, and then reach a conclusion as to which variant most likely reflects the original autograph.

So then, to resolve textual variation in the New Testament text, our methodology is as follows. Concerning the external criterion, one must determine:

1. the variant supported by the oldest manuscripts
2. the variant supported by manuscripts having the widest geographical range
3. the variant supported by the most reliable textual families, i.e., Alexandrian and Western

Concerning the internal criterion, one must determine:

1. the shortest variant
2. the variant most difficult to understand
3. the variant that does not violate the author's style or context
4. the presence of common copyist mistakes

We emphasize that one must not only gather this information, but also weigh the evidences, determining which factors are more convincing in defense of one variant or another. Then on the basis of both quantity and quality of evidences, one decides between the variants.

In conclusion, we take into consideration the following counsel from Kurt Aland about evaluating textual variants:

1. It is difficult to decide a textual question purely on the basis of the internal criterion, if manuscript evidence is not also convincing.
2. Greek texts carry more weight than translations.
3. The quality of manuscripts supporting a given variant is more important than their quantity.
4. Preference for the variant most difficult to understand may conflict with other criteria.<sup>380</sup>
5. If a variant yields a reading more similar to a quotation from the Septuagint or a reading from a parallel New Testament text, the scholar must be suspect that the copyist may have been trying to harmonize the text he received to these other sources.<sup>381</sup>

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<sup>380</sup>One must consider that the variant most difficult to understand may also be the one that disrupts the context, and for that reason it is difficult to understand.

<sup>381</sup>Aland, p. 280-281.

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Chapter 5: Can We Believe Everything We Read? The Question of Inspiration

People across the world, both believers and even many unbelievers, value and respect the Bible as a source of encouragement and inspiration. Unlike unbelievers, though, believers hold that the Bible is a supernatural book and is in some sense inspired by God and the very Word of God.

What exactly is “inspiration?” What is this conviction based on? In this chapter, we will address these questions.

A. The Definition of Inspiration

James Orr correctly claims, “Man can know God only as, in some way, God reveals, or makes Himself known to man.”³⁸² In light of this truth, we may safely assume that when God reveals Himself, He will also create a means to preserve that revelation. This is the essence of the concept of “inspiration.” Inspiration is the means by which God provides for the faithful preservation of His revelation. Erickson concurs, “Since God does not repeat his revelation for each person, there has to be some way to preserve it.”³⁸³

In order to ensure a precise preservation of His revelation, God moved on the writers of Scripture in a supernatural fashion. In other words, He “inspired” them. The same Spirit who gave this revelation also provided the means for its preservation.³⁸⁴ Carl Henry expounds this idea in his definition of inspiration: “Inspiration is a supernatural influence upon divinely chosen prophets and apostles whereby the Spirit of God assures the truth and trustworthiness of their oral and written proclamation.”³⁸⁵

Charles Hodge comments on the distinction between revelation and inspiration: “The object of revelation is the communication of knowledge. The object or design of inspiration is to secure infallibility in teaching.”³⁸⁶ Hodge also sees in Paul’s statement in 1 Cor 2:13 an excellent expression of this relationship: “Which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual {thoughts} with spiritual {words},” that is, expressing truths given by the Spirit with words given by the Spirit.³⁸⁷

We must also clarify that God’s revelation comes in two forms: revelation in words, and revelation in deeds. In the case of the latter, the biblical narrator did not necessarily receive special revelation of the biblical events, but could record them based on information available to him by natural means. Luke, in fact, did extensive research on the life of Jesus (Lk 1:3-4). As far as we know, he received no personal revelation about Jesus’ history, but learned of it from human sources. Yet, as inspired writers, the biblical authors faithfully and accurately recorded that history.

Nonetheless, we may still confidently speak of the narrative material in Scripture as revelation in its own right. As stated above, the biblical authors recorded this history under the inspiration of the Spirit. This means that *God Himself* relates this history through the biblical narrators, and thus it possesses the character of divine revelation. The biblical narrative is therefore not so much a description of God’s revelation through His acts in the past, as it is a revelation for readers today.

Concerning the biblical genre “poetry,” Beegle expresses doubt that the psalmist wrote under inspiration at all.³⁸⁸ Does not this material only express the feelings and experience of the psalmist? Yet, Beegle fails to consider that although the psalmists generally do speak from their own personal experience, God directed the

³⁸²Orr J. Revelation and inspiration. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1952. – P. 2.

³⁸³Erickson M. J. Introducing Christian doctrine. – 2nd ed. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001. – P. 61.

³⁸⁴Strong A. H. Systematic theology. – Philadelphia, PA: American Baptist Publication Society, 1907. – P. 198.

³⁸⁵Henry C. F. H. God, revelation, and authority. – Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books. – V. 4. – P. 129.

³⁸⁶Hodge C. Systematic theology. – Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1997. – V. 1. – P. 155.

³⁸⁷Ibid.

³⁸⁸Beegle D. Scripture, tradition, and infallibility. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1973. – P. 199.

expression of those inner feelings in such a way that they could become an inspired means of instruction, encouragement and comfort for others, who are going through similar experiences.

We reject the idea that the Bible possesses different “levels” of inspiration, that is, some portions are more “inspired” than others are. We affirm, rather, “All Scripture is inspired by God” (2 Tim 3:16), and in equal measure. Sections of Scripture differ not in degree of inspiration, but in the degree of importance that they hold for Christian faith and practice. Pinnock expresses it well, that all of Scripture is inspired, but not all is equally central.³⁸⁹

In addition, Orr makes an interesting and important observation about the relationship between inspiration and progressive revelation. The term “progressive revelation” describes how, in the course of biblical history, God reveals His truth to His people progressively or in stages. This means that biblical books closer to the end of the canon may contain a fuller and more precise expression of God’s truth than we see in earlier books. Orr comments that some doctrines revealed in earlier canonical books, although they no longer directly apply to the Church (like the instruction on divorce in the Old Testament), nonetheless are fully inspired in that they faithfully reflect God’s plan at that time in history.³⁹⁰

Finally, we must touch on the relationship between inspiration and insight. Inspiration, as already defined, is the supernatural action of the Holy Spirit on the writers of Scripture for the preservation of God’s revelation and the precise expression of His truth. Along with this, all would agree that the help of the Spirit is necessary not only in composing Scripture, but also in its proper interpretation by the reader.

However, we must not consider the latter aspect “inspiration.” Inspiration was only for the biblical writers. In order not to confuse inspiration with the help that the Spirit provides in its interpretation, we employ a different term to describe the latter – “insight.” The Spirit does not inspire the reader in such a way that his/her interpretation becomes infallible and equal to Scripture, but simply gives insight into its understanding and application to life. Nonetheless, Strong rightly stresses the necessity of insight from the Spirit: “Christ has not so constructed Scripture as to dispense with his personal presence and teaching by his Spirit.”³⁹¹

B. The Mechanism of Inspiration

To better understand the idea of inspiration, one must consider its mechanism of action. We want to know exactly how God inspired the Bible. Did He simply inspire the biblical writers, who then wrote the text of Scripture on their own, or did He inspire their choice of words as well? In other words, does the Spirit’s work of inspiration extend only to the writer, or also to his words?

We must also determine the degree of human involvement in writing of Scripture. Is the writer totally passive in the process, or does he participate in some way, and to what degree?

1. Who or What Is Inspired?

a. Inspired Authors

Liberal theologians reject the idea of God’s special inspiration of the biblical authors. In their opinion, the writers of the Bible were simply religious geniuses, who possessed the ability to perceive spiritual truths above the norm. This theory is known as the “intuition theory.”³⁹²

³⁸⁹Pinnock C. H. Biblical revelation: The foundation of Christian theology. – Chicago: Moody Press, 1971. – P. 88.

³⁹⁰Orr, p. 175-176.

³⁹¹Strong, p. 219.

³⁹²Strong, p. 203; Duffield G. P., Van Cleave N. M. Foundations of Pentecostal theology. – Los Angeles, CA: L.I.F.E. Bible College, 1983. – P. 21.

A brief examination of what the biblical authors felt about their own writings, however, will suffice to refute this error. In both Old and New Testaments, the writers testify of the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives and ministries. For example, David said, “The Spirit of the LORD spoke by me, And His word was on my tongue” (2 Sam 23:2), and Paul claimed, “Which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual {thoughts} with spiritual {words}” (1 Cor 2:13). In the words of Strong, “Inspiration is an influence of the Spirit of God. It is not a merely naturalistic phenomenon or psychological vagary, but is rather the effect of the inworking of the personal divine Spirit.”³⁹³

In addition, in refutation of the “intuition theory,” we note that not any person, however talented he or she may be, could possess the quality of inspiration, but only God’s chosen prophets and apostles. The biblical narrative makes it perfectly clear that God took the initiative in appointing such individuals. He called them to that ministry and endowed them with the gift of the Spirit to execute that ministry.³⁹⁴

Others embrace the so-called “illumination theory,” which states that inspiration refers to the Spirit’s work to simply give biblical authors special insight into God’s plan. An adherent of this theory, Marcus Dods, expresses it this way: “The inspired man might not see the facts of history any more clearly than the uninspired; but he saw God in history where the uninspired only saw human passions.”³⁹⁵

This theory, however, provides little place for receiving new revelation from God, especially in regards to prophecy. This theory shares much in common with the main postulate of liberal theology, that God does no miracles, but accomplishes everything by natural means. Strong opposes this teaching, stating, “We grant that there may have been instances in which the influence of the Spirit, in inspiration, amounted only to illumination... But we deny that this was the constant method of inspiration, or that such an influence can account for the revelation of new truth to the prophets and apostles.”³⁹⁶

Finally, others defend the position that the Holy Spirit did indeed supernaturally inspire the biblical writers in a general sense, but that He did not superintend their choice of words. Lampe, for example, feels that the Spirit’s work of inspiration is comparable to God’s breathing into Adam “the breath of life” (Gen 2:7).³⁹⁷ Yet in a following discussion, we will show that inspiration goes beyond just personally enriching the author, but effects his word choice as well.

In conclusion, we want to clarify several other issues concerning the inspiration of the biblical authors. First, liberal theologians accept the thesis that several authors participated in the composition of certain biblical books.³⁹⁸ Yet, this significantly complicates the question of inspiration. How can we demonstrate the inspiration of a book with many authors? Which author was inspired? Conservative evangelical theologians, in general, reject the multiple-author hypothesis. This position is well defended in Donald Guthrie’s *New Testament Introduction*.

Second, some commentators remind us that the activity of the Spirit in inspiration does not sanctify the writer, but simply equips him to write Holy Scripture. Finally, inspiration does not convey omniscience. The biblical authors knew only what God revealed to them.³⁹⁹

b. Inspired Words

³⁹³Strong, p. 196.

³⁹⁴Hodge, v. 1, p. 154-155; Henry C. F. H. Divine revelation and the Bible // Walvoord J. F. Inspiration and interpretation. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1957. – P. 256.

³⁹⁵Dods M. The Bible: Its origin and nature. – New York: Scribner’s Sons, 1912. – P. 126.

³⁹⁶Strong, p. 206.

³⁹⁷Noted in Graham R. W. The inspiration of Scripture // Lexington Theological Quarterly. 1987. 22. P. 99. Also, see Orr, p. 162-163.

³⁹⁸See discussion in Achtemeier P. J. The inspiration of Scripture: Problems and proposals. – Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1980. – P. 24.

³⁹⁹Shedd W. G. T. Dogmatic theology // Ed. Gomes A. W. – 3rd ed. – Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Pub, 2003. – P. 98-100; Silva M. Old Princeton, Westminster, and inerrancy // Conn H. M. Inerrancy and hermeneutic: A tradition, a challenge, a debate. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1988. – P. 71.

Along with the claim that God inspired the biblical writers, i.e., He opened to them an understanding of His plan and imparted His thoughts to their minds, we must also recognize that He directed their word choice, so that they wrote exactly what He wanted them to write. Therefore, we can consider what they wrote to be the Word of God. Inspiration does not mean that the biblical writers, having received God's thoughts, expressed those thoughts in their own words. If God inspired only the writers, then Podnyuk's concern has weight: "If God inspired only the writers, then their writings may have been polluted by interaction with their own primitive worldviews."⁴⁰⁰

The theory that inspiration extends to the words of Scripture is called "verbal inspiration." The Bible supports this view. Paul, for example, wrote, "All Scripture is inspired by God" (2 Tim 3:16). Notice that Paul ascribes inspiration not to the authors of Scripture, but to what they wrote. In a similar way, Jesus announced, "The Scripture cannot be broken" (Jn 10:35), that is, the words of Scripture. Paul wrote that Israel was "entrusted with the oracles of God" (Rom 3:2). Again, the verbal nature of inspiration is stressed. In 2 Peter 1:21, we read, "Men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God."⁴⁰¹ When we survey the New Testament in its entirety, we see that the New Testament writers received the Old Testament as the verbatim Word of God.

The Bible, in fact, contains God's speech.⁴⁰² The prophets were God's mouthpiece, transmitting His literal words. Throughout the Old Testament, we encounter the phrase, "Thus says the Lord." Also significant are the instances where God commanded the prophets to record His revelation (Ex 34:27; Isa 8:1; 30:8; Jer 36:28; Ezek 43:11; Hab 2:2). This indicates that not only are the thoughts of the prophets important, but their very words. In addition, we encounter passages where God forbade people from adding or removing words from the text (Deut 4:2; Jer 26:2; Rev 22:18-19). Again, we see emphasis on the words of Scripture – they must be preserved without alteration or distortion.⁴⁰³

It is enlightening to observe the interplay between the expressions "God says" and "Scripture says" in the Bible, which shows that the words of Scripture are God's words, not just a human's words. Comparing Genesis 12:1-3 with Galatians 3:8, we discover that the words ascribed to God in the former are attributed to Scripture in the latter. We observe the same in comparing Exodus 9:13-16 with Romans 9:17, and Psalm 2:7 with Acts 13:33. So then, God's words are the words of Scripture. The opposite is also true. In Genesis 2:23-24, the words of Scripture, written by Moses, are attributed to God in Matthew 19:4-5. We see the same in comparing Psalm 2:1 with Acts 4:24-25, and Psalm 95:7 with Hebrews 3:7.⁴⁰⁴

In confirmation of "verbal inspiration," commentators cite the following passages of Scripture.⁴⁰⁵ In Jeremiah 1:9, we encounter a fine expression of God's relation to His prophets: "Behold, I have put My words in your mouth." Later, God warns the prophet, "Do not omit a word!" (Jer 26:2). God spoke to Moses, "I, even I, will be with your mouth, and teach you what you are to say" (Ex 4:12). Concerning the Old Testament in its entirety, Jesus once stated, "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God" (Matt 4:4). Concerning the New Testament, Paul claimed that he taught words "taught by the Spirit" (1 Cor 2:13).

Some claim that a statement can be expressed in various ways without distortion of its meaning.⁴⁰⁶ That may be the case, but that is not the case with Scripture, otherwise it would lose its distinction of being the

⁴⁰⁰Поднюк С. Методы изучения Библии. – Р. 7.

⁴⁰¹Pieper F. Christian dogmatics. – St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953. – v. 1. – P. 217-218.

⁴⁰²Grudem W. A. Scripture's self-attestation and the problem of formulating a doctrine of Scripture // Carson D. A., Woodbridge J. D. Scripture and truth. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1992. – P. 19ff.

⁴⁰³Geisler N. L., Nix W. E. A general introduction to the Bible. – Chicago, IL: Moody, 1986. – P. 49-50; Henry, God, revelation, and authority, v. 4, p. 136.

⁴⁰⁴Geisler, Nix, p. 51.

⁴⁰⁵Ferguson S. B. How does the Bible look at itself? // Conn H. M. Inerrancy and hermeneutic: A tradition, a challenge, a debate. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1988. – P. 56-57; Witmer J. A. The Biblical evidence for the verbal-plenary inspiration of the Bible // Bibliotheca sacra. 1964. 121. P. 248.

⁴⁰⁶See Lewis G. R. What does biblical infallibility mean? // Youngblood R. Evangelicals and inerrancy. – Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1984. – P. 46; Orr, p. 210-211; Beegle, p. 233-234.

Word of God. It would be, rather, God's ideas in human words. However, the prophets, apostles and the Lord Himself regarded Scripture as the Word of God. In addition, the above-mentioned arguments show the activity of the Spirit in the author's word choice. Thus, God's direction in the choice of words guaranteed a precise expression of His truth.

Shedd adds the idea that thoughts are also a verbal phenomenon. People do not think in abstraction, but in concrete words. Therefore, if God inspired the thoughts of the biblical writers, He also thereby already suggested which words would be the most appropriate to express them.⁴⁰⁷

2. The Human Factor

If inspiration extends to the author's word choice, then in what way is the human author involved in the process at all? We will investigate two competing theories: the dictation theory and the accommodation theory.

a. The Dictation Theory

According to the theological school called "fundamentalism," the Holy Spirit dictated to the biblical authors what they should write. Augustus Strong describes this theory in the following words: "This theory holds that inspiration consisted in such a possession of the minds and bodies of the Scripture writers by the Holy Spirit, that they became passive instruments or amanuenses – pens, not penmen, of God."⁴⁰⁸

Such an understanding of divine inspiration held some prominence in antiquity, especially among pagans. In addition, the Hebrew philosopher Philo advanced such an understanding, as did the Christian apologist Athenagoras of Athens (2nd c.).⁴⁰⁹ Athenagoras wrote,

I think that you also, with your great zeal for knowledge, and your great attainments in learning, cannot be ignorant of the writings either of Moses or of Isaiah and Jeremiah, and the other prophets, who, lifted in ecstasy above the natural operations of their minds by the impulses of the Divine Spirit, uttered the things with which they were inspired, the Spirit making use of them as a flute-player breathes into a flute (*A plea for Christians*, 9).

We can support this notion only partially. Dictation did indeed occur in those instances where God spoke directly to people, or through them. This would apply to the Law of Moses and the messages of the prophets. In other instances, it is more appropriate to speak not of dictation, but of cooperation between the Divine and human authors of Scripture.

We can refute the theory of complete dictation in the following way. First, in Scripture we observe that each biblical author has his own literary style, vocabulary, etc. This would be inconsistent with the idea that the same Spirit dictated to all the writers of Scripture. Second, Luke stated that before writing his history of Jesus, he researched the question thoroughly (Lk 1:1-3). Third, this teaching deviates from the traditional understanding of inspiration in the Church, especially among Protestants.⁴¹⁰ J. I. Packer informs us, "It is safe to say that no Protestant theologian, from the Reformation till now, has ever held it."⁴¹¹

Charles Hodge offers another refutation. He points out that God is able to speak through people "without turning them into machines."⁴¹² Strong considers it foolish to claim that "the Scripture writers should have had

⁴⁰⁷Shedd, p. 101-102.

⁴⁰⁸Strong, p. 208.

⁴⁰⁹Dods, p. 107-110.

⁴¹⁰Achtemeier, p. 33.

⁴¹¹Packer J. I. *Fundamentalism and the Word of God*. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1958. – P. 79.

⁴¹²Hodge, v. 1, p. 169.

dictated to them what they knew already, or what they could inform themselves of by the use of their natural powers.”⁴¹³ Chafer reminds us that God’s conventional dealing with humans is not to violate their will, but to invite cooperation with Him.⁴¹⁴

b. The Accommodation Theory

The “accommodation theory” holds that God inspired the biblical writers in such a way that the author employed his usual literary style and vocabulary, took into account the historical situation of his recipients, and wrote his work with a specific goal in mind. At the same time, God directed this process in such a way that every word chosen by the human author was that word, that God wanted him to use. Packer expresses this concept well: God works “through and by means of the writers’ own activity, in such a way that their thinking and writing were *both* free and spontaneous on their part *and* divinely elicited and controlled, and what they wrote was not only their own work but also God’s work.”⁴¹⁵

So then, the action of the Spirit on the authors of Scripture, in the words of Achtemeier, “enhances rather than suppresses the human potential.”⁴¹⁶ Orr concurs, “The genius (of the author) is enkindled, not suppressed, by the power of the Holy Spirit inspiring him.”⁴¹⁷ It is also correct to claim that God specially prepared the biblical writers, so that their intellectual and linguistic abilities, educational level, and personal experience enabled them to become His instruments to write the Holy Text.⁴¹⁸ In the words of Chafer, “God evidently employs the personal talents of the human authors, selecting them according to their natural ability for the task He commits to them. Moses the historian, David the sweet singer, and Paul the logician, are examples.”⁴¹⁹

At the same time, we add that this relationship of “accommodation,” which “enhances the human potential,” does not exhaust the mechanics of God’s self-revelation. In other words, we do not want to confuse this concept with the theories of intuition or illumination, described above. God can, and indeed did, reveal to the authors of Scripture truths that exceeded their human abilities to perceive them without the aid of special, supernatural revelation.

One can cite substantial support for the accommodation theory. Frist, as was already mentioned, Luke conducted scholarly research before writing his Gospel (Lk 1:1-3). This means that he wrote his Gospel account not under dictation by the Spirit, but from the results of his research. Second, in several New Testament passages, the authorship of Old Testament quotations is attributed not to God, but to people. This shows the real participation of the human authors in the process of inscripturation and confirms the accommodation theory.

- David speaks by the Holy Spirit (Mk 12:26; Acts 1:16; 4:25);
- David “writes” or “speaks” (Lk 20:42; Acts 2:25; Rom 11:9; Mk 12:36);
- Isaiah “writes” or “speaks” (Jn 1:23; 12:39; Rom 9:27, 29; Mk 7:6; Matt 15:7);
- Moses “writes” or “speaks” (Rom 10:5, 19; Matt 22:24; Mk 7:10; Acts 3:22; Mk 12:19; Lk 20:28).

This does not indicate, of course, that these Old Testament passages were not inspired. Here, simply, the conscious human participation in this process is emphasized.

⁴¹³Strong, p. 210.

⁴¹⁴Chafer L. S. Systematic theology. – Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1993. – V. 1. – P. 68.

⁴¹⁵Packer, Fundamentalism, p. 80.

⁴¹⁶Achtemeier, p. 26.

⁴¹⁷Orr, p. 169.

⁴¹⁸Erickson, p. 67.

⁴¹⁹Chafer, v. 1, p. 76.

Chafer draws an interesting parallel between the writing of Scripture and the incarnation of the Son of God. Just as Jesus Christ is both fully God and fully human, Scripture is both fully God's Word and fully the words of men. Just as some people during the Christological debates attempted to prove that Jesus was either fully God, or fully human, but not both, some people today commit the same error. They speak of the Bible as the Word of God without human participation (the dictation theory), or as human words without God's participation (liberals).⁴²⁰

How exactly God the Holy Spirit interacted with the biblical authors to produce an inspired result, however, remains a mystery.⁴²¹ Chafer aptly expresses it: "As to *how* the divine revelation was given to the human author, none other than God or the elect man could know. It was wholly within those personal and sacred relationships into which none other might intrude."⁴²²

C. The Degree of Inspiration

1. Defense of Biblical Inerrancy

In this section, our concern is the degree of inspiration that the biblical text enjoys. Is every word inspired, or not? The answer to this question has an enormous effect both on our understanding of the Bible, and on our understanding of the doctrines based on it.

The view defending the inspiration of each word in the Bible is called "full inspiration," or "biblical inerrancy." How can one substantiate this view?

a. Full Inspiration Defined (Biblical Inerrancy)

According to the theory of "full inspiration," every word in the biblical text is the Word of God, inspired by Him. Consequently, the Bible is without error and is completely reliable in all matters. One of the most ardent supporters of this view is Charles Hodge, who writes,

Inspiration extends to all the contents of these several books. It is not confined to moral and religious truths, but extends to the statements of facts, whether scientific, historical, or geographical. It is not confined to those facts the importance of which is obvious, or which are involved in matters of doctrine. It extends to everything which any sacred writer asserts to be true.⁴²³

If the Bible is inerrant, it becomes crucial to define what exactly an "error" is. Some say the Bible is free only from intentional mistakes, but not from unintentional ones. In other words, the biblical authors do not intentionally deceive us. In fact, the biblical authors do insist on their honesty.⁴²⁴ Others feel that the Bible is true in matters that it intends to teach us, but may not be accurate in unimportant details. We will look at this latter theory in greater detail later.

⁴²⁰Ibid, v. 1, p. 75.

⁴²¹Warfield B. B. The works of Benjamin B. Warfield, Volume 1: Revelation and inspiration. — Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2008. — P. 379.

⁴²²Chafer, v. 1, p. 82.

⁴²³Hodge, v. 1, p. 163.

⁴²⁴See Lk 1:1-5; Jn 21:24; Rom 9:1; 2 Cor 11:31; Gal 1:20; 1 Tim 2:7; 2 Pet 1:15-18; 1 Jn 1:1-5 (Preus R. Notes on the inerrancy of scripture // Bulletin of the Evangelical Theological Society. 1965. 8. P. 129-132).

However, the majority of conservative evangelical theologians define “error” as that which does not correspond to reality. This means that if the Scriptures are inerrant, then all that they contain corresponds to the true state of affairs. As Geisler puts it, truth must be judged by its correspondence to the facts.⁴²⁵

Concerning inerrancy, we must make the following important clarification. When we claim that “every word” in the text is inspired, we mean “every word” in the context of the sentence, in which it is located, and in light of the entire biblical text. Words taken in isolation do not possess their full meaning, but only when seen in their relationship with other words in the text.

b. Full Inspiration Defended: Biblical Arguments

1) Full Inspiration of the Old Testament

It will be useful for us to divide our discussion of biblical inerrancy into two parts: the inerrancy of the Old Testament and of the New Testament. The teachings of Jesus and the apostles confirm Old Testament inerrancy. To review the objections to using the testimony of Jesus and the apostles in defense of Old Testament inspiration, see chapter 2, section B-4.

The New Testament demonstrates that Jesus and His disciples often spoke of the Old Testament as God’s Word (Matt 4:4; Mk 7:13; Rom 3:2; 9:6; Heb 4:12; 5:12) or as God’s speech (Acts 1:16; 3:18, 21; 4:25; 13:35).⁴²⁶ Scripture is the foundation of Christian faith (Eph 2:20).⁴²⁷

Furthermore, they fully supported the inspired nature of Old Testament teaching. A few examples: the Law in general (Matt 5:17), the Ten Commandments (Mk 10:19), the love commandment (Lk 10:26-27), the ceremony for cleansing a leper (Mk 1:44), the temple as a place of prayer (Mk 11:17), order in marriage (Mk 10:6-7), the resurrection of the dead (Mk 12:26), multiple witnesses (Matt 18:16), respect for parents (Mk 7:10).

Moreover, Jesus and the apostles understood the Old Testament narrative as true history. We note no instance when they expressed any doubt about the historicity of the Old Testament. A few examples:

- Jonah and the great fish (Matt 12:40)
- the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Matt 11:23; Jude 7)
- Adam and Eve (Matt 19:4-6; Rom 5:12; 1 Tim 2:13-14)
- Noah’s flood (Lk 17:26; 2 Pet 3:6; Heb 11:7)
- Satan (Mk 3:23-25; Eph 4:27)
- Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Mk 12:6; Rom 9; Lk 3:34)
- the brazen serpent (Jn 3:14)
- the wife of Lot turning to salt (Lk 17:32)
- Job (Jam 5:11)
- the destruction of Jericho (Heb 11:30)
- parting the Red Sea (Heb 11:29; 1 Cor 10:1-2)
- creation of the world (Jn 1:3; Col 1:16)
- manna in the wilderness (1 Cor 10:3-5)
- three Hebrews cast into the oven (Heb 11:34)
- Daniel in the lion’s den (Heb 11:33)

⁴²⁵Geisler N. L. An evaluation of McGowen’s view on the inspiration of Scripture // Bibliotheca Sacra 2010. 167. C. 21. Erickson concurs (Erickson, p. 74).

⁴²⁶Henry, God, revelation, and authority, v. 4, p. 136-137.

⁴²⁷Vanhoozer K. J. Augustinian inerrancy: Literary meaning, literal truth, and literate interpretation in the economy of Biblical discourse Merrick J., Garrett S. M. Five views on biblical inerrancy // Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013. – P. 304.

- Elijah praying for rain (Jam 5:17).

Additionally, Jesus and His disciples anticipated fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies (Matt 26:54; Jn 5:39; Lk 24:44; Acts 2:17, 25, 34; 3:22, 25). Paul announced that he believed “everything that is in accordance with the Law and that is written in the Prophets” (Acts 24:14).⁴²⁸

The following item holds special importance. Three times in the New Testament, Jesus or Paul based their arguments on only one word in the text, which one cannot do, unless one believes that every word is inspired. For example, in Matthew 22:32, Jesus proves to the Sadducees that there will be a resurrection from the dead: “I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” The use of the present tense “is” in Exodus 3:6 indicates that God is still the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that is, they are still alive to Him. If the word had been “was,” then Jesus could not have quoted it in support of the resurrection. His argument depended on the tense of one verb.

Moreover, in Matthew 22:44, Jesus quotes David, who, in his time, called his future son “Lord.” Jesus continues, “If David then calls Him ‘Lord,’ how is He his son?” Again, everything depends on one word – in this instance, “Lord.” In Galatians 3:16 Paul demonstrates that Jesus is the descendant, i.e., “seed,” of Abraham, who will inherit the promise of Abraham. Since “seed” stands in the singular, Paul can claim that Jesus is the only heir of Abraham. Paul’s argument depends on the number of the word – singular, not plural.

It is significant that, although in the New Testament we see changes in how the Old Testament applies to believers in Jesus (for example, Acts 15:19-21), the New Testament writers nonetheless fully support the truth and inspiration of these teachings. A change how the Old Testament is applied in no way affected their opinion of its spiritual quality.⁴²⁹

Next, we will investigate several key passages that support the full inspiration of the Old Testament.

- For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished (Matt 5:18).
- If he called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken) (Jn 10:35).
- Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth (Jn 17:17).
- All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness (2 Tim 3:16).
- But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is {a matter} of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God (2 Pet 1:20-21).

Concerning 2 Pet 2:20-21, some may object that these verses relate only to prophetic passages. Erickson responds, “Peter refers to the ‘prophetic word’ (2 Peter 1:19) and every ‘prophecy of scripture’ (v. 20) in such a way as to lead us to believe that the whole of the collection of writings commonly accepted in that day is in view.”⁴³⁰

In summary, we will consider Pinnock’s comments on 2 Tim 3:16 and 2 Pet 1:20-21. The former passage establishes that *all* Scripture is inspired. The latter passage reveals that *no* prophecy of Scripture was of human origin. So then, the doctrine of full inspiration is confirmed by both inclusion and exclusion.⁴³¹ Without doubt, Jesus and His apostles gave full support to the idea of Old Testament inerrancy.

⁴²⁸Grudem, p. 46-47.

⁴²⁹Marshall I. H. Biblical inspiration. – Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 1982. – P. 24.

⁴³⁰Erickson, p. 64.

⁴³¹Pinnock, Biblical revelation, p. 57.

2) Full Inspiration of the New Testament

It is more difficult, of course, to establish the inerrancy of the New Testament on the basis of Jesus and the apostles' teaching, since the New Testament was not fully written until the end of that period. Nonetheless, with the aid of the following premises, we may establish New Testament inerrancy.

First, we have already demonstrated the full inspiration of the Old Testament based on Jesus and the apostles' teaching. Second, Jesus and His disciples spoke of the Old Testament as "Scripture." For Jesus and the apostles the term "Scripture" referred to the books that contain God's revelation, what we would call the "canon" today. It is important to realize that Jesus and the apostles considered the Old Testament, and *only* the Old Testament, to be Scripture. Third, if the Old Testament is inerrant and is considered Scripture, then we can conclude that Scripture, in general, possess the quality of inerrancy. Fourth, since our New Testament books are included in the canon (see chapter 3), we can consider them "Scripture." If the New Testament is described by the same term as the inerrant Old Testament, i.e., "Scripture," then it must possess all the characteristics of Scripture, including inerrancy.

Along with this, Hodge provides this helpful thought: "If the Scriptures of the old economy were given by inspiration of God, much more were those writings which were penned under the dispensation of the Spirit."⁴³² We may also argue that the apostles wrote their works with authority, expecting their readers to obey their instructions.⁴³³ Although this alone does not confirm the total inerrancy of the New Testament, it can serve as a supplementary argument in support of this position. The apostles were conscious of the fact that they were writing God's truth.

c. Full Inspiration Defended: Other Proofs

A classic argument for inerrancy goes as follows. If the Bible, as was proven earlier, is the Word of God, and if God, by nature, is faithful and true, then the Bible cannot contain error, since God cannot lie (Heb 6:18). It follows, then, that the biblical writers wrote a faithful account of what actually happened. The disciples of the apostle John, in fact, testified of his Gospel: "This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and wrote these things, and we know that his testimony is true" (Jn 21:24). Notice that they did not call John's Gospel a "story," but a "testimony." Duffield and Van Cleave add the thought, that it is unlikely that God would use an untruth to advance His truth.⁴³⁴

Finally, until modern times, the generally accepted teaching of the Church was that the Bible was God's Word, inspired by the Holy Spirit, and a fully reliable source of God's revelation. Consider the following examples:

- Justin Martyr: "I am entirely convinced that no Scripture contradicts another" (*Dialogue*, 65).
- Irenaeus: "The Scriptures are indeed perfect, since they were spoken by the Word of God and His Spirit" (*Against Heresies*, 2.28.2).
- Basil the Great: "No single syllable of the sacred writings it to be neglected."⁴³⁵
- Gregory Nazianzen: "It is blasphemous to suppose that... even the smallest letters (are) without design."⁴³⁶
- John Chrysostom: "There is divergence in the historical narrative of the Gospels, but there is no contradiction."⁴³⁷

⁴³²Hodge, v. 1, p. 160.

⁴³³See 1 Cor 14:37; 1 Thes 2:13; 4:2, 8; 2 Thes 2:15; 3:6, 14-15; 2 Cor 10:5-6; 12:11-12; Gal 1:8-9; 2 Thes 3:14-15; 1 Jn 4:6.

⁴³⁴Duffield, p. 23.

⁴³⁵From George Barry in Lindsell H. The battle for the Bible. – Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976. – P. 52.

⁴³⁶Ibid.

⁴³⁷Ibid.

- Augustine: “I have learned to yield this respect and honour only to the canonical books of Scripture: of these alone do I most firmly believe that the authors were completely free from error” (*Letter to Jerome*, 82.3).
- Martin Luther: “The Scriptures cannot err” (*St. L. XIX:1073*).⁴³⁸
- John Calvin: Scripture “came to us, by the instrumentality of men, from the very mouth of God” (*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1.7.5).
- John Wesley: In Scripture there “is no defect, no excess” (*Preface to the Sermons*, 5).⁴³⁹

2. Objections to Biblical Inerrancy

On the one hand, when we examine the teaching of Jesus and His apostles on the inspiration of Scripture, we discover that they endorsed the view of full inspiration, that is, biblical inerrancy.

On the other hand, the Bible contains so-called “phenomena.” This term refers to the presence of scientific, geographical, and historical claims, which supposedly contradict secular history or scientific data. Some also see inconsistencies within the Bible itself, even to the point of finding incorrect doctrine. Also problematic is the presence of seemingly unfulfilled prophecies. These issues merit our attention.

a. Inconsistencies with Scientific Data

It is claimed that the Bible advances ideas inconsistent with modern science. For example, the Scriptures say that the sun moves through the heavens from East to West (Josh 10:12-13; Ecc 1:5; Ps 19:4-6). Furthermore, the Law of Moses classifies a bat as a bird, not as a mammal (Lev 11:12-19). In Matthew 12:42, we read of the “ends of the earth,” which leaves the impression of a flat earth. In addition, it seems that the biblical writers held to a primitive cosmology – that the atmosphere is contained in a hard shell (Gen 1:8), which is held up by pillars (Job 26:11) attached to a foundation (2 Sam 22:8), and that it has windows to let down precipitation (Gen 7:11).

We can best understand such inconsistencies between scientific and biblical claims by considering the instability of the discipline of science.⁴⁴⁰ If the Holy Spirit inspired the biblical writers to describe scientific facts with absolute precision, according to which scientific standard should He have directed them? To the standards of the 15th century? The 21st century? The 24th century? If the scientific claims of Scripture corresponded to the standards of 21st century science, then would not readers of the Bible in the 24th century consider it errant? In His wisdom, the Holy Spirit did not introduce such a confusion into the Holy Text, but allowed the biblical writers to express scientific data in accordance with the scientific standards of that time.

We offer the following explanations as well. In places where the sun is described as moving across the sky, we are dealing with what is called “phenomenological language.” This means that a phenomenon may be described in terms of how it seems from the human vantage point. Even today, we speak of the sun “rising” and “setting.” In addition, in Matthew 12:42, the idea of the “ends of the earth,” is also phenomenological. It seems to the naked eye that the earth does have edges. We still speak of the “ends of the earth” today.

When the Law of Moses classifies the bat as a bird, we consider this an instance of “prescientific classification.” According to this principle, it is permissible to use more primitive classification schemes. It seemed right to the ancients that a flying creature should be called a bird. Additionally, we observe prescientific classification in Lev 11:5, where the camel and rabbit are said to “chew the cud.” The ancients were describing these animals not from the perspective of the anatomic features, but their method of eating.

⁴³⁸From Pieper, v. 1, p. 282.

⁴³⁹From Wesley J. John’s *Wesley’s theology* / Ed. R. W. Burtner, R. E. Chiles. – Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1982. – P. 18

⁴⁴⁰Noted in Runia K. *Karl Barth’s doctrine of Holy Scripture* // Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1962. – P. 88; Achtemeier, p. 96-97; Duffield, p. 18-19.

We also have the example of Jesus calling the mustard seed the smallest of seeds (Matt 13:32). One must consider that in Palestine, that was indeed the case.⁴⁴¹

Some object to the more spectacular claims of the Bible, which seem impossible from a scientific point of view, like the sun standing still (Josh 10:12-13), a flood covering the earth (Gen 7:17-20), light appearing before the sun was created (Gen 1:3, 14), a baby born from a virgin (Matt 1:25), or the creation of the universe from nothing (Heb 1:3).

Yet, such objections simply challenge the truth of God's omnipotence. Could not God, who created the planet Earth, temporarily halt its rotation without causing any negative consequences? Could not Almighty God cover the earth with water, not to an excess of 10 feet, but 1000 feet? Could not He, if He so pleased, create light before the sun? With Almighty God, all things are possible. Finally, some object to the biblical dating of the creation of the world and time humans appeared on it. This topic is treated in detail in the third volume of this series, in the discussion of God as Creator.

In conclusion, we will make an important qualification. Although we are ready to recognize that the Holy Spirit allowed the biblical authors to describe natural phenomena according to the cosmology of their time, nevertheless we must take caution here. Sometimes, scientific "facts" may directly contradict biblical assertions. In such cases, we must affirm the priority of Scripture over science. For example, the Bible describes different components of the human condition: such as the soul, spirit, conscience, etc. Here the Bible encroaches on the disciplines of medicine and psychology, which may offer alternative theories. Yet, since biblical anthropology is key to understanding other truths, we must accept the biblical view of human nature.

b. Inconsistencies with Geographical Data

Concerning supposed geographical inconsistencies, we will examine a pair of examples. First, in Mark 5:1-13, Jesus casts a legion of demons out of a man, and they "entered the swine; and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea." Mark records that this occurred in the "country of the Gerasenes," that is, the city of Gerasa. In the parallel passages in Matthew and Luke and in the textual variants on this passage, we encounter other locations: Gadara and Gergesa. The problem with Gerasa is that it is 50 kilometers from the sea. Although the territory of Gadara stretches to the sea, there are no cliffs there.⁴⁴² Additionally, the cities of Gerasa and Gadara are too far from the sea for someone to run there and back in one day (see Mark 5:14-15). The word "Gergesa" is found only in weaker textual variants, and the location of this city is unknown. It is possible, though, that the city in question is the present day Kersa. It is close to the sea, and cliffs with caves are nearby.⁴⁴³

Second, in Mark 7:31 we read, "Again He went out from the region of Tyre, and came through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, within the region of Decapolis." The problem here is that Sidon is north of Tyre, while the Sea of Galilee is south. One possible explanation is that, since Jesus' destination was the Decapolis (to the east of the Sea of Galilee), He went north from Tyre in order to reach the east bank. In addition, an ancient papyrus (No 45) gives the variant, "from the regions of Tyre and Sidon," which removes the difficulty.⁴⁴⁴

c. Inconsistencies with Historical Data

Unlike supposed scientific or geographical inconsistencies, alleged historical contradictions can lead to much more significant theological consequences, since historical data directly affect doctrinal claims. In fact,

⁴⁴¹Archer G. L. *Encyclopedia of Bible difficulties*. – Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1982. – P. 32; Lindsell, p. 169.

⁴⁴²Zindler F. R. www.atheists.org/christianity

⁴⁴³Brooks J. A. *Mark // The New American commentary*. – Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1991, p. 89.

⁴⁴⁴Metzger, *A textual commentary*, p. 82.

the foundation of Christian faith, the death and resurrection of Jesus, is based on historical events. If the Bible is historically unreliable, this could potentially shed doubt on the fact of Christ's resurrection. In fact, not a few more "progressive" theologians have already crossed that line and deny His bodily resurrection.

Also imperative to note is that, unlike scientific data, which often vary, the faithfulness of a historical account does not change from time to time or place to place. Although, in the course of time, people may understand the natural world differently, everyone is clear on what is true history and what is not. Therefore, we reject the theory that the writers of Holy Scripture wrote history in accordance with standards of their day, which supposedly allowed exaggeration and legendary elements in the recounting of events. God's standards of honesty would not permit that.

Moreover, those who accuse the Bible of historical errors fail to consider that we do not possess absolute knowledge of historical events in antiquity. It is very possible that new discoveries will reveal evidence supporting the biblical narrative. Another complicating factor is the following. If we allow that certain passages are historically inaccurate, then what criteria can enable us to determine which passages are accurate, and which ones are not?⁴⁴⁵

A very weighty argument in favor of historical accuracy is that Jesus and the apostles always accepted and respected the historicity of the Old Testament. They never expressed doubts about the reliability of the biblical narrative.⁴⁴⁶ In addition, Luke speaks of the faithfulness and precision of his account (Lk 1:3-4). As far as the dependability of John's Gospel narrative, his disciples wrote, "We know that his testimony is true" (Jn 21:24).

In a number of instances, the biblical account has already been vindicated. R. A. Torrey provides the following examples, where the Bible was found true in spite of earlier skepticism by secular authorities.⁴⁴⁷ In Acts 13:7, Luke calls Sergius Paulus ἀνθύπατος (*anthupatos*, i.e. "proconsul"). It was formerly thought that since Cyprus was an imperial province, it would be ruled by a *propraetor*, not a *proconsul*. Later, though, scholars discovered that in Luke's time, Cyprus had changed from an imperial province to a senatorial province, which is administrated by a *proconsul*. In addition, Lindsell informs us that archeology has confirmed Luke's claim that "Quirinius was governor of Syria." (Lk 2:2).⁴⁴⁸

Next, for a long time scholars believed that Belshazzar was a legend (Dan 5). The king of Babylon at the time of the Median invasion was known to be Nabonidus, and he was absent from the city during the siege. Later discoveries, though, revealed that Nabonidus had a son named Belshazzar. He certainly was acting ruler in Babylon during his father's absence. This is why he promised to make Daniel "third {ruler} in the kingdom" (Dan 5:16), after his father and himself.⁴⁴⁹ Other findings have confirmed the existence of Darius the Mede and Sargon of Assyria.⁴⁵⁰

Formerly, it was thought Moses could not have written the Pentateuch, since people at that time could not write. Now, that theory has been debunked. Furthermore, the presence of the Hittites in Palestine, a theory once rejected by historians, but affirmed by the biblical narrative, has been confirmed by archeology. Next, historians previously denied the presence of camels in Egypt during Abraham's time, but they have since been proven wrong. Archeology has also confirmed the existence of Sodom and Gomorrah.⁴⁵¹ We make special note of the groundbreaking work of William Ramsay, who confirmed many of the historical claims mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles.⁴⁵²

Some point to the disagreement between Gamaliel (Acts 5:34-39) and Josephus concerning the appearance of false Messiahs (see *Jewish Antiquities*, 20:97ff). Here we must keep in mind that Luke is simply

⁴⁴⁵Duffield, p. 15.

⁴⁴⁶Henry, *God, revelation, and authority*, v. 4, p. 182, 205, 251; Geisler, Nix, p. 86-88.

⁴⁴⁷Torrey R. A. *Difficulties in the Bible: Alleged errors and contradictions*. – London: James Nisbet & Co. – p. 22-23.

⁴⁴⁸Lindsell, p. 162.

⁴⁴⁹Ibid, p. 163.

⁴⁵⁰Harris L. L. *Inspiration and canonicity of the Bible*. – Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1957, 1969. – P. 117-119.

⁴⁵¹Henry, *God, revelation, and authority*, τ. 4, c. 182, 205, 251; Archer, *Encyclopedia*, p. 95.

⁴⁵²Bray G. *Biblical interpretation, past and present*. – Downers Grove: IL: Intervarsity Press, 1996. – P. 569-570.

recording the opinion of Gamaliel, who is not an inspired individual. It is also possible that Gamaliel was correct, and Josephus was not.⁴⁵³

At the same time, we must admit that some historical inconsistencies remained unresolved. For example, we have no outside confirmation of Shalmaneser V's victory over Samaria (2 Kin 17:3-6), or of the existence of Pharaoh Ramses in the 15th century BC.⁴⁵⁴ Also problematic is the claim that in the third year of Hoshea (728), the king of Israel, Hezekiah began to reign in Judah (2 Kin 18:1). This would fix the date of Sennacherib's assault on Judah in the 14th year of Hezekiah at 714 (2 Kin 18:13). Secular historians insist, however, that Sennacherib attacked in 701, not 714.⁴⁵⁵

A much discussed topic is the city of Jericho. Historians relate that the ancient city along with its walls were destroyed about 2300 BC.⁴⁵⁶ A new city was erected and was inhabited until the 16th century BC. Little evidence remains for its existence after that time.⁴⁵⁷ In addition, archeologists demonstrate the destruction of the cities of Canaan not in the 15th century, as in the Bible, but in the 13th century. Along with this, history records the reign of a certain Pharaoh Ramses, not in the 15th century, but the 13th century. Finally, Palestine apparently had functioning pagan temples until 13th century. The above-mentioned historical anomalies require further investigation.

The nature of dialogue in the biblical text also receives much attention. Strictly speaking, only the biblical author enjoys inspiration to the degree of inerrancy, but the biblical characters do not. Consequently, we may discover inaccuracies or misstatements in their speeches. The doctrine of full inspiration guarantees only that the biblical authors faithfully represent the speeches included in Scripture, but does not vouch for their contents. Often, we explain the apparent historical inaccuracies in Stephen's speech in Acts 7 in this way.

For evaluating the truth content of biblical dialogue, Lewis gives the following wise counsel. First, one must seek in the text itself some kind of indication that the statements in the dialogue should be taken as literal truth or not. The most obvious example is the preaching and teaching of Jesus. We can receive His words as true in all cases. On the other hand, God gave the following assessment of Job's friends: that they "have not spoken of Me what is right as My servant Job has" (Job 42:7). In the case of other speakers recorded in Scripture, one must judge each case individually in light of the entire biblical revelation.⁴⁵⁸

d. Inconsistencies between Passages of Scripture

Students of the Bible have long noticed the presence of inconsistencies between parallel passages of Scripture. In Appendix D, we investigate in detail many instances of such inconsistencies along with suggested solutions. In this section, though, we will discuss the issue in more general terms, highlighting principles that may lead to the resolution of many of these difficulties.

Parallel passages in the biblical narrative contain many examples of inconsistencies in quantities or numbers. Some examples are covered in Appendix D. Haley explains that in biblical times, numbers were expressed by letters, which could lead to confusion because of similarity between them.⁴⁵⁹ This may also explain many cases of differences in spelling of names.

⁴⁵³Strong, p. 228; Pinnock, Biblical revelation, p. 197.

⁴⁵⁴Weeks N. The sufficiency of Scripture. – Edinburg: Banner of Truth, 1988. – P. 47-52.

⁴⁵⁵Beegle, p. 182-183.

⁴⁵⁶Historians also discuss the existence of Ai after that time (Kenyon K. M. The Bible and recent archaeology. – Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1978. – P. 27-43; Enns P. Inerrancy, however defined, does not describe what the Bible does // Merrick J., Garrett S. M. Five views on Biblical inerrancy. – Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013. – P. 98).

⁴⁵⁷At the same time, conservative biblical scholars date the destruction of Jericho by Joshua at the end of the 15th century, which nearly corresponds to the disappearance of the second city.

⁴⁵⁸Lewis, Biblical infallibility, p. 43.

⁴⁵⁹Haley J. W. Examination of the alleged discrepancies in the Bible. – London: Dickinson & Higham, 1875. – P. 380. Dillard challenges this view (Dillard R. B. Harmonization: A help and a hindrance // Conn H. M. Inerrancy and hermeneutic: A tradition, a challenge, a debate. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1988. – P. 158-159).

Other factors can also explain discrepancies. One person may have more than one name. For example, Eshbaal (אֶשְׁבָּעַל) of 1 Chr 8:33 and Ish-bosheth (אִישׁ-בֹּשֶׁת) of 2 Sam 2:10 are the same person. The ending is merely changed from בעל (*Baal*) to בֶּשֶׁת (*boshet*), or “shame.” Eshbaal is a “man of Baal,” while Ish-bosheth is a “man of shame.”⁴⁶⁰ Additionally, there were no vowels in early Hebrew texts – only consonants. Readers of the text could have easily assigned the wrong vowels, resulting in different names. Moreover, some names may have had more than one pronunciation.⁴⁶¹

One must also allow for the omission of names in biblical genealogies. As a result, the term “son” may actually mean “descendant,” and “father” could mean “ancestor.” A clear example is Genesis 46:16-18, where Zilpah “bore” to Jacob sixteen children. Yet, these sixteen individuals include her children’s’ (Gad and Asher’s) children and the children of Asher’s son Beriah.⁴⁶²

When studying the chronologies of the kings of Israel and Judah, the student of Scripture encounters not a few difficulties. Happily, solutions can be found thanks to the work of Edwin Thiele and his publication *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*. His solutions to these discrepancies are based on the following factors: (1) the death of Ahaz, according to Assyrian records, occurred in 853 BC, (2) Israel measured a “year” from spring to spring, while Judah measured a “year” from fall to fall, (3) the reigns of kings sometimes overlapped, and (4) occasionally the chronologies employed the “accession year” method, according to which the year in which a king ascends the throne is not always counted as the first year of his reign.⁴⁶³

Concerning the different ways that the Four Gospels record the words of Jesus, we must make the following comments. First, we differentiate the *ipsissima verba* and the *ipsissima vox*. The term *ipsissima verba* translates “true (exact) words” of the speaker in a narrative, while *ipsissima vox* means “true voice” of the speaker. In other words, according to the principle of *ipsissima vox*, the true sense of the speaker’s words are expressed in the narrative, but they may not be his/her exact words. Do we have in the Gospels Jesus’ exact words or only an approximation? In other words, do we possess the *ipsissima vox* or the *ipsissima verba* of the Lord?⁴⁶⁴

It is difficult to convincingly defend the thesis that the Gospels always record the exact words (*ipsissima verba*) of Jesus (or in other cases of dialogue in narrative as well), although that certainly might be the case in many instances. Many examples of significant differences between accounts of Jesus’ words testify in favor of *ipsissima vox* (see Appendix E).

Also important to note is that Jesus did not speak Greek, but Aramaic. In the New Testament, though, His words are in Greek. This means that the New Testament text could not have preserved Jesus’ exact words, since it is a translation.⁴⁶⁵ However, we refrain from the extreme position that the bible authors intentionally distorted the speech in narrative dialogues in order to advance their own ideas or theology.

So then, even though we allow for the use of *ipsissima vox*, the doctrine of full inspiration, which we are defending in this chapter, guarantees that the true sense of the words originally spoken are preserved. We also take into consideration Jesus’ promise to His disciples that, through the Holy Spirit, He would “bring to your remembrance all that I said to you” (Jn 14:26). We can, therefore, have full confidence in the biblical narrative. A fuller discussion of this question is found in chapter 13, section E.

e. False Teaching in Scripture

⁴⁶⁰Harris, p. 115-116.

⁴⁶¹Haley, p. 312-314, 394-395.

⁴⁶²Shedd, p. 107.

⁴⁶³Kaiser W. C., Davids P.H., Bruce F. F., Brauch M. T. Hard sayings of the Bible. – Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity: 1997. – P. 55ff.

⁴⁶⁴Among those accepting the theory *ipsissima vox*: Grant Osborne, Donald Carson, Darrell Bock, Paul Feinberg, and I. Howard Marshall. Donald Green is opposed.

⁴⁶⁵Marshall, Biblical inspiration, p. 61-62.

Another challenge to biblical inerrancy is the claim that the Bible contains false teaching.⁴⁶⁶ Common examples are cited in Ecclesiastes 3:19-21 and 7:16.

For the fate of the sons of men and the fate of beasts is the same. As one dies so dies the other; indeed, they all have the same breath and there is no advantage for man over beast, for all is vanity. All go to the same place. All came from the dust and all return to the dust. Who knows that the breath of man ascends upward and the breath of the beast descends downward to the earth? (Ecc 3:19-21).

Do not be excessively righteous and do not be overly wise. Why should you ruin yourself? (Ecc 7:16).

In order to address this objection, we must first understand the character of the Book of Ecclesiastes. The author, for the most part, writes from a secular point of view. Possibly, for this reason he often uses the expression “under the sun,” that is, from a human point of view. The value of this book lies not so much in its individual statements, but in the conclusion the author reaches at the end: “The conclusion, when all has been heard, {is:} fear God and keep His commandments, because this {applies to} every person” (Ecc 12:13).

This book describes the author’s search for meaning. He seeks it in wealth, women, and wisdom, sometimes making incorrect statement based on his observations on life and personal experience. Yet, at the end of it all, he comes to the proper conclusion: “Fear God.”

Runia stresses an important point. If the Bible advances false teaching, then how can one correct it? Where can we find a higher standard, by which to judge when the Bible is correct, or when it is in error?⁴⁶⁷

f. Unfulfilled Prophecies

Some object that the Bible contains prophecies yet unfulfilled. For example, Isaiah 17:1 predicts that Damascus will be totally destroyed, yet that has never occurred. In addition, in chapter 26 of his prophecy, Ezekiel predicted that Nebuchadnezzar would capture the city of Tyre, but he, in fact, failed to do so. Later in the same book, his unsuccessful attempt is actually recorded (Ezek 29:18).

We can offer the following explanations.⁴⁶⁸ As far as Damascus goes, possibly the prophecy may not apply so much to the city itself, as to the ancient Syrian state. In fact, in Isaiah 17:3, we read, “The fortified city will disappear from Ephraim, and sovereignty from Damascus and the remnant of Aram.” We know from history that Damascus fell from being a regional power. Another possibility is that the prophecy concerns the end times. We note that verse 17 of this same chapter is eschatological in scope.

Concerning Nebuchadnezzar, we note that the ancient city of Tyre had two parts: one part on the shore and the other on an adjacent island. Nebuchadnezzar conquered the city on the shore, but the people with their valuables fled to the island. Later, Alexander the Great conquered the island and plundered the people. It is interesting to note that in Ezekiel 26:1-11, those attacking Tyre are described in the singular, which may apply to Nebuchadnezzar. Yet, from verse 12 onward, we encounter the plural, which may indicate the Greeks. The prophecy, then, was fulfilled in two parts.

g. Limitations Due to Humanness/Fallenness of the Biblical Authors

⁴⁶⁶See Barth K. Church dogmatics. / Trans. G. W. Bromiley, G. T. Thomas, H. Knight. Ed. G. W. Bromiley, T. F. Torrance. – New York: T & T. Clark, 2009. – 1.2.509; Beegle, p. 279.

⁴⁶⁷Runia, p. 104.

⁴⁶⁸Kaiser, p. 74; Wiseman D. J. Damascus // Wood D. R. W., Marshall I. H. New Bible dictionary. – 3rd ed. – Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1996. – P. 251-252.

Some feel that, due to the limitations of human understanding and language, God had to “accommodate” His message in order for it to be received by finite human beings.⁴⁶⁹ Some go to the extreme of claiming that, as a result of accommodation, God’s revelation lost its inerrant, and possibly, its inspired character.⁴⁷⁰

We also affirm that God could not have fully expressed Himself within the limitations of human language. Yet, this in no way implies that God could not communicate His revelation with sufficient precision that people could truly know Him. The simplification of material does not necessarily result in its distortion. In addition, we have earlier proven the “verbal” nature of inspiration – that God inspired His Word to the degree of the authors’ word choice. So then, human language did not prevent God from expressing Himself in verbal form.⁴⁷¹

In light of God’s creative genius, Henry can claim, “If He can create man, the communication to him of ideas and words in man’s language is no great burden.”⁴⁷² Packer adds the following thought that Jesus Christ, the incarnate God, successfully employed human language in His teaching ministry.⁴⁷³ In addition, God created language with the goal of communication. The skill of communication is part of God’s image in humanity.

Moreover, we may claim that even human sinfulness did not corrupt the purity of the revelation given to the biblical writers. Even after the Fall, the Spirit was able to use human channels to communicate His revelation without distortion.⁴⁷⁴ Jesus Himself, in fact, appealed to the Old Testament, written by fallen humans, as the literal Word of God. This shows that He believed it possible to communicate Divine revelation through imperfect people, while still preserving its purity.

h. Influence of Culture on Biblical Writers

Opponents to biblical inerrancy also point to the influence of culture on the biblical writers – they could not avoid introducing into the text purely human ideas determined by their cultural upbringing. At times, this claim concerns matters that do not involve a violation of inerrancy. For example, we earlier affirmed that, with some qualifications, the biblical writers shared the scientific worldview of their audience and expressed God’s truth in a corresponding way. Additionally, the Bible abounds in cultural expressions and images of those times. Jesus Himself constantly employed everyday examples to communicate His teaching. Nonetheless, we object to the claim that the biblical authors mimicked the cultural practice of combining actual history with folklore or myth.⁴⁷⁵

Earlier, we warned of the dangers of rejecting the historical accuracy of Scripture. We will highlight several points again. Peter, one of the closest of Jesus’ disciples, wrote, “For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty” (2 Pet 1:16). Paul also spoke out against “myths” (1 Tim 1:4; 4:7; 2 Tim 4:4).⁴⁷⁶ In addition, Luke’s historical credibility is affirmed in that he “investigated everything carefully from the beginning” (Luke 1:3). Of John’s veracity, we read, “We know that his testimony is true” (Jn 21:24).

⁴⁶⁹See Sparks K. The sun also rises: Accommodation in inscripturation and interpretation // Bacote V., Miquélez L. C., Okholm D. L. Evangelical & Scripture: Tradition, authority and hermeneutics. – Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 2004. – P. 126; Franke J. R. Recasting inerrancy: The Bible as witness to missional plurality // Merrick J., Garrett S. M. Five views on Biblical inerrancy // Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013. – P. 265-269.

⁴⁷⁰See Beegle, p. 265.

⁴⁷¹Grudem, p. 20.

⁴⁷²Henry, Divine revelation and the Bible, p. 271.

⁴⁷³Packer J. I. The adequacy of human language // Geisler N. Inerrancy. – Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1980. – P. 217-218.

⁴⁷⁴Lewis G. R. The human authorship of inspired Scripture // Geisler N. Inerrancy. – Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1980. – P. 231; Feinberg P. The meaning of inerrancy // Geisler N. Inerrancy. – Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1980. – P. 282; Mohler R. A. When the Bible speaks, God speaks: The classic doctrine of Biblical inerrancy // Merrick J., Garrett S. M. Five views on Biblical inerrancy // Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013. – P. 120.

⁴⁷⁵See Franke, p. 79; Barth, 1.2.509.

⁴⁷⁶Preus, p. 99.

Moreover, Jesus called His apostles “witnesses,” which implies their fidelity. We can safely assume the same degree of fidelity from the Old Testament writers. The standard of honesty that Jesus and the apostles held to was, in fact, advanced in the Old Testament as well.

Lagrange promoted the view that by exaggerating the historical material and by adding legendary elements, the biblical writers were attempting to teach theology more than history.⁴⁷⁷ Yet, one must question how true doctrine can be based on false history.

Therefore, on the one hand, we affirm the influence of culture on the biblical writers in reference to their scientific worldview and use of cultural images and expressions. On the other hand, we firmly reject that they distorted history or added to it legendary accounts or myths.

i. Improper Methodology

Another objection made by opponents of inerrancy is that adherents of full inspiration of Scripture employ a faulty methodology, namely deductive, rather than inductive, reasoning. The deductive argument that inerrancy’s opponents object to is as follows: God cannot lie, and therefore the Bible, being God’s Word, cannot error.⁴⁷⁸

Critics of inerrancy boast in the superiority of the inductive approach, namely that one should form his/her view of inspiration on the facts of Scripture, that is, the “phenomena.” One must consider these factors when deciding what biblical inspiration really means. According to such thinkers, inerrancy is thereby ruled out as an option for understanding biblical inspiration, since the phenomena point to obvious mistakes in the text. Mounce claims that induction allows us to define the true character of inspiration – that it *does not* include inerrancy.⁴⁷⁹

However, the case with inerrancy is not so. The doctrine of full inspiration is based both on deductive and inductive reasoning. The fact is that the “facts” of Scripture include not only the discrepancies we have earlier discussed, but also the teaching of Jesus and the apostles on the matter.⁴⁸⁰ The presence of the “phenomena” alone does not settle the matter.

Yet, we encounter the following complication. If, on the one hand, the Bible testifies of Jesus and the apostles’ staunch position supporting inerrancy, and, on the other hand, it also contains the “phenomena,” then where are we to begin? Which aspect is weightier? Adherents of inerrancy are convinced that the teaching of Jesus and the apostles carry much greater weight than seeming contradictions in the biblical text.

In addition, some commentators note that the Bible is not an ordinary book, which one can treat as a mere human literary product. Its status as the Word of God requires us to relate to it with great respect and not be hasty to ascribe defects to it.⁴⁸¹

Moreover, Nicole insightfully comments that, on the one hand, the doctrine of full inspiration is a concrete biblical teaching. On the other hand, the presence of phenomena is not a biblical teaching, but an observation made from Scripture. Therefore, it seems most appropriate to give greater weight to specific biblical statements about the nature of inspiration.⁴⁸² Furthermore, conclusions based solely on the presence of

⁴⁷⁷Noted in Beegle, p. 210.

⁴⁷⁸See Enns, p. 113.

⁴⁷⁹Mounce R. H. Clues to understanding Biblical accuracy // Eternity. June, 1966. 17, no. 6. P. 17.

⁴⁸⁰Warfield, p. 205-206. Also, see Saucy R. L. Difficulties with inerrancy // Youngblood R. Evangelicals and inerrancy. – Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1984. – P. 111-112; Ramm B. Protestant Biblical interpretation. – 3rd ed. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1970. – P. 240-241.

⁴⁸¹See Bahnsen G. L. Inductivism, inerrancy and presuppositionalism // Youngblood R. Evangelicals and inerrancy. – Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1984. – P. 215; Pinnock, Biblical revelation, p. 178

⁴⁸²Nicole R. R. The inspiration and authority of Scripture: J. D. G. Dunn versus B. B. Warfield // Churchman. 1984. 98. P. 204.

phenomena can only be tentative, since at any time, new discoveries may reconcile these discrepancies. Yet, the teachings of Jesus and His apostles are constant and stable.⁴⁸³

Paul Feinberg compares the inerrancy questions with scientific inquiry, arguing that the presence of certain still unresolved discrepancies does not nullify the more substantial evidence in favor of full inspiration. In scientific inquiry, after examination of the evidence, researchers form a hypothesis, which is accepted if the bulk of the evidence supports it. Similarly, if the bulk of evidence favors inerrancy, the presence of still unresolved discrepancies should not affect our conclusion.⁴⁸⁴

At the same time, some conservative scholars remind us that, even though the teaching of full inspiration of Scripture has the support of Jesus and the apostles, we should not simply ignore the biblical phenomena, but actively engage in their study. Wenham writes, “Surely a truly biblical theology of the inspiration and authority of scripture will be based on all the data.”⁴⁸⁵

j. Editing the Biblical Text

Another question arises concerning later editing of the biblical text.⁴⁸⁶ In Scripture, we observe instances where it is clear that a later editor added information to the text. For example, another author besides Moses wrote about the latter’s death (Deut 34:1-12). In Genesis 14:14, someone inserted the name “Dan,” since at the time of the author, Moses, this tribe had not yet received its inheritance of land in Canaan (similar example in Deut 34:1). The final verses of the Gospel of John were most likely written by his disciples. In John 21:24, we read, “This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and wrote these things, and we know that his testimony is true.”

Grisanti makes an appropriate response to this issue:

Within the canonical process, and subsequent to the initial writing of a biblical book or books, a God-chosen individual or prophetic figure under the superintendence of the Holy Spirit could adjust, revise, or update pre-existing biblical material in order to make a given Scripture passage understandable to succeeding generations. Those revisions, which occurred within the compositional history of the OT, are also inspired and inerrant.⁴⁸⁷

k. Other Objections

Some feel that Paul’s statement in 1 Corinthians 7:12 undermines the doctrine of inerrancy: “But to the rest I say, not the Lord...” Does this mean that Paul’s is here giving only human advice? One must consider that verse 12 contrasts with verse 10: “But to the married I give instructions, not I, but the Lord.” Paul is simply indicating that the instruction in verse 10 came directly from the Lord, whereas the instruction in verse 12 did not.⁴⁸⁸ Yet, Paul’s apostolic counsel is, nevertheless, inspired. In verse 40, Paul affirms, “In my opinion she is happier if she remains as she is; and I think that I also have the Spirit of God.”

⁴⁸³Bahnsen, *Inductivism*, p. 212.

⁴⁸⁴Feinberg, p. 272-276

⁴⁸⁵Wenham G. J., p. 287. Similar view in Pinnock, *Biblical revelation*, p. 196.

⁴⁸⁶Material taken from Grisanti M. A. *Inspiration, inerrancy, and the Old Testament canon: the place of textual updating in an inerrant view of scripture* // *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*. 44/4. 2001. P. 577-598.

⁴⁸⁷*Ibid*, p. 582.

⁴⁸⁸Turretin F. *Institutes of elenctic theology* / Trans. G. M. Giger. Ed. J. T. Dennison Jr. – Phillipsburg, NJ: R & R Publishing, 1992. – V. 1. – P. 69.

Finally, others object that biblical inerrancy is ruled out by the presence of grammatical errors in the text. In response, we appeal to Ferguson's apt rejoinder: "Grammar is a matter of custom and development, not (normally) a matter of truth and error."⁴⁸⁹ Pinnock adds, "Grammar is made for man, not man for grammar."⁴⁹⁰

D. Various Suggested Solutions to the Inerrancy Question

Having studying both sides of the issue, we must arrive at some conclusion. Only two options present themselves to us. Either inspiration extends to all of Scripture, resulting in an inerrant text, or it does not, allowing for errors in the text. In addition, within each of these two categories, different positions exist to defend one view or the other. We will investigate each in turn.

1. Theories Allowing Errors in Scripture

a. Errors Only in Historical and Scientific Data

Some defend the idea that the Scriptures may error only in historical and scientific matters, but the teachings of Scripture are totally true.⁴⁹¹ One way the historical discrepancies are explained is to assume that the biblical writers used sources that contained errors.⁴⁹² In addition, we are told to consider the literary genre of the biblical materials. In general, we do not require that writers in the historical genre record events with absolute precision. An occasional minor discrepancy does not prevent us from appreciating the general contours of the historical account.⁴⁹³

On the other hand, adherents of this position must consider the close connection between history and doctrine, which we discussed earlier, and the necessity of preserving the historical foundation of the Christian faith. In addition, history and doctrine are connected in yet another way. We are not able to empirically substantiate doctrinal questions, only historical ones. Therefore, if Scripture is unreliable in historical matters, how can we assert its fidelity in doctrinal ones? As the Lord once said, "'If I told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?'" (Jn 3:12).⁴⁹⁴

In defense of a historically errant Scripture, Pannenberg argues that according to 2 Timothy 3:16, Scripture is inspired not in every respect, but only "for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness."⁴⁹⁵ Pannenberg's thinking, however, is misguided in that the cited quotation concerns the *goal* of inspiration. The *degree* of inspiration is indicated in the phrase "*all* Scripture is inspired by God." Although the goal of Scripture is not to teach science, geography or history, "*all* Scripture," including its scientific, geographical and historical portions, are fully inspired.

The problem with suggesting errant historical sources for Scripture is that the entire biblical narrative becomes suspect as a consequence. How can one determine which historical data is accurate, and which is

⁴⁸⁹Ferguson, p. 63.

⁴⁹⁰Pinnock, Biblical revelation, p. 188.

⁴⁹¹See Enns, p. 59-64; 83-116; 242-248; 292-296; Beegle D. Scripture, tradition, and infallibility. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1973. – 332 p.; Orr J. Revelation and inspiration. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1952. – 224 p.; Fuller D. P. Benjamin B. Warfield's view of faith and history: A critique in the light of the New Testament // Bulletin of the Evangelical Theological Society. 1968. 11. P. 75-83; Strong, p. 227; Pinnock, Biblical revelation, p. 186; Mounce, p. 18.

⁴⁹¹Ramm, p. 201.

⁴⁹²See Achtemeier, p. 77; Orr, p. 164-165; Beegle, p. 162.

⁴⁹³See Walhout C. The responsibility of hermeneutics // Texts and actions. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985. – P. 69ff; Mounce, p. 73; Achtemeier, p. 36.

⁴⁹⁴Geisler N. L. Theological method and inerrancy: A reply to Arthur F. Holmes // Youngblood R. Evangelicals and inerrancy. – Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1984. – P. 142.

⁴⁹⁵Pannenberg W. On the inspiration of Scripture // Theology Today. 1997. 54. P. 212-213. James Dunn shares this view (see Nicole, p. 201) and Ferguson, p. 60.

not? In other words, how can we know when the historical sources used by the biblical authors were correct, and when they were not correct?

Furthermore, Pinnock argues that, according to the doctrine of inspiration, the final version that resulted from the gathering and arranging of biblical materials is fully inspired by God, regardless of what sources were used or how they were used. At the end of the day, the whole of Holy Scripture, as finally penned by the biblical authors, is true and accurate.⁴⁹⁶

Concerning the claim that we do not require absolute precision from historians, one must recall that we are dealing here not with conventional human writers, but divinely inspired authors. Concerning errors in matters of science, see our earlier discussion of that point.

b. Inerrancy in Attaining the Author's Intention

Others hold to the opinion that the idea of "inerrancy" concerns only what the author intended to teach in his text. That is, if the goal of the author was not to relate historical data, but rather simply to unveil its instructional value, then the presence of historical errors does not violate the concept of full inspiration.⁴⁹⁷ If the author accomplished his intended goal, then the work was "inerrant" in reaching that goal.

However, divorcing historical fact from authorial intent can lead to a hazardous instability. For example, Vanhoozer suggests that the goal of the biblical narrative of the conquest of Canaan (Joshua chp. 6) was to show God's faithfulness in giving Israel the Promised Land. The account itself, though, may contain inaccuracies. Yet, what prevents us, then, from postulating that the goal of the resurrection narrative was to show God's victory over death, but that Jesus did not really rise?⁴⁹⁸ Some who operate on this principle have taught exactly that.

Another problem here is that according to the principle of "verbal inspiration," not only the author's intention is inspired, but his words as well. This means that each word in the biblical text, regardless of the author's intention, was written under the Spirit's direction and, therefore, is true. Finally, Nicole points out that the author's intention is revealed in the text itself. We have no other access to it. In other words, the author wrote what he intended to write.⁴⁹⁹

c. Inerrancy in Attaining God's goal

According to this view, the Bible faultlessly achieves God's goal of leading believers in Jesus to salvation. Since the presence of historical inaccuracies do not hinder people from understanding God's plan of salvation, the Scriptures accomplish God's intended goal. In this sense, the Bible is "inerrant."⁵⁰⁰

On the other hand, we object, "Can an 'errant' gospel lead to a 'true' salvation?" It seems that unreliability in the biblical narrative would undermine our confidence in the Bible in general, including its teaching on salvation.⁵⁰¹ Payne and Poythress remind us that attainment of salvation is not the only goal of Scripture. The

⁴⁹⁶Pinnock, *Biblical revelation*, p. 78.

⁴⁹⁷See Franke, p. 282; Fuller D. P. *The nature of Biblical inerrancy* // *Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation*. 1972. 24. P. 47; Vanhoozer, p. 74.

⁴⁹⁸Vanhoozer, p. 227-228.

⁴⁹⁹Nicole, p. 205.

⁵⁰⁰See Coleman R. J. *Reconsidering "limited inerrancy"* // Youngblood R. *Evangelicals and inerrancy*. – Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1984. – P. 164; Dods, p. 152-154; Hoffman D. S. T. *Coleridge and the attack on inerrancy* // Moo D. *Biblical authority and conservative perspectives*. – Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1997. – P. 114; Franke, p. 268; Achtemeier, p. 147-148; Orr, p. 20; Strong, p. 218; Pannenberg, p. 214; Grenz S. J. *Nurturing the soul, informing the mind. The genesis of the Evangelical Scripture principle* // Bacote V., Miquélez L. C., Okholm D. L. *Evangelical & Scripture: Tradition, authority and hermeneutics*. – Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 2004. – P. 217-218.

⁵⁰¹Henry, *God, revelation, and authority*, v. 4, p. 189-190.

Bible also contains much instructional material for believers.⁵⁰² In fact, the great majority of the Bible was written not for the unbelieving world, but for God's people.⁵⁰³

d. Errors Due to the Development of Religious Thought

We may briefly treat the liberal view that in the course of time many authors and editors contributed to the composition of each biblical book, and that each of them in turn made alterations in the text. The result, supposedly, was the introduction of inconsistencies and contradictions in the text.⁵⁰⁴ However, as we asserted earlier, conservative evangelical theology in general rejects the theory of multiple authors of each biblical book.

e. Inerrant Parts of Scripture Are Self-Evident

If, as argued above, the Bible contains errors and contradictions, then how can these mistakes be ascertained? Some adherents of biblical errancy contend that the inerrant parts of Scripture are self-evident. In other words, in reading the biblical text, the reader can distinguish the true from errant parts, since the former create in the reader's heart an internal confirmation of their truth value.⁵⁰⁵

This approach, though, is very problematic. There are no objective criteria for distinguishing truth from error. In practice, it turns out that different people will recognize different parts of the Bible true, depending on their personal convictions. We need objective criteria for discernment of truth, independent from intuition or human preference.⁵⁰⁶

2. Theories Not Allowing Errors in Scripture

a. The Abstract Approach

Among proponents of biblical inerrancy, we encounter different approaches to dealing with the phenomena of Scripture. The first for our consideration is the so-called "abstract approach." According to this theory, we must give greater weight to the teaching of Jesus and the apostles concerning Scripture's full inspiration than to apparent contradictions in the text. In this vein, Warfield writes,

We approach the study of these phenomena with a presumption against their being such as will disprove the Biblical doctrine of inspiration... Asserted facts as to performance must give way before the fact as to teaching, unless the evidence on which they are based as facts outweighs the evidence on which the teaching may be accredited as true.⁵⁰⁷

In other words, in Warfield's opinion, the teachings of Jesus and the apostles on full inspiration so far exceeds in value the evidence from biblical phenomena that the position of inerrancy is, for all practical purposes, irrefutable.

⁵⁰²Payne J. B. Partial omniscience: Observations on limited inerrancy // Youngblood R. Evangelicals and inerrancy. – Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1984. – P. 171.

⁵⁰³Poythress V. S. Problems for limited inerrancy // Youngblood R. Evangelicals and inerrancy. – Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1984. – P. 174-175.

⁵⁰⁴See Achtemeier, p. 130.

⁵⁰⁵See Beegle, p. 282; Dods, p. 157; Strong, p. 219.

⁵⁰⁶Henry, v. 4, p. 189.

⁵⁰⁷Warfield, p. 219, 224.

Nevertheless, serious conservative theologians will not be content to ignore the phenomena in Scripture, but along with the abstract approach will attempt to propose, as far as possible, convincing explanations for these discrepancies.

b. The Harmonization Approach

This approach claims that we are able at the present time with the data presently available to resolve all the apparent discrepancies of Scripture. Therefore, adherents of “harmonization” make every effort to offer a thorough explanation for every inconsistency encountered in the Bible.

Nevertheless, this approach is subject to criticism. Not infrequently, its adherents suggest rather fanciful and strained solutions to problem passages.⁵⁰⁸ The classic example is Harold Lindsell’s proposal that in order to harmonize the varying accounts of Peter’s denials of Christ, one must conclude that Peter denied Him not three, but six times.⁵⁰⁹

c. The Moderate Harmonization Approach

The “moderate harmonization approach” is similar to the “harmonization approach” except for the qualification that, although we can resolve many phenomena at the present time, we do not yet have sufficient information to resolve them all. In the future, when research uncovers more historical data, we will be able to harmonize all the biblical accounts.

Earlier, we cited several cases where formerly unresolved discrepancies were successfully resolved in the light of new discoveries. This gives Pinnock the courage to claim, “It is a matter of record that the majority of critical hypotheses charging the Bible with error over the past hundred years have been refuted by facts and withdrawn.”⁵¹⁰ When one encounters a still unresolved discrepancy, Turretin counsels, “It will be wiser to acknowledge our own ignorance than to suppose any contradiction.”⁵¹¹

Ferguson speaks of the value of combining the abstract with the moderate harmonization approach. On the one hand, the abstract approach provides a theological foundation for the claim of inerrancy. On the other hand, the moderate harmonization approach serves the apologetic goal of substantiating that claim.⁵¹²

Opponents of the moderate harmonization approach object that, even though many biblical phenomena have been successfully resolved, this does not guarantee that in the future all problem passages will be solved.⁵¹³ This is a fair objection. Nonetheless, Lindsell responds that the opposite claim also holds: “The absence of a solution for even a single remaining problem is no reason to suppose that there is no solution.”⁵¹⁴

R. C. Sproul shares an interesting thought that one must distinguish “contradiction” and “mystery.” By definition, a “contradiction” is impossible to reconcile. A “mystery,” though, is simply an unknown fact. Therefore, we must look at the phenomena of Scripture as “mysteries”: “Mysteries may not be clear to us now simply because we lack the information or the perspective to understand them.”⁵¹⁵

Speaking from a practical perspective, Charles Hodge compares the discrepancies in Scripture with the marble of the Greek Pantheon. The presence of some particles of sand in the marble does not affect the

⁵⁰⁸Barr J. *Fundamentalism*. – Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1977. – P. 57-60; Achtemeier, p. 60-76.

⁵⁰⁹Lindsell, p. 175-176.

⁵¹⁰Pinnock, *Biblical revelation*, p. 178.

⁵¹¹Turretin, v. 1, p. 73.

⁵¹²Ferguson, p. 64.

⁵¹³Beegle, p. 196-197. Erickson agrees, p. 72.

⁵¹⁴Lindsell, p. 182.

⁵¹⁵Sproul R. C. *Essential truths of the Christian faith*. – Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1992.

structure as a whole. In the same way, the believer who has a solid foundation in the biblical doctrine of full inspiration is not disturbed by the presence of some still unresolved questions.⁵¹⁶

d. Qualified Inerrancy

Here it is assumed that lack of precision is not equal to error. This means that the Bible may contain imprecision in historical or scientific questions, but that these do not invalidate the doctrine of inerrancy. The biblical authors wrote with the degree of precision necessary to accomplish their goals.⁵¹⁷

According to this theory, we allow the following features, which are not considered errors in Scripture:⁵¹⁸

- generalization of material
- approximations and round numbers
- phenomenological language
- pre-scientific categories of classification
- mistakes in spelling or grammar
- abbreviation of speeches
- omission of details in narrative
- non-chronological ordering of events
- omission of names in genealogies
- creative use of Old Testament material in the New Testament
- figures of speech
- inclusion of incorrect statements by non-believers in the text

Curiously, this theory appears to share much in common with the theory of “inerrancy in attaining the author’s intention” discussed above. Nevertheless, we heed Shedd’s warning about allowing not only imprecision in the text, but actual introduction of error. Biblical writers do not attribute “to Christ a parable which he did not teach, a miracle which he did not work,” or describe him “as concerned in occurrences with which he really had nothing to do.”⁵¹⁹

Finally, it is important to keep in mind that “qualified inerrancy” does not necessarily discount previous theories that defend inerrancy, but may work together with them in harmony. One may hold to the “abstract approach” as the foundation of inerrancy, while at the same time utilizing the system “qualified inerrancy” to reconcile difficult passages in conjunction with the “modified harmonization approach.”

At a conference of evangelical scholars, held in Chicago in 1978, the theory “qualified inerrancy” served as the basis for their definition of inerrancy. Their statement on the question, made at the completion of the conference and reflecting “qualified inerrancy,” is found in Appendix C.

e. The Witness of the Holy Spirit

Earlier in this chapter, we spoke of the theory, in defense of errancy, that the true parts of Scripture are self-evident to the reader. Among defenders of inerrancy exists a similar view – the proof of full inspiration lies not in logical arguments or resolution of discrepancies, but in the internal witness of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the believer. This theory differs from the corresponding errancy theory in holding that not only parts of

⁵¹⁶Hodge, v. 1, p. 170.

⁵¹⁷Henry, God, revelation, and authority, v. 4, p. 180; Warfield, p. 77–78; Geisler, Nix, p. 57.

⁵¹⁸Henry, God, revelation, and authority, v. 4, p. 201–207, 217.

⁵¹⁹Shedd, p. 105.

Scripture are inspired, but all of it is inspired. Yet, the proof of that inspiration is subjective – the Spirit simply tells us that it is so.⁵²⁰

Although we affirm that the Spirit gives an internal confirmation of the truth of Scripture in the hearts of believers, we must not base our faith in inerrancy solely on that foundation – it will open the door to subjectivity. God has provided us a solid, objective basis for this doctrine, discussed earlier, which does not depend on fluctuating inner feelings, but on firmly established facts. The witness of the Spirit is vital, but plays a secondary and supplemental role in confirming the veracity of Scripture.

E. Conclusions, the Extent of Inspiration, and the Authority of Scripture

1. Conclusions

Concerning the doctrine of biblical inspiration, we arrive at the following conclusions. **First**, the results of our investigation weigh in favor of biblical inerrancy – that the Bible contains no errors. We define “error” as that which does not correspond to facts, or as Aristotle put it, “To say of what is that it is, and of what is not that it is not, is true.”⁵²¹ All that is written in God’s Word corresponds to the true state of affairs.

In addition, we conclude that the Bible is inerrant in all respects, i.e., both in doctrinal and non-doctrinal matters. The only exception we permit is that the biblical authors were allowed to express God’s truths in accordance with the scientific standards and worldview of that day. However, in respect to historical reliability, the writers of Scripture operated not on cultural standards, but on biblical standards of truth. Their works were not only history, but also reliable testimony.

Second, among the suggested solutions for biblical phenomena, we prefer a combination of several approaches, which, taken together, provide an adequate response to this challenge. We base our general conviction of the trustworthiness of the Bible on the teaching of Jesus and the apostles and their attitude toward Scripture (the abstract approach), which appears to render our conviction indisputable and irrefutable. Nonetheless, serious students of God’s Word must seek, as much as possible, credible solutions to biblical phenomena (the moderate harmonization approach). The “qualified inerrancy” approach is useful for discovering solutions to many of these difficult passages.

At the same time, in line with the moderate harmonization approach, we recognize that at the present time we are not able to resolve all the issues raised by the phenomena of Scripture, but await future discoveries in the areas of archeology and historiography. In our search for harmonization, we also recognize the element of “mystery.” Lovelace writes that the idea of inerrancy may “demands artistry beyond any formula we can devise.”⁵²² In addition, along with rational arguments in defense of inerrancy, the Holy Spirit provides an inner assurance of Scripture’s veracity in the hearts of believers.

Moreover, we reject the idea that the presence of still unresolved discrepancies overthrows the doctrine of full inspiration. In order for the opponents of inerrancy to prevail, they must demonstrate that their position in general outweighs the proofs offered in defense of inerrancy, which, as we have demonstrated, they fail to do. Therefore, we accept the doctrine of the full inspiration of Scripture.

Third, we hold to the position that, with the exception of direct prophecy, the biblical writers were real participants in composing the biblical text and expressed God’s truth in accordance with their personal vocabulary, literary style and goals for writing. At the same time, God directed the process of Scripture writing in such a way to ensure that every word chosen by the authors of Scripture was the very word God wanted

⁵²⁰See Mounce, p. 17

⁵²¹*Metaphysics*, 1011b25 ([https://www.logicmuseum.com/wiki/Truth_\(Aristotle\)\)](https://www.logicmuseum.com/wiki/Truth_(Aristotle)))

⁵²²Lovelace R. Inerrancy: Some historical perspectives // Nicole R. R., Michaels J. R. Inerrancy and common sense. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1980. – P. 34.

chosen. So then, we affirm the “verbal inspiration” of Scripture, yet reject the “dictation theory” as a mechanism for that process, favoring the “accommodation theory.”

Fourth, we embrace the understanding of inspiration as expressed in the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy (see Appendix C), which corresponds to our findings in this study.

Finally, Runia rightly stresses that the discussion of the nature of Scripture (although important, even critical) should not distract us from embracing and applying its contents. We defend the inspiration of Scripture so that we can observe it.⁵²³

2. The Extent of Inspiration

Having defined the nature of Scripture in terms of “full” and “verbal” inspiration, we now turn our attention to the extent of inspiration. Here we ask the question, “How far does inspiration extend? Does it include copies and translations made from the originals, or only the original documents?” As we discussed in an earlier chapter, the original biblical documents have long perished. What then, is the status of the copies and translations made from them? Are they also inspired, and, if so, to what degree?

a. The Status of Copies and Translations

As a rule, inerrancy, or full inspiration, applies only to the original documents penned by the biblical authors. We know that God led the prophets and apostles in their composition of Holy Scripture. Therefore, we have confidence in its inspired status. We have no assurance, though, of complete precision in its copying or translation.⁵²⁴

It is interesting to note that the apostle Paul sometimes personally signed his letters (1 Cor 16:21; Gal 6:11; Col 4:18; 2 Thes 3:17; Philemon 19). He did so in order to assure his readers that they were reading the original, and not a copy. Additionally, copies of biblical books differ from one another. Clearly, documents that differ from one another cannot all be inerrant.

Nevertheless, the absence of the originals and presence of textual variants among the copies does not necessarily lead to doctrinal distortions. Since Christian doctrine is never based on a single passage, but on the entire biblical witness, passages that may have been changed in the copying process can be recognized when comparing them with other related Scripture passages.⁵²⁵ One must also take into consideration that, since God is highly interested in preserving His revelation, He would certainly have acted in a way to ensure that it would not be lost in transcription. He promised, in fact, that His Word would abide forever (see Isa 40:8; Matt 5:18; 24:35; Lk 16:17; 1 Pet 1:24-25).⁵²⁶

In light of this, Christian theology assigns to the *assembled mass* of copies the quality of “infallibility,” which means that when their witness is taken together, they will not lead to doctrinal error. The copies, viewed as a whole, are sufficiently reliable. Through critical analysis of the existing copies, comparing them to one another (see chapter 4), we are able to extract from them true Christian doctrine.⁵²⁷

We may appeal to several arguments to support the claim that the copies of biblical books possess sufficient accuracy to function in the capacity of God’s Word. First, Jesus and the apostles did not use original copies of the Old Testament, but copies. Yet, they used them with confidence that they communicated God’s revelation. Second, of God’s Word it is said that it is “living and active” (Heb 4:12). Yet again, copies of the

⁵²³Runia, p. 165.

⁵²⁴In spite of this, Philo believed that the Septuagint translators were inspired. Catholics hold the same conviction about the Vulgate (Bahnsen G. L. The inerrancy of the autograph // Geisler N. Inerrancy. – Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1980. – P. 155).

⁵²⁵Weeks, p. 46.

⁵²⁶Bahnsen, Inerrancy, p. 185.

⁵²⁷Henry, God, revelation, and authority, v. 4, p. 178, 233, 236; Young E. Thy Word is truth. – Philadelphia, PA: Banner of Truth, 1957. – P. 55-56.

originals are in view. Third, the phrase “it is written” introduces quotations taken from the copies, which again testifies of their reliability as Scripture.⁵²⁸

One must also consider that the science of textual criticism, which seeks to restore the original biblical writings, is highly developed and can provide us with texts that are practically identical to the originals.⁵²⁹

Another point is worth noting. At times, the New Testament writers employed amanuenses to write the actual texts (see Rom 16:22). The work of an amanuensis is not a copy, but an original. One can assume that the New Testament writers verified the content of their letters.⁵³⁰

As far as translations go, there is also no guarantee of their inerrancy. They vary among themselves in quality. As we stated earlier, “inerrancy” applies only to the originals. Copies possess “infallibility.” But we cannot vogue even for the infallibility of translations, since a poor translation can lead one into error. The fidelity of a translation depends totally on its quality.⁵³¹

b. The Necessity of Inerrant Originals

If the original biblical documents no longer exist, then why must we insist on their inerrancy? Achtemeier adds the objection that if God saves believers through errant copies, then what is the urgent need to prove the inerrancy of the originals?⁵³²

The thing is that copies and translations are reliable communicators of God’s Word only to the degree that they reflect the inerrant originals. If we allow that the originals have errors, then we undermine the dependability of the copies and translations based on them. Only when we have full confidence in the originals can we depend on the copies and translations based on them.⁵³³

Additionally, it is possible to discover and correct mistakes that occurred in the process of transcription, but we are less able to discern errors in the originals themselves.⁵³⁴ We can continually strive to improve our biblical texts and approximate them more closely to the originals, but it is far more problematic to attempt to correct errors in the original documents, if they really contain them.

In answer to the question, why God did not preserve the original biblical documents, we can only speculate. Maybe people would have worshipped them. Maybe someone would have attempted to falsify them to promote his/her own doctrines.⁵³⁵ Geisler insightfully notes that God did indeed preserve the originals by preserving multiple copies of them, through which we can now work back to the writings penned at the first by the prophets and apostles.⁵³⁶

3. The Authority of Scripture

The final topic for our investigation is the authority of Scripture. Without question, if the Bible is God’s inspired, inerrant Word, then it carries God’s authority as well. Believers must treat the Bible as the voice of the Lord. It defines the will of God for humanity.⁵³⁷ In applying Scripture to our lives, we keep in mind, of course, the cultural context of the Bible and the principle of progressive revelation.

⁵²⁸Bahnsen, *Inerrancy*, p. 169.

⁵²⁹Geisler, *Nix*; Henry, *God, revelation, and authority*, v. 4, p. 220-221, 235, 247-249; Wescott B. F., Hort J. A. *The New Testament in the original Greek*. – New York: Harper and Brothers, 1881 – P. 2; Bruce F. F. *The New Testament documents: Are they reliable?* – P. 19-20; Warfield, p. 145.

⁵³⁰Henry, *God, revelation, and authority*, v. 4, p. 208.

⁵³¹*Ibid*, v. 4, p. 178, 223, 236; Young, p. 55-56.

⁵³²Achtemeier, p. 73. Also, see Beegle, p. 157-174, 307-308.

⁵³³Henry, *God, revelation, and authority*, v. 4, p. 178, 232, 239-241.

⁵³⁴Archer G. *A survey of Old Testament introduction*. – Chicago, IL: Moody, 1974. – P. 23; Bahnsen, *Inerrancy*, p. 182-184.

⁵³⁵Geisler, *Nix*, p. 43-44; Henry, *God, revelation, and authority*, v. 4, p. 241-242; Haley, p. 30-40.

⁵³⁶Geisler, *An evaluation of McGowen’s view*, p. 36.

⁵³⁷Geisler, *Nix*, p. 39.

J. I. Packer aptly conjoins the issues of Scriptural authority and full inspiration: "Statements that are not absolutely true and reliable could not be absolutely authoritative."⁵³⁸ Mohler echoes this thought: "Without a total commitment to the trustworthiness and truthfulness of the Bible, the church is left without its defining authority, lacking confidence in its ability to hear God's voice."⁵³⁹

Some attempt to skirt the claim of biblical authority by claiming that authority lies not in Scripture, but in God and Christ. This is, of course, true. Nevertheless, Nicole wisely states, "How shall we distinguish between the authority of God and the authority of what he says?"⁵⁴⁰

Pinnock adds the helpful thought that without the doctrine of inerrancy, "normative theology" and "clear, bold preaching" are unattainable.⁵⁴¹ If Christian theology and preaching cannot be based on the standard of God's Word, then Christians need to find another basis for their convictions. Liberals, in fact, actively seek this new foundation for faith. Yet, they disagree among themselves as to where to find it, which testifies of the futility of their quest. Carl Henry warns of the danger of this liberal experiment – the liberal approach "may modify the Biblical message only in details, or it may threaten its intrinsic content. That is why the connection between special revelation and Bible is strategically important."⁵⁴²

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⁵³⁸Packer, Fundamentalism, p. 96.

⁵³⁹Mohler, p. 31. Also, see Anderson S. E. Verbal inspiration inductively considered // Youngblood R. Evangelicals and inerrancy. – Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1984. – P. 15.

⁵⁴⁰Nicole, p. 208.

⁵⁴¹Pinnock C. H. Baptists and Biblical authority // Youngblood R. Evangelicals and inerrancy. – Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1984. – P. 157.

⁵⁴²Henry, Divine revelation and the Bible, p. 264.

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III. The Interpretation of Scripture

Chapter 6: The Task of Proper Interpretation

A. The Goal and Task of Hermeneutics

God has revealed Himself through Holy Scripture. Yet, in order to properly grasp that revelation, one must correctly interpret it. Therefore, we must thoroughly investigate the question of biblical interpretation.

When we discuss biblical interpretation, we encounter various terms that need clarification, for example, the word “interpretation” itself. Interpretation is discovering the meaning of a text. In other words, we want to capture the thoughts that the author expressed in his text. We seek to discover what exactly he/she was trying to communicate to his/her readers. In other words, we are searching for the author’s intent. Words are signposts that point to the author’s meaning and intention.

In some cases, the author’s meaning is straightforward. In other cases, it requires more careful investigation. Take, for example, this quotation from Ecclesiastes. What is the author getting at?

Furthermore, men are afraid of a high place and of terrors on the road; the almond tree blossoms, the grasshopper drags himself along, and the caperberry is ineffective. For man goes to his eternal home while mourners go about in the street (Ecc 12:5).

Another key term in biblical interpretation is “hermeneutics.” Lewis Chafer offers this helpful definition: hermeneutics is “the art of interpreting literature, especially the Sacred Scriptures,” and includes “the recognition of the principles upon which a true analysis must proceed.”⁵⁴³ The key word in this definition is “principles.” Hermeneutics involves identifying principles or methods that can be used to interpret any text and discover its meaning. In his book *The Hermeneutical spiral*, Grant Osborne defends a similar definition: hermeneutics is “the science which delineates principles or methods for interpreting an individual author’s meaning.”⁵⁴⁴

⁵⁴³Chafer L. S. *Systematic theology*. – Dallas, TX: Dallas Seminary Press, 1947-1948. – P. 115.

⁵⁴⁴Osborne G. *The hermeneutical spiral*. – Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1991. – P. 5.

We will elaborate on these principles of interpretation in the following chapter, but we want to mention at the outset that these principles are not any shocking new discovery, but simply derive from common sense. In the words of Kaiser, hermeneutics simply “collects these observed rules as already practiced by native speakers and arranges them in an orderly way for the purpose of study and reflection.”⁵⁴⁵

The next term for discussion is “exegesis.” Chafer defines it as “the application of the laws of interpretation” to a specific text.⁵⁴⁶ Here we highlight the word “application.” Exegesis involves application of hermeneutical principles to the interpretation of a passage of Scripture in order to discover its meaning.

The term “exegesis” comes from the Greek word ἐξηγέομαι (*exegeomai*). According to the etymology of the word, it contains two parts: the prefix ἐκ (*ek*), which means “out from,” and the verb ἄγω (*ago*), or “lead.” These two thoughts, taken together, define well the essence of exegesis: “drawing out” the meaning of a text.⁵⁴⁷ The term ἐξηγέομαι (*exegeomai*) is found in the New Testament in the following passages: Lk 23:35; Jn 1:18; Acts 10:8; 15:12, 14; 21:19. A key usage is in Jn 1:18, where Jesus is described as the one who reveals or, roughly speaking, “interprets” the Father: “No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained (ἐξηγέομαι) {Him}.”

The final term to acquaint ourselves with is “theology.” Theology involves combining various passages in order to define a specific biblical theme or teaching. In order to define a biblical doctrine, we must consider the biblical passages that concern that topic. In this way, theology differs from exegesis. Exegesis involves interpretation of a single passage, while theology concerns the entire biblical witness on a topic of interest.

In summary, hermeneutics teaches us principles, by which the task of interpretation should proceed. Exegesis employs these principles to discover the meaning of a specific text. Theology combines various passages that have gone through the exegetical process in order to derive the biblical teaching on any topic of interest.

B. More on “Authorial Intent”

We have already asserted that the intent of the author determines a text’s meaning. We must “unpack” this definition still more. There are four elements in a text’s meaning: *sense*, *referent*, *perlocution*, and *illocution*. Beyond that, the text’s *significance* must also be considered.

The “sense” of a text is the combination of the dictionary definitions of each word in the passage taken together, considering also the context, in which it is found.⁵⁴⁸ That is, after discovering the definition of each word, we look at the grammatical connections between them and discern the influence of the given context on their meanings. Cotterell rightly emphasizes the importance of context: “Like an utterance, the letter can only be understood aright by reference to the one context from which and in which it has its meaning.”⁵⁴⁹ He also comments that the meaning of a text is influenced not only by what is said, but also by what is not said.⁵⁵⁰

Let us take for an example of the idea of “sense” a short passage in Jeremiah 52:7a: “Then the city was broken into, and all the men of war fled.” The definition of the word “city” is a group of people living together in a certain location. The phrase “was broken into” refers to the destruction of the defenses of the city, supposedly by an enemy force. “All the men of war” are the soldiers guarding the city, while “fled” means

⁵⁴⁵Kaiser W. C. *Legitimate hermeneutics* // McKim D. *A guide to contemporary hermeneutics*. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986. – P. 115.

⁵⁴⁶Chafer, p. 115.

⁵⁴⁷There is a rival definition of hermeneutics and exegesis, which claims that exegesis involves the study of principles of interpretation and their application to a concrete text, while hermeneutics is understood as application of the text’s meaning to the modern reader. Gordon Fee employed these terms in this way (Fee G. *Gospel and Spirit: Issues in New Testament Hermeneutics*. – Peabody, MS: Hendrickson, 1991. – P. 4). We will employ, however, the definitions offered by Chafer and Osborn above.

⁵⁴⁸See Cotterell P., Turner M. *Linguistics and biblical interpretation*. – Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1989. – P. 77ff.

⁵⁴⁹*Ibid*, p. 64.

⁵⁵⁰*Ibid*, p. 47-49.

rapid movement away from danger. Combining these thoughts, we arrive at the sense of the text: a certain enemy entered a guarded city by force, which caused its guardians to flee.

Yet, the sense of the text is simply an abstraction. It only relates the definitions of the words in the text. It does not refer to any actual situation in real life. We must then define the *referents* of these words. The “referent” is that object, individual, idea, etc., to which these words refer. The “sense” of a text is connected to the *connotation* of the words, while the “referents” relate to their *denotation*. In our example (Jer 52:7), the referent of the word “city” is Jerusalem, “the men of war” are the Israeli army, and those who broke into the city are the Babylonians. Knowing the referents of the text supplies us with concrete information from the passage.

Walhout delineates four types of referents.⁵⁵¹ A “concrete” referent is a specific object in reality, such as “dog,” “house,” “man,” etc. An “ideal” referent refers to a concept, such as “friendship,” “quality,” “unselfishness,” etc. “Self-referents,” such as “and,” “but,” “for,” etc., connect other words in the text. Finally, “descriptive referents” refers to objects that exist only in the mind of the author. For example, when someone relates a fictitious story, his/her words describe the fictitious world that he/she is creating.

In our search for the meaning of a text, it is important to keep in mind common assumptions between the author and his/her readers. Sometimes the author and reader have a common history or experience that enables the author to omit certain details, since the reader is already aware of them. Therefore, it is always helpful to study the historical context of a passage to discover these common elements.⁵⁵²

The discussion of “perlocutions” and “illocutions” remains. An author seeks not only to pass on information, but also to produce a psychological effect on his/her audience. The technical term for this is a “perlocution.” In other words, the author attempts to make a certain impression on the reader, arouse a certain feeling, or motivate to a certain action. By means of his/her text, the author is making a “speech-act,” that is, he/she wants to accomplish something.⁵⁵³

In our example from Jeremiah 52:7, the prophet is likely attempting to do more than just pass on historical information. He also is demonstrating that God will back up his warnings about forsaking the covenant by chastising His people. Therefore, one can assign to this passage the perlocution “shame, leading to repentance.”

In order to achieve the desired perlocution, the author utilizes the appropriate “illocution.” This term refers to a specific type of speech, such as a warning, announcement, claim, invitation, etc. If the writer wishes to produce alarm in the reader (perlocution), he/she may employ a warning (illocution). If the author wants to stir excitement (perlocution), he/she might use an exclamation (illocution).

Finally, we must explain the “significance” of a text. This term denotes how the passage is received or applied in a given situation. In his volume *Validity in Interpretation*, E. D. Hirsch did groundbreaking work in this area, where he makes a clear distinction between meaning and significance. He writes, “Meaning is that which is represented by the text; it is what the author meant by his use of a particular sign sequence; it is what the signs represent. Significance, on the other hand, names a relationship between that meaning and a person, or a conception or a situation.”⁵⁵⁴ Concerning “significance” he writes, “There is literally no limit to the significance of the shortest and most banal text. Not only can its verbal meaning be related to all conceivable states of affairs... but it can also be related at different times to changing conditions in all conceivable states of affairs.”⁵⁵⁵

Let us look again at Jeremiah 52:7 from the vantage point of “significance.” If the reader of this passage happened to live at the time of the Roman invasion of Jerusalem, he may find in it a different, but related significance than the original readers did. Just as God punished Israel through Babylon, He may be doing a

⁵⁵¹Walhout C. The responsibility of hermeneutics // Texts and actions. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985. – P. 50-52.

⁵⁵²Cotterell, p. 90-91.

⁵⁵³Walhout, p. 43-44.

⁵⁵⁴Hirsch E. D. Validity in interpretation. – New Haven: Yale, 1967. – P. 113.

⁵⁵⁵Ibid, p. 63.

similar thing through Rome. The reader may discover in a text a principle that applies to his/her situation. At the same time, when a reader applies a passage to his/her situation, he/she must be certain that the application is, as Cotterell states, “*in conformity with that determined meaning.*”⁵⁵⁶

In our search for authorial intent, we encounter still another obstacle. According to the doctrine of inspiration, the Bible has two authors: a human one and a divine one (the Holy Spirit). Therefore, we must seek to understand the relationship between these two authors and their respective authorial intents.

According to conservative evangelical hermeneutics, in the great majority of cases, the authorial intent of both the human and divine authors overlap. This means that the Spirit acted on the human writers in such a way, that what the latter consciously intended to communicate to their audiences is precisely what the Spirit sought to communicate as well. In other words, God did not bypass the human authors of Scripture, but truly spoke through them, imparting to their minds and hearts the message He meant to speak. So then, if we discover the human author’s intent, we uncover the divine author’s intent as well.

To the above rule of thumb, however, we must note certain exceptions. First, there are instances when it appears that only God knew the full meaning of the text penned by the human author. A clear example is prophecy. It is unlikely that the prophets fully understood how their predictions would be fulfilled (see 1 Pet 1:10-12; Jer 23:20; Dan 12:8-9). At the same time, the prophets likely did have some idea of who or what they were referring to, but simply did not know about their referents in full detail. That becomes clear only when the prophecy is fulfilled.⁵⁵⁷ In addition, we have no assurance that the human author always perceived the symbolic element in typological personages in Scripture. This issue is discussed in greater detail in a later chapter.

The question also arises whether the meaning of a passage can change over time. Not infrequently, a later biblical writer will see in a certain passage more meaning than the original author apparently perceived. This often occurs in how New Testament writers treat the Old Testament. Has the New Testament author discovered a “fuller” meaning of the original text that lies outside the boundaries of original authorial intent?

In answer to this quandary, we must recall our previous discussion of the distinction between “meaning” and “significance.” When a later biblical writer apparently assigns more “meaning” to an earlier text, we are dealing not with the original passage’s “sense” or “referents,” but with the significance of the text for the later author. The original meaning, which the original author assigned to the text (i.e., its sense, referents, perlocution, and illocution) remains unchanged. What changes is the passage’s significance in the light of further revelation.⁵⁵⁸

In a similar way, some may claim that a biblical text may obtain a “fuller” meaning when it is examined in the light of the entire biblical canon.⁵⁵⁹ New information, obtained from other passages of Scripture, can shed new light on an earlier text. On the other hand, we must not confuse exegesis with theology. Every passage of Scripture that touches on a certain topic will contribute to the formation of the corresponding doctrine. The process of doctrinal formation, though, does not affect the meaning of the texts employed – they maintain their original meanings. When we combine various texts to form doctrine, we are creating something entirely new – the whole-Bible teaching on that subject, or “theology.” Riggs, citing Kaiser, wisely counsels:

Once the exegetical work has been completed, then the interpreter can proceed to set the doctrinal content of a particular passage in its total biblical context by way of gathering together what God has said on the topic. This is the analogy of faith of the whole of Scripture. But the analogy of faith should not be used to extricate meaning from or import meaning to texts that appeared earlier than the

⁵⁵⁶Cotterell, p. 52.

⁵⁵⁷For example, in Jeremiah 23:5, the prophet knew that the word “Branch” referred to the Messiah. Yet, he did not know that the Messiah was Jesus of Nazareth. He possessed only a general idea of the referent’s identity.

⁵⁵⁸The issue of the New Testament use of the Old Testament is discussed in a subsequent chapter.

⁵⁵⁹See Scalise C. J. *From Scripture to theology*. – Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1996. – P. 63.

passage where the teaching is set forth either most clearly or perhaps for the first time. Such an exercise is eisegesis, not exegesis.⁵⁶⁰

When dealing with authorial intent, one must also be wary of “tunnel-vision.” Although the biblical author had a primary goal or intent in writing his text, he may also provide valuable “incidental” material that must be considered as well.⁵⁶¹ For example, in Philippians 2:5-11, Paul speaks much of the divinity and humanity of Christ. Yet, his main topic is humility and Christian unity. Yet, the fact that Christology is not the main thrust of this passage in no way minimizes the value of the Christological material it contains.

Our last item for clarification is as follows. If all we know about the biblical author’s intention is what he wrote in his text, then how can we “get behind” his words to discover his thoughts and intentions?⁵⁶² In this connection, some claim that we have access not to the actual author of the text, but the “implicit” author. This term describes the actual author at the time, and only at the time, of writing. Consequently, all that we can know about the “implicit” author is the contents of the given passage.⁵⁶³ How, then, can we discover the real author and his intention?

In response, we note that for this very reason we conduct a thorough exegetical analysis of the text. By studying history, culture, language, genre, etc. we can better our understanding both of the actual biblical author and his text. This will certainly aid us in discovering the actual author’s intention.

We conclude that the proper approach to interpreting a text lies in identifying authorial intent, which includes the sense, referents, perlocution and illocution of the passage in question. After discovering the author’s intent, the interpreter’s task then becomes applying the passage to his/her situation, respecting the original meaning of the text (i.e., the author’s intent) without distortion.

C. The Spiritual Side of Interpretation

By the expression “the spiritual side of interpretation,” we mean that the interpretation of Scripture is not just an academic exercise. There are spiritual factors that affect it as well. One does not fully comprehend God’s truth by means of human reasoning alone. There are unfortunately many examples, both in church history and in modern times, of capable, intelligent, highly educated individuals who distorted the truth of God’s Word. There exist other important elements in the exegetical task besides intellectual prowess.

1. Diligence in Study

The quest for truth requires diligence. A proper execution of the exegetical process requires much time and great effort. The thorough study of syntax, word meanings, context, etc. can be very painstaking work. Therefore, one must apply oneself to one’s work. Jesus Himself said that if we *continue* in His Word, then we would know the truth (Jn 8:31-32). Knowledge of the truth does not come through a quick glance at the Bible, but a constant application to its study. Therefore, diligence, being a spiritual virtue, is one of the necessary elements in the spiritual side of interpretation.

The early apostles took Jesus’ instruction about abiding in the Word seriously. In the Book of Acts, we read that they devoted themselves “to prayer and to the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:4). Similarly, Paul charges Timothy to apply all diligence in handling the Word: “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a

⁵⁶⁰Riggs J. R. The “fuller meaning” of Scripture: A hermeneutical question for Evangelicals // Grace Theological Journal. № 7.2. Fall 1986. – P. 223.

⁵⁶¹Fee, p. 17.

⁵⁶²See Keifert P. R. Mind reader and maestro: Models for understanding biblical interpreters // McKim D. A guide to contemporary hermeneutics. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986. – P. 225-226.

⁵⁶³Cranford L. L. Modern New Testament interpretation // Corley B., Lemke S., Lovejoy G. Biblical hermeneutics. – Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1996. – P. 128ff; Walhout, p. 48-49.

workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth" (2 Tim 2:15). Paul also praises Christian workers who work hard in teaching (1 Tim 5:17).

In 1 Timothy 5:17, Paul describes the work of teachers with the term κοπιάω (*kopiaō*). This Greek word has two primary meanings. First, it means, "work hard, toil, strive, struggle." Second, it means, "become weary, tired."⁵⁶⁴ Clearly, this term implies applying maximal effort. Additionally, Paul directs the Thessalonian church to honor preachers and teachers who labor among them (1 Thes 5:12). Again, we encounter the term κοπιάω (*kopiaō*) describing their labor in the Lord for the Church.

Diligence is a necessary element for success in any endeavor. People in secular society strive to make new breakthroughs that will bring them personal success. Ministers of God's Word, though, who are aiming at a higher goal, should apply themselves even more. Such devotion will, of course, take its toll on one's lifestyle. There will be less time for rest and relaxation, but this is the price for attaining excellence in ministry.

A classic example of devotion to the Word is Ezra, a teacher in Israel in the fifth century BC. It is written of him that he "set his heart to: (1) study the law of the LORD, (2) and to practice {it}, and (3) to teach {His} statutes and ordinances in Israel" (Ezra 7:10).

First, we note Ezra's diligence in regard to his work. The word translated "set heart to" is הִכִּין (*hehin*), which means, "establish, set up, fix."⁵⁶⁵ In other words, Ezra made a firm decision to study, observe, and teach God's Word. He was determined to accomplish his goal. Likely, he spent much time studying the Old Testament. At the same time, he was a "doer of the word, and not merely a hearer" (Jam 1:22). Besides that, he served God's people as a teacher, not only by word, but by example as well.

We may cite another fine example of devotion to God's Word. In Psalm 119, the psalmist expresses his love for God's Word and his desire to observe it. We read: "I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, as much as in all riches. I will meditate on Your precepts and regard Your ways. I shall delight in Your statutes; I shall not forget Your word" (14-16); "I will also speak of Your testimonies before kings and shall not be ashamed. I shall delight in Your commandments, which I love. And I shall lift up my hands to Your commandments, which I love; and I will meditate on Your statutes" (46-48); "O how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day. Your commandments make me wiser than my enemies, for they are ever mine" (97-98).

2. Assistance of the Holy Spirit

The second irreplaceable element for effective interpretation of the Bible is the assistance of the Holy Spirit. Why is the Spirit's help so vital? First, the Bible reveals that we are fallen creatures with depraved minds (Eph 4:17-18; Rom 12:2). Although we are now in Christ, our minds are not yet fully renewed, but are still undergoing that process. Second, the Bible reveals that God's Word is spiritual in nature (1 Cor 2:12-13; Jn 6:63; Lk 24:45). This means that the individual who studies the Word without the direction of the Spirit will never fully capture its meaning and may fall into error.

In both Old and New Testaments, God promises the aid of the Spirit of truth as a guide to truth (Jer 33:3; Jn 14:26; 16:13; 1 Jn 2:27). The Spirit enlightens our minds to understand the Scriptures. One must have spiritual sensitivity to handle the Word properly. This is what Jesus meant by the words "He who has ears, let him hear" (Matt 13:9; 11:15; Rev 2 and 3).

It is important to note that the Spirit does not reveal to us new truths that are not already in Scripture. He opens our eyes, rather, to appreciate the truths that are already there. Erickson correctly comments:

⁵⁶⁴Arndt W., Gingrich F. W., Danker F. W. Bauer, W. A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature. – Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996. – P. 443.

⁵⁶⁵Brown F. Driver S. R. Briggs C. A. Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English lexicon (electronic ed.). – Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 2000. – P. 465.

There is an understanding of the text that cannot be obtained simply through intellectual study, but which the Holy Spirit gives in illumination... The role of the Holy Spirit is not to convey new information that is not in the biblical text. Rather, the Spirit gives insight or understanding of the meaning that is in the biblical text, although it may not always be possible to unpack that meaning fully using exegetical methodology.”⁵⁶⁶

In this regard, Goldingay writes, “Interwoven with the active analytic work of my mind is a periodic receiving of a spark of insight on the actual subject matter of the text I am wrestling with.”⁵⁶⁷ Fram concurs, “Nor does the Spirit give us power to transcend reason altogether.”⁵⁶⁸

How can we engage with the Spirit in this endeavor? First, the Bible urges us to pray and request guidance (Ps 119:18; Eph 1:16-19). Second, upon completion of our exegetical research, we must reflect or mediate on the Word, relying on the Spirit to give insight. Scripture speaks of the value of meditation on the Word:

This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it... (Josh 1:8).

I have more insight than all my teachers, For Your testimonies are my meditation (Ps 119:99).

Consider what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything (2 Tim 2:7).

When students of Scripture sincerely seek the Spirit’s help, He will guide them in their understanding. When the Spirit gives special insight, the interpreter may experience an inner confirmation that the Spirit is speaking. We observe an example of this in Luke 24:32: “Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?” It is important to note, though, that such an inner conviction is not the best indicator of true spiritual illumination from the Spirit, but the correspondence of one’s interpretation with the total witness of Scripture on the topic. Henry rightly comments,

Yet unless priority is given to the objectively inspired content of Scripture, Spirit-illumination readily gives way to private fantasy and mysticism. The Spirit illumines persons by reiterating the truth of the scriptural revelation and bearing witness to Jesus Christ. Spirit-illumination centers in the interpretation of the literal grammatical sense of Spirit-breathed Scripture.⁵⁶⁹

When an interpreter, who has truly heard from the Spirit, gives out his/her teaching, others in the Body of Christ will be able to recognize and confirm that truth as well. It is curious to note that, although the enemies of Jesus and the disciples opposed their teaching, they were not able to refute it, thereby indirectly confirming its validity (see Matt 22:46; Lk 2:46-47; 20:26, 39-40; 21:14-15; Acts 4:13; 6:8-10). Packer agrees that one can verify the insights given by the Spirit: “This Spirit-given understanding comes by a rational process that can be stated, analyzed, and tested at each point.”⁵⁷⁰

3. Purity of Heart

⁵⁶⁶Erickson M. *Evangelical interpretation*. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1993. – P. 50-52.

⁵⁶⁷Goldingay J. *Models for interpretation of Scripture*. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995. – P. 188.

⁵⁶⁸Frame J. M. *The Spirit and the Scriptures* // Carson D. A., Woodbridge J. D. *Hermeneutics, authority and canon*. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1986. – P. 232.

⁵⁶⁹Henry C. F. H. *God, revelation, and authority*. – Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1999. – V. 2. – P. 15.

⁵⁷⁰Packer J. I. *Infallible Scriptures and the role of hermeneutics* – Carson D. A., Woodbridge J. D. eds. *Scripture and truth*. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1992. – P. 337.

Another necessary element in “spiritual” hermeneutics is the proper condition of the interpreter’s heart. He/she must be pure of heart. One hindrance to purity of heart is pride. The Bible cautions us that God does not reveal His mysteries to those who rely on their intellect (Matt 11:25-26; 1 Pet 5:5; 1 Cor 3:18-20). The development of our mental capabilities is necessary and good, but to rely on our unaided intelligence to discover God’s truth is futile and even dangerous. God “is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble” (1 Pet 5:5) in the understanding of His ways.

A pure heart is also characterized by obedience. God does not reveal His mysteries to the disobedient (Jn 7:17; 14:21). Podnyuk correctly notes that, according to Scripture, “knowledge” includes not only possessing information, but also how one lives in the light of that knowledge. The Word must become “incarnate” in our lives.⁵⁷¹

The Bible abounds in examples of how sin can lead to a distortion of God’s revelation. Even in the first century, many departed from sound doctrine (1 Tim 1:4-7; 4:7; 6:3-5, 20-21; 2 Tim 2:14-18, 23; Tit 3:8-9). We may summarize Paul’s characterization of false teachers as follows. They are motivated by pride (1 Tim 1:7; 6:4) and greed (1 Tim 6:5), they are diverted by trivial doctrines and unbiblical legends (1 Tim 1:4; 4:7; 6:4, 20; 2 Tim 2:14, 16, 23; Tit 3:9), they speak little of more essential matters, like personal faith, obedience, and practical Christian living (1 Tim 1:4-6; 4:7; Tit 3:8). Such teachers produce little fruit (1 Tim 1:6; Tit 3:9), stir up disputes (2 Tim 2:23), confuse their audience (2 Tim 2:14), and often end up in error (1 Tim 6:20-21; 2 Tim 2:16-18).

Furthermore, Peter states that the “untaught and unstable” distort the Word to their own destruction (2 Pet 3:16). The religious teachers of Jesus’ day rejected Him, not understanding the Scriptures, even though they studied them diligently, due to the darkened condition of their hearts (Jn 5:39-40; Acts 13:27). For the same reasons God rebuked Old Testament leaders (Jer 8:8) and the Israeli people in general (Ezek 12:2). In the Church, the “meat” of the Word is reserved for the spiritually mature, while the immature get only “milk” (Heb 5:11-14; 1 Cor 3:1-3).

Moreover, the one who gives insight to the human interpreter is the Holy Spirit. Yet, the same Spirit also corrects our path. If one is not open to correction by the Spirit, he/she is also not open to receive his tutorage in the Word. James leaves us with this counsel: “Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and {all} that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted” (Jam 1:21).

4. Corporate Effort of the Church

The interpretation of Scripture is most effective when done corporately in the context of the Church. God does not give all His revelation to one person, but to the Body of Christ in general. The Bible itself was not written by one individual, but by about forty authors. God delights in unity among His people, and one means of attaining that unity is by the corporate effort of the Church in interpreting God’s Word. Each student of the Word should include in his/her research the opinion of other scholars and commentators. In this way, the interpretive work of one can be sharpened and enhanced by the work of others.

The work of interpretation can include not only Church leaders, but the so-called “laity” as well. On the one hand, we recognize that God has appointed specially gifted individuals in the Church to teach (1 Cor 12:20-28; Acts 13:1-2). Yet, on the other hand, all believers, by virtue of the Spirit’s presence in them, are able to teach. Paul, in fact, encourages all believers to teach one another (Col 3:16).

We also recognize that, although the work of interpretation is a corporate effort, every believer is responsible for what he/she believes. Each of us must know the Word for ourselves and be able to test every teaching, if it is of God or not (1 Thes 5:21-22; Acts 17:11).

⁵⁷¹Поднюк С. Методы изучения Библии. – Р. 9.

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## Chapter 7: The Grammatico-Historical Method

In the previous chapter, we defined hermeneutics as “the science which delineates principles or methods for interpreting an individual author’s meaning.”<sup>572</sup> The standard hermeneutic principles for interpreting any text, including Holy Scripture, are grouped under the title “the grammatico-historical method.” In this chapter, we will detail the steps in this analysis, which will enable us to better discover the authorial intent of Scripture.

### A. Defining the Text

The first step in the grammatico-historical method is defining or determining the limits of the text we want to study. Here, there is one major rule to observe – not to choose a text less than one full paragraph in length. One may examine a longer text consisting of several paragraphs, but not less than one. The reason here is that a paragraph is usually devoted to one major theme. Therefore, examination of the entire paragraph is imperative to maximally gain from its contents.

When one chooses a text for exegetical examination, one must be sure to properly determine where the paragraph(s) begins and ends. This is determined by noting when the discussion of a topic begins and ends. The chapter divisions in the Bible, though, are not always helpful. Here are a few examples where a topic continues beyond the chapter division:

- 1 Jn 1:5-2:2 = how to deal with sin
- Mk 8:34-9:1 = call to discipleship
- 1 Cor 10:31-11:1 = imitating Paul’s example

Another factor to consider in defining the text is the presence of textual variants. In order to properly analyze a text, one must know which words it originally contained. We discussed this topic in detail in chapter 4.

### B. Preliminary Reading

Having determined the limits of the text, next one must carefully read the text and acquaint oneself with its contents. Here it is important to remember that the goal of the preliminary reading is not do a detailed analysis or to gain some great insight into the text’s meaning, but simply to get better acquainted with what it says.

While doing the preliminary reading, it is helpful to sort the text’s material into the following categories: historical, theological and ethical. “Historical” material relates to recoded events. “Theological” material addresses what we are to believe. “Ethical” material addresses what we are to do or not do.

In this step of the analysis, there are several pitfalls to avoid. First, in categorizing material try not to omit material. Second, do not add to your summary ideas not actually present in the text. Even if we know more about the topic under discussion from other passages of Scripture, we must refrain from reading that material into our text. At this point in the analysis, we must pretend that we know nothing except for what the text actually says.

The third caution is related to the second. One must read the text without preconceived notions as to its meaning. It is difficult to read a text with pure objectivity, i.e., without reading into it our personal convictions. Yet, without this caution, one might distort the text’s meaning. At the outset, we must pretend that we are reading the text for the very first time.

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<sup>572</sup>Osborne G. The hermeneutical spiral. – Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1991. – P. 5.

How does a preliminary reading of the text help us? It clearly leads to a better acquaintance with the text. In addition, an objective reading of the text will aid in ridding us of preconceived, possible errant ideas about its meaning. This will put us in position to give the text a fair and honest analysis.

### **C. Analysis of History and Culture**

The third step in a thorough exegetical study is examining the historical background: (1) which existed at the time the passage was written, and (2) of the events described in the passage itself. The exegete must go back in time and enter into the world of the Bible to understand and faithfully interpret it. Dodd agrees:

The ideal interpreter would be one who has entered into that strange first-century world, has felt its whole strangeness, has sojourned in it until he has lived himself into it, thinking and feeling as one of those to whom the Gospel first came, and who will then return into our world, and give to the truth he has discerned a body out of the stuff of our own thought.<sup>573</sup>

#### **1. Background of the Book's Composition**

The first task in the analysis of history and culture is to discover (1) who wrote the passage under consideration, (2) to whom it was written, and (3) when it was written. At the same time, we are interested only in the information that *has bearing on the meaning of our passage*. All other details connected with these questions are irrelevant to our investigation.

We find a good example of how information about the author can affect a passage's meaning in Philippians 4:4: "Rejoice in the Lord always." We know that the apostle Paul penned these words. Yet, Paul wrote this verse from prison. Therefore, if Paul could write about the joy of the Lord in the midst of personal suffering, how much more can we who live in comparable comfort rejoice in Him?

Knowing something about the original recipients can also provide valuable insight. For example, we observe in Matthew's gospel an abundance of Old Testament quotations. This is explained by recalling that Matthew wrote his Gospel primarily for Jews, who needed to see from the Old Testament Scriptures that Jesus is the Messiah.

Finally, how can knowing the date of composition affect interpretation? We note a marked difference, for example, between the books of Kings and Chronicles as to how they describe the history of Israel – Kings puts it in a more negative light than Chronicles. This is likely because of when the books were written. Kings was written soon after the exile to Babylon, while Chronicles was written at the time of Israel's restoration. The purpose of Kings, likely, was to show God's people the reason for their exile – their unfaithfulness to the covenant. The purpose of Chronicles, however, was likely to inform the new generation of exiles returning to Palestine of their past history – both the bad and the good.

#### **2. Historical and Geographical Features of the Text**

The next aspect of this analysis involves researching the historical and geographical data mentioned in the passage itself. The historical data includes both people and events. As far as the former, we find a fascinating example of historical insight in the study of Cyrus, king of Persia. Ezra chapter 1 records his releasing the captive Jews to their homeland with a request for them to pray to the God of Israel for him. Secular history reveals, though, that Cyrus released not only Israel, but also all the peoples in captivity, requesting prayer from each of them. It appears that Cyrus was a pragmatist – willing to accept help from any deity.

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<sup>573</sup>Dodd C. H. Cambridge inaugural lecture, from Robinson J.A.T. *Theologians of our time*: XII. C.H. Dodd. – *Expository Times*. 1964. № 75:4. P. 102.

Our next example concerns interpretation of events recorded in the passage. We read in 2 Chronicles 35 about Pharaoh Neco of Egypt, who was intercepted by Josiah, king of Judah, on his way to aid Assyria against Babylon at the battle of Carchemish. Secular history informs us that Babylon ended up victorious in the battle and was confirmed as the next great world power. Is it possible that Josiah's interference helped tip the scales in favor of Babylon, the country that later exiled his people?

### 3. Cultural Features of the Text

Along with historical data, studying cultural features apparent in the text can reap helpful insights as well. First, we look for economic features. For example, in Matthew chapter 18, Jesus told a story about a slave, whom his master forgave a sum of 10,000 talents, yet the slave refused to forgive his fellow slave who owed him a hundred denarii. What does that mean in our money? One talent was about 60 pounds and was used to measure either gold or silver.<sup>574</sup> A denarius was only single day's wage for a laborer.<sup>575</sup> Now we can understand why the master in the parable was so incensed with the forgiven slave's unwillingness to forgive another.

Cultural features also include political issues. For example, the woman from Samaria was amazed that Jesus spoke with her, since "Jews have no dealings with Samaritans" (Jn 4:9). A little research reveals that the Jews and Samaritans had a very tense relationship and at one time actually warred with one other.

Customs of the times must also be noted. In Ephesians chapter 5, we note an interesting phenomenon. In Paul's instruction to married couples, he instructs the husband at length about loving his wife, but briefly and summarily directs the wife to submit to her husband. Why this discrepancy? Probing into the cultural values of the times, we discover that submission to the husband was already accepted in that culture, and therefore needed little elaboration. On the other hand, sacrificial love for one's wife was a radical departure from cultural norms, and therefore required more attention.

Another prime example comes from the Old Testament. In Genesis chapter 19, we read a bizarre story of angels who came to visit Lot and were threatened by the inhabitants of Sodom, who wanted sex with them. In order to protect his guests, Lot offered the mob his daughters instead. Although we cannot justify Lot's actions, we can understand him better when we realize that, in the culture of that time, one felt obligated to protect one's guests at any cost.

Finally, one must consider the religious background of the passage under study. For example, in Genesis chapter 1, we read about God's creation of heaven and earth. Usually, we see this as an explanation of the universe's beginnings, and so it is. On the other hand, in light of the fact that Israel struggled greatly with temptation to idolatry, we can take this narrative in still another way – it is an indirect refutation of polytheism, since one God is the Creator of all.

Another prime example of the value of considering the religious background of a passage is the account of the Last Supper in the Gospels. What exactly did Jesus have in mind when He said, "This is My body," and "This is My blood?" Here Jesus and His disciples were celebrating the Jewish Passover. The elements of bread and wine already had a symbolic meaning – a remembrance of Israel's exodus from Egypt. Yet, the Exodus itself serves as a symbol of a future, greater deliverance of God's people from the penalty and power of sin through Messiah's sacrificial death. Therefore, when Jesus announces, "This is My body," and "This is My blood," He is simply replacing the original symbolic meaning of these elements with a new symbolic meaning – a prophetic proclamation of His work on Calvary.

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<sup>574</sup>Perkin H. W. Money // Bromiley G. W. The international standard Bible encyclopedia. – Rev. ed. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979–1988. – V. 3. – P. 403.

<sup>575</sup>Denarius // Bromiley G. W. The international standard Bible encyclopedia. – Rev. ed. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979–1988. – V. 1. – P. 923.



We may, then, paraphrase Jesus' words as follows: "Jesus took some bread as if to say, 'This bread, which each year you break in remembrance of the Exodus from Egypt, in reality symbolizes My body, which will be broken for you.'" Similarly, "He took the cup, as if to say, 'This cup, which each year you drink in remembrance of the Exodus from Egypt, in reality symbolizes My blood, which will be shed for you.'" Thus, Jesus reveals the deeper meaning of Passover.

#### 4. Literary Features of the Text

The last step in our analysis of history and culture is to consider literary features in the text. By this we mean: does the author of our passage borrow material or ideas from previously written works? Does he rely on outside sources? First, we look for direct quotations. If so, we must discover where the quotation was taken from and what role it plays in its original context, since this may have a bearing on the interpretation of the passage under study. Sometimes, material in our passage may have been quoted in a later work. If so, we must see how it was used by this other author in the new context.

An example of a quotation taken from a previous work is Jesus' words on the cross, "'Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?'" which is translated, 'My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?'" Here, the Lord is quoting Psalm 22, which prophetically describes the process of crucifixion. Therefore, Jesus is indicating that He is the fulfillment of that prophetic Old Testament passage.

One may also come across indirect quotations. Here, earlier material is not cited verbatim, but ideas are taken from it. In 1 Corinthians 13:2, for example, we read, "If I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing." The idea of "removing mountains" is an indirect allusion to the words of Christ in Mark 11:23. We may note the same in James' use of Christ's teaching in James 1:22 (cf. Matt 7:24-27).

We must also note that a biblical author may draw not only from earlier canonical books, but from other ancient literature as well. One can find borrowing from intertestamental writings, as noted in Appendix B. In addition, early Christian hymns are likely cited in Philippians 2:6-11, 1 Timothy 3:16, and Colossians 1:15-20. At the same time, similarity between biblical and non-biblical material does not always necessarily mean that the former borrowed from the latter.

#### D. Analysis of Genre

An important part of the exegetical process is the analysis of the genre in which a passage was written. "Genre" refers to specific literary types. We can illustrate this by a trip to the library. There we find magazines, newspapers, fiction, poetry, biographies, scholarly works, etc. Each literary type has its own unique features and is written in a certain recognizable style. Consequently, when we read in a certain genre, we expect the material to follow certain standard patterns for that given genre. Unconsciously, we take into consideration the features of that genre when we interpret the passage at hand.

In reading the Bible, we encounter genres employed in antiquity, with which we may not be well acquainted. This requires us to learn these genres and their unique features. The biblical genres are as follows: narrative, law, epistle, proverb, prophecy, apocalypse, poetry, and wisdom. We also note that a single biblical book may contain more than one genre, and this is often the case. Interestingly, the apostle John wrote in three genres: narrative, epistle and apocalypse.<sup>576</sup>

Vanhoozer rightly notes that the use of various genres is beneficial in that an author can thereby appeal to various aspects of the human personality: to reason, emotion, imagination, etc. It is possible that the author of

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<sup>576</sup>Reeves R. Reading the genres of Scripture // Corley B., Lemke S. Lovejoy G. Biblical hermeneutics. – Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1996. – P. 263.

Hebrews speaks of the variety of genres when he writes, “God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways...” (Heb 1:1).<sup>577</sup>

## **1. Narrative**

The genre “narrative” is the retelling of historical events. There are three aspects to its analysis: narrative as history, as literature, and as instruction.

### **a. Narrative as History**

In its most basic sense, narrative is history. Biblical history is unique in that it is written from God’s perspective, since we often encounter commentary as to how God viewed events. Yet, this “divine” commentary is not always present. The author may simply describe the event and leave it to the reader to judge for himself/herself the appropriateness of people’s behavior in the story.<sup>578</sup>

For example, were the early apostles correct in how they chose Judas Iscariot’s replacement (Acts 1:26)? Did Paul act prudently when he ignored the advice of others not to go up to Jerusalem (Acts 21:11-14)? How about the time when Jacob deceived his father in order to receive the latter’s blessing (Genesis 27), or when Joseph required the starving Egyptians to sell all they had, even themselves, to buy food from Pharaoh (Gen 47:13ff)? In these and other cases, the text does not indicate how God felt about these actions. The fact that Scripture records a certain deed does not necessarily mean that God endorses it. One must evaluate such events in the light of the entire body of Scripture.

Some errantly teach that the Bible does not relate true history. They feel that biblical history, although based on true events, was elaborated with legendary elements in order to glorify the heroes of the Bible or to teach a theological or moral lesson. We delve into this issue in chapter 14 of this volume. The issue of verbatim recalling of biblical dialog was already discussed in chapter 5.

### **b. Narrative as Literature**

One must also analyze narrative as literature. The authors of Scripture were not only historians, but also filled the role of composers of literature. When they composed their books, they enjoyed a degree of freedom, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, to choose the historical material that suited their purposes and arrange it accordingly. This is especially notable in parallel passages in the Four Gospels and in the books of Kings and Chronicles. These books show variation in what material was used and how it was used. This phenomenon is studied under the rubric of “redaction criticism,” which is discussed more in chapter 13.

Liberal commentators misguidedly accept the literary aspect of narrative, while denying its historicity. Yet, accepting narrative as literature in no way requires annulling its historical fidelity or value. One can compose a creative literary piece that is nonetheless true to history.

In analyzing the genre “narrative” from a literary point of view, one must compare parallel passages and inquire why the biblical author included or excluded certain details, and why he arranged the material the way he did. The answers to these questions may shed light on what theological or instructional goal the author was pursuing when he composed his history.

Let us observe, for example, differences in the story of Jesus’ rejection at Nazareth (Matt 13:53-58; Mk 6:1-6; Lk 4:16-30). Only Luke includes the fact that Jesus read in the synagogue about the descent of the Spirit on Messiah. Luke, in fact, often highlights the role of the Spirit in the life and ministry of our Lord. We encounter

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<sup>577</sup>Vanhoozer K. J. *The semantics of Biblical literature* // Carson D. A., Woodbridge J. D. *Hermeneutics, authority and canon*. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1986. – P. 78-79.

<sup>578</sup>Osborne, p. 156.

the same emphasis on the Spirit in Luke's second volume, the Acts of the Apostles. Furthermore, only Luke records our Lord's words about Elijah going to the Gentiles. Luke emphasizes the theme of the mission to the Gentiles in his writings in general. Clearly, these topics, as well as others, were central in Luke's theological agenda.

The authors of Scripture, in their capacity as writers of literature, often include in their narrative some standard elements of literary composition. We can note the following: (1) historical background of the event, (2) characters, (3) scenes, (4) plot, (5) dialog, (6) inner feelings of the characters, (7) narration, and (8) omission of certain details.

The **historical background** concerns the geographical, chronological and historical circumstances, in which the events of the story took place. Such information may aid in interpretation. For example, in 1 Kings 13, we read of a prophet in the time of King Jeroboam who rebuked Israel for idolatry. Yet, for violating God's instruction not to spend the night in Samaria, the prophet was killed by a lion. Why was God's punishment of the otherwise obedient prophet so severe? Learning the background of the account may help.

We might speculate that the prophet's message of rebuke consisted not only in words, but in actions as well. By instructing the prophet not to remain in Samaria, God may have been symbolically indicating that Samaria was an unclean place because of its idolatry. Therefore, by spending the night in Samaria against God's direction, the prophet may have been contradicting his message of rebuke and thus failed in his prophetic mission.

All literary works have **characters** than can be classified as follows. The "round character" is the main player, often the hero of the story. He/she is called "round" because we see all sides of this person's character – his/her weaknesses as well as strengths. Consequently, we cannot always predict how this individual will perform in different situations, which increases the drama of the account. We also encounter "flat characters," who consistently demonstrate only one character trait. Therefore, his/her behavior is easily predictable. The "agent" is a secondary character whose participation somehow enables the plot to proceed. The "foil" is the character who displays the opposite traits of the main character and highlights the latter's strengths or weaknesses.

When analyzing the story's characters, one must keep a couple rules in mind. First, a group of people can fill the role of one character. The Pharisees in the Gospels are a good example. Rarely is one Pharisee mentioned in isolation, but all are grouped together – the "Pharisees came," the "Pharisees said," etc. Second, although God is not always mentioned, one may assume His presence in every scene. He is the discreet observer of every act.

Let us look at an example. In Judges, chapter 11, Jephthah is the main or "round" character. We observe him from all angles. Sometimes he acts wisely, sometime foolishly; sometimes he performs well, sometimes poorly. It is difficult to predict how he will respond in a given situation. The "flat" characters in the story are Jephthah's brothers, who constantly give Jephthah trouble, the elders of Gilead, whose only goal is to try to convince Jephthah to be their leader, and the king of Ammon, whose only interest is to take land from Israel.

There are many agents in Judges 11. The parents of Jephthah are mentioned because their history explains why Jephthah's brother are set against him. The Ammonites enter the story because they support their king in his assault on Israel. On the other side, "worthless fellows" come to aid Jephthah, as do the men of Israel. Messengers enable communication between the opposing sides.

The most interesting character is Jephthah's daughter, who fills the role of the foil. She is the opposite of her father: he is aggressive and ambitious; she is passive and submissive. She is ready to obey her father even to death. Thus, Jephthah's aggressiveness and ambition are made even more manifest when compared to his daughter's meekness.

As in most literary works, the biblical narratives are segmented into specific **scenes**. In Judges 11, the first scene is Israel's conflict with Ammon. Then, the scene shifts to the early history of Jephthah, who later becomes God's instrument of victory. The next three scenes depict negotiations between Jephthah and different parties. His first negotiations take place with the elders of Gilead and yield a favorable result for

Jephthah. Next, he seeks to negotiate with the king of Ammon, but unsuccessfully. Finally, he “negotiates” with God by making a vow in order to secure His help in battle.

By comparing the final three scenes, we can observe a certain development. In his negotiations with the elders of Gilead, Jephthah was successful in attaining his aims. In the negotiations with the king of Ammon, however, things did not go so well. The “negotiations” with God led to even a more negative, even tragic result. As a result of his thoughtless vow, he apparently sacrificed his own daughter.

The **plot** is the process by which the overall goal of the story is reached. The standard order of a plot is as follows: (1) an introduction, in which we become acquainted with the elements of the story and its players, (2) the appearance of the issue to be resolved, and (3) the resolution of the issue, which is sometimes tragic, so that the readers learn not to copy the example of those who failed. Another aspect of the plot is the tempo. One should note when the events happen in quick succession, and when the plot slows. The latter usually occurs during the more important segments of the plot. A common ploy to slow the plot is to introduce dialog.

Let us examine the plot of Judges 11. The problem is the conflict with Ammon. How was the problem resolved? Here we encounter a significant point. A hurried reading of the passage may create the impression that the issue with Ammon was solved by Jephthah’s vow. However, a more careful reading will reveal that God had already provided the means of victory before Jephthah made his vow, when He sent His Spirit upon him. In the other accounts of the judges of Israel, the coming of the Spirit was the key to victory. Jephthah’s apparent lack of trust in God’s enabling Spirit, though, led to him making his tragic, and unnecessary vow.

Next, we investigate the **narration** himself. Here we are interested to know who is telling the story. Usually, a third-person narrator does this, that is, the author of the book. Sometimes, though, one of the characters in the story relates the events from his point of view. It can be helpful to discern from the tone of the narrative how the narrator feels about the story he is telling, which may aid in our evaluation of the characters’ actions. In Judges 11, especially in verses 34 and 40, we can pick up a sense of grief, underscoring the tragic nature of the narrative.

When analyzing the **dialog**, one should ask the following. First, who is leading the conversation? Usually, the leader of the dialog considers himself/herself superior to the other. It is also interesting to observe how the dialog partners respond to each other. In addition, we must identify the theme of the discussion. Each partner is attempting through the dialog to accomplish something. What are they after, and why? For example, in Jesus’ conversation with the woman of Samaria, she wanted to engage Him in a theoretical religious discussion, while Jesus wanted to delve into her personal life (Jn 4). In Jesus’ conversation with Nicodemus (Jn 3), the latter appealed to Jesus as a teacher, while Jesus pointed out his need not for more knowledge, but for a spiritual rebirth.

Next, the text sometimes reveals the **inner thoughts and feelings** of a person in the story, which may aid us in evaluating his/her character. Finally, one may note an **omission** of material when comparing parallel passages. One must ask why one author included it, while another excluded it.

### c. Narrative as Instruction

The third aspect of biblical narrative is that it fulfills a teaching function as well. The authors of Scripture are not only historians and writers, but theologians as well. When we examine narrative as instruction, we must note that teaching takes place on two levels. On the one hand, a person in the narrative may be teaching. On the other hand, the author of the narrative is trying to get a theological point across as well in the way he uses the historical material. Therefore, we must analyze both the teachings contained in the narrative, and the instructional goals of the narrator.

The above-mentioned approach is well illustrated in Acts, chapter 7, where Steven, on trial before the Jewish leaders, addresses his accusers. Stephen’s goal in his speech is to give a prophetic rebuke to his audience. What, then, is Luke’s goal in recording his speech? Most likely, Luke is hoping to inspire his audience

by Stephen's courage and strength. Therefore, one speech accomplishes two instructional goals: one for Stephen, and the other for Luke.

It is important to note that the teaching of the character in the narrative may or may not be totally accurate. As far as the biblical author goes, the doctrine of inspiration guarantees that his teaching is true. The content of the biblical character's speech, though, we must evaluate in the light of the whole of Scripture.

In Steven's case, there seems to be no reason to doubt the correctness of his teaching *per se*, seeing that he was filled with the Spirit at that moment, and Luke makes no negative comment on it.<sup>579</sup> On the other hand, God said about the friends of Job that they had "not spoken of Me what is right as My servant Job has" (Job 42:7).<sup>580</sup> The author of the book of Job, however, included these teachings under the Spirit's direction, albeit for a different pedagogic purpose. As far as Job goes, sometimes his words are true (see Job 42:7), and sometimes they are not (see Job 38:2).<sup>581</sup>

Another excellent example of teaching "on two levels" is the Synoptic Gospels. There we encounter, of course, the words of Jesus, whose teachings are always true. Besides that, all the Gospel writers selected material from the life and teaching of Jesus in such a way to present Him in a certain light for the sake of the audience they sought to reach. The "first level" of teaching, then, is the actual teaching Jesus gave to the people of His day. The "second level" of teaching is the attempt by the Gospel writers not only to pass the teachings of Christ on to their audience, but also to make a unique contribution to our overall understanding of the person of Christ.

## 2. Law

The genre "Law" involves the giving of commandments. There are two types of commandments: apodictic and casuistic. Apodictic law lays down general moral principles, which the people of God must observe. A good example is the Ten Commandments, one of which is "honor your father and your mother" (Ex 20:12). Yet, sometimes a more specific application to life is needed. In such cases a "casuistic law" comes into play, where the moral principle is put into practice. For example, in the case of a disobedient child we read, "If any man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey his father or his mother... then all the men of his city shall stone him to death; so you shall remove the evil from your midst, and all Israel will hear {of it} and fear" (Deut 21:18-21).

When interpreting commandments one must gather and compare other commandments on the same topic, both apodictic and casuistic. This will enlarge and sharpen one's understanding of the passage under investigation. Weeks comments on the value of having both types of commandments. Apodictic law allows the condensing of material, since most cases will be decided on the basis of the general principles anyway. On the other hand, having concrete examples helps to clarify those principles.<sup>582</sup>

An important question arises as to how the Old Testament law applies to New Testament believers. This will be our topic in the next chapter.

## 3. Epistle

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<sup>579</sup>On the other hand, we note some historical discrepancies in Stephen's speech when we compare it to Old Testament history (see Appendix D). Yet, since Stephen is not writing inspired Scripture here, we cannot require from him complete historical accuracy.

<sup>580</sup>On the other hand, the friends of Job do at times teach correctly. In 1 Corinthians 3:19, Paul approvingly quotes the words of Eliphaz the Temanite from Job 5:13.

<sup>581</sup>In connection with this, we should say a word about the book of Ecclesiastes. In some places, the author speaks not as a Spirit-inspired writer, but from the point of view of his experience and observations in life. This book describes the author's search for meaning. He seeks it in wealth, women, and wisdom, sometimes making incorrect statements based on his observations on life and personal experience. Yet, at the end of it all, he comes to the proper conclusion that the meaning of life is found only in God. Consequently, we must interpret individual passages in this book in that light (see Thiessen H. C. Lectures in systematic theology. – Revised by V. D. Doerksen. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979. – P. 381).

<sup>582</sup>Weeks N. The sufficiency of Scripture. – Edinburg: Banner of Truth, 1988. – P. 8-9.

Possibly, the most central literary genre found in Scripture is the epistle, since epistles contain the most substantial doctrinal content in the Bible. We must study the special features of this important genre. First, the epistle is a letter, written according to the standard custom of letter writing of that day. As in all letters, the author begins with a greeting, goes on to the body of the letter, and ends with a farewell.

The epistles are not textbooks in systematic theology, written to explicate various Christian doctrines. They are, rather, “applied theology,” written for practical purposes. The biblical author applies his knowledge of Christian doctrine to resolve issues for the recipients. At the same time, the epistle writer does not tell all that he knows about that doctrinal question. In order to study Christian doctrine more thoroughly, one must look at the whole Bible. The goal of the epistle writer is not to give a full exposition on a teaching, but rather to share enough knowledge of it to solve the problem at hand.

As stated above, epistles were patterned according to the ordinary custom of letter writing of the day.<sup>583</sup> In New Testament times, in fact, letters intending to teach, or “epistles,” were coming into vogue. New Testament writers wrote according to this model. Sometimes they address one individual, but more often a single church or group of churches.

A typical letter would begin with a greeting, which we observe in New Testament epistles as well. First, the author identifies himself and indicates his status in relation to the recipients. New Testament authors often refer to their apostolic status and thereby emphasize their authority in the Church.

After the author identifies himself, he gives a greeting. The typical greeting among the Greeks was χαρεῖν (*харэйн*), i.e., “rejoice.” The customary greeting among the Jews was *שלום* (*shalom*), i.e. “peace.” In the epistles, we see the greeting “grace” (i.e. χάρις, similar to the word χαρεῖν) and “peace.” It seems that the apostles were greeting both the Gentile and Jewish believers, highlighting thereby the unity of the Church. In secular letters, after the greeting came an expression of gratitude to the recipient and words of blessing. In New Testament epistles, though, the expression of gratitude is directed toward God, followed by a prayer for the recipient(s).

When analyzing the opening of an epistle, one should be attentive to the following. First, who is actually the author of the letter? Sometimes the greeting comes from several individuals, but only one of them is the actual author. Next, how does the author introduce himself? Does he speak of himself as an apostle, emphasizing his authority over the Church, or as a “bondservant of Christ,” emphasizing Christ’s authority over him? In addition, how does the author address the Church? Does he praise it, or begin in a critical tone? The author’s opening may reflect the spiritual condition of the given congregation.

Next, for what does the author express thanks to God? What positive features of the church are mentioned? Finally, for what does the author pray? This may indicate what struggles or needs the congregation is facing. What about the farewell at the end of the epistle? Who is sending or receiving greetings? Here we may gain some insight into the historical background of both the congregation and the author.

Part of the analysis of this genre is unraveling the arguments the author uses to reinforce his claims. Often, the epistle writer will give reasons or substantiation for his instructions, while at other times he simply makes assertions without confirming proofs. In the latter case, the author simply relies on his apostolic authority and expects the recipient(s) to receive his exhortation as such. In those cases, though, where he does appeal to argumentation, the interpreter must analyze the logic of his arguments.<sup>584</sup>

We will draw a brief example from Romans, chapter 3, where Paul claims that people are justified before God by faith. In this connection, he offers several proofs: (1) the Old Testament speaks of justification by faith,

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<sup>583</sup>See the discussion in Schreiner T. R. *Interpreting the Pauline epistles // Guides to New Testament exegesis.* – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1990. – P. 23-30; and Osborne, p. 252ff.

<sup>584</sup>See Schreiner, p. 97ff.

(2) a person cannot be justified by works, (3) God's grace is expressed in justification by faith, and (4) the cross of Christ has satisfied God's just punishment for humanity's sin.

It may also prove helpful to analyze the style of the author's arguments. Aristotle provides us with helpful categories of argumentation. If a person appeals to some authority in support of his/her position, we designate this by the Greek term *ethos*. Paul uses this approach, among other places, in his letter to Philemon. In an effort to urge Philemon to receive back his runaway slave, he writes, "Having confidence in your obedience, I write to you, since I know that you will do even more than what I say" (v. 21). By mentioning Philemon's "obedience," Paul is appealing to his apostolic authority.

If one appeals to emotion, we term this *pathos*. Turning again to Paul's letter to Philemon, we read in verse 9, "Yet for love's sake I rather appeal {to you}—since I am such a person as Paul, the aged, and now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus." Clearly, Paul here is playing on Philemon's emotions to secure his cooperation.

An appeal to logic is called *logos*. In Colossians 2:20-21, Paul employs this approach: "If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, 'Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!'"

#### 4. Parable

The next genre for our investigation is "parable."<sup>585</sup> A parable is a fictitious story, told to teach a lesson. Although the story is not real history, one may still analyze the parable from the point of view of history. For example, the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10) makes sense when we are aware of the hostile relationship that existed between the Samaritans and the Jews. We may also study a parable as literature, identifying in it literary features such as plot, background, character types, etc.

We must also identify the goal of the parable. Just as in our discussion of the "two levels" of teaching in narrative, the same exists in a parable. The one teaching the parable is attempting to achieve a certain goal, as is the biblical writer who includes it in his book.

Some practical suggestions when interpreting parables are as follows. First, identify the main point or theme of the parable. Sometimes the biblical text itself gives that away. For example, prior to relating a parable of Jesus in Luke 18, Luke identifies for the reader the purpose of the parable: "Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart" (Lk 18:1). It is also helpful to study other parables in that same context. In Matthew chapters 24-25, Jesus tells several parables about His second coming. Their messages complement one another.

Next, one must identify the "points of correspondence" in the parable. Here we are asking, "Which elements in the parable have symbolic meaning?" Sometimes a parable has only one main point, as in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10) – aiding those in need, even an enemy. Other details in the story likely have no significance, except for the mention of the priests and Levites, who may symbolize those who have religious devotion, but lack compassion for others.

In other parables, however, there may be many points of correspondence. The main point of the parable of the sower and the seeds (Matt 13) is how people receive God's Word. Yet, in distinction from the previous example, this parable has many symbolic elements. The seed is the Word of God, the soils are people's hearts, etc.

Podnyuk cautions that improper application of details in a parable can lead to serious theological error.<sup>586</sup> For example, some early commentators mistakenly felt that since Jesus is the vine (Jn 15), God must have created Him, since a vine is part of creation. Besides this, Pelagius noted that the prodigal son returned to his father without the help of a mediator (Lk 16). Does this imply that one can come to God directly, without the mediation of Christ? Definitely not!

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<sup>585</sup>See Osborne, p. 245-246.

<sup>586</sup>Поднюк С. Методы изучения Библии. – Р. 25.

Thiselton draws our attention to another special feature of parables.<sup>587</sup> In His preaching, Jesus sought common ground with His listeners. He spoke of vineyards, wedding feasts, catches of fish, sowing seed, etc. His listeners were well acquainted with these topics, since they related to their interests and needs. Yet, Jesus arranges His parables in such a way as to introduce to the hearers a new and unexpected element. For example, in Luke 18:9-17, contrary to expectations, the Pharisee is not justified before God, but the tax collector – the former was regarded as a religious hero, but the latter as a villain! Other parables follow the same pattern. David was in full agreement with Nathan's parable of rebuke, until he discovered that it applied to him (2 Chr 12:1-10).

Moreover, a parable can have multiple applications depending on the hearer. When one hears a parable, he/she usually relates to one of the characters more than to the others. In Jesus' parable of the Pharisee and tax collector (Lk 18), one hearer may identify more with the Pharisee, while others may see themselves in the role of the tax collector. Each hearer, though, receives something from the Lord, whether rebuke or reassurance. The genre "narrative" has the same effect, since the reader may identify more with one or another of the characters in the historical narrative.<sup>588</sup>

## 5. Poetry

The genre "poetry" is widespread throughout Scripture. We notice it especially in the Psalms, but it is present in wisdom literature, prophecy, apocalypse, and even in the epistles. Unlike our poetry, Hebrew poetry is based not on rhyme, but on parallelism. "Parallelism" means that neighboring lines in the poem are of approximately the same length and parallel each other in one of the following ways: synonymously, antithetically, or synthetically.

The term "synonymous parallelism" refers to neighboring lines that advance the same idea, albeit expressed in different ways. For example:

He ties {his} foal to the vine,  
And his donkey's colt to the choice vine;  
He washes his garments in wine,  
And his robes in the blood of grapes (Gen 49:11).

In this example, the phrases, "He ties {his} foal to the vine," and, "His donkey's colt to the choice vine" are saying the same thing. The same is true for "He washes his garments in wine," and, "His robes in the blood of grapes."

In the following New Testament example, "first part" equals "root," and "lump" parallels "branches":

If the first piece {of dough} is holy, the lump is also;  
and if the root is holy, the branches are too (Rom 11:16).

We take our final example of synonymous parallelism from Proverbs 29:18, where the words "vision" and "law" are synonyms:

Where there is no vision, the people are unrestrained,  
But happy is he who keeps the law.

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<sup>587</sup>See Thiselton A. The new hermeneutic // McKim D. A guide to contemporary hermeneutics. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986. – P. 85ff.

<sup>588</sup>Goldingay J. Models for interpretation of Scripture. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995. – P. 40.



The second type of parallelism is antithetical parallelism. Here the second line of a pair expresses the contrast of the first. In the following construction, a wise and foolish son are contrasted:

A wise son makes a father glad,  
But a foolish son is a grief to his mother (Prov 10:1)

This verse also demonstrates synonymous parallelism. The words “father” and “mother” are synonyms, indicating “parents.”

Proverbs 3:33 also contains antithetical parallelism:

The curse of the LORD is on the house of the wicked,  
But He blesses the dwelling of the righteous.

Another example is from Psalm 20:7:

Some {boast} in chariots and some in horses,  
But we will boast in the name of the LORD, our God.

The final type of parallelism is synthetic parallelism. Here we see a certain development between lines in a pair. For example:

So I will send fire upon the wall of Gaza;  
And it will consume her citadels (Amos 1:7).

As a result of God sending fire on the wall of Gaza, her citadels are consumed.

Another instance:

I call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised,  
And I am saved from my enemies (Ps 18:3).

Because David called upon the Lord, he is delivered from his enemies. Synthetic parallelism implies not only result, but may also indicate intensification, culmination, or other relationships.

Even though we encounter parallelism throughout Scripture, this poetic arrangement abounds in the Psalms. The Psalms as a whole are often classified by types. Hermann Gunkel’s classifications are as follows:<sup>589</sup>

- Hymns of praise: example - Psalm 103
- Community laments: example - Psalm 44
- Songs of individual thanksgivings: example - Psalm 18
- Songs of individual laments: example - Psalm 3
- Royal psalms: example - Psalm 4
- Spiritual songs: example - Psalm 50
- Mixed types: example - Psalm 100
- Others (entrance liturgies, Torah songs, blessings)

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<sup>589</sup>See Bray G. Biblical interpretation, past and present. – Downers Grove: IL: Intervarsity Press, 1996 – P. 400-402.

Let us look more closely at two types of psalms: psalms of praise and psalms of lament. Psalms of praise glorify God, encourage reflection on Him, and inspire faith. They also provide both the writer and reader a vehicle for expressing emotion connected to these themes.

As far as psalms of lament, they also enable the expression of emotion, in this case, painful emotion. Psalms of lament conventionally follow a certain pattern. First, the psalmist appeals to God for help, bringing his petition before Him. Then, he either acknowledges his sin as the cause of the trouble, or defends his innocence. Next, the psalmist will invite God's punishment on his enemies and express confidence in God's intervention. In conclusion, he thanks God in advance for His anticipated help.

## 6. Wisdom

Next, we will examine the genre "wisdom." We find this genre primarily in the other poetic books of the Old Testament, namely in Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon. The New Testament also boasts this literary type: the Epistle of James. Yet, the classic example of wisdom literature is the Proverbs of Solomon.

We can characterize the structure of a proverb as follows. First, the *theme* is introduced, followed by a *commentary* on that theme, that is, an evaluation of a certain behavior or its results. In Proverbs 28:19 we read, "He who tills his land will have plenty of food, but he who follows empty {pursuits} will have poverty in plenty." The *theme* here is diligence. The *commentary* – it leads to prosperity. Other features of proverbs are their brevity, parallel structure, and practicality.

How should one approach interpreting proverbs? First, in this literature, the terms "understanding," "discernment," "wisdom," and "knowledge" are synonyms, interchangeably employed for rhetorical effect. When interpreting proverbs, focus on their main theme. It is very helpful to compare the proverb under study with other proverbs touching on the same subject in order to broaden our understanding of that theme.

A thorny question concerning proverbs is this: "Why do we not always see in our experience a proverb's fulfillment?" For example, Proverbs 28:19 promises that hard work leads to prosperity, and Proverbs 22:6 assures us that proper child raising ensures a child's lifelong fidelity. Yet, we do not always see this in real life. We might respond that a proverb's fulfillment depends on other factors as well. A simple proverb cannot take into consideration all of life's complex factors in determining the outcome in every individual case. The goal of a proverb is merely to correlate one factor with another. All other things being equal, the proverb will be fulfilled as written.

Several categories exist for classifying proverbs. We may list "fatherly instruction," as in Proverbs 4:1: "Hear, {O} sons, the instruction of a father, and give attention that you may gain understanding." Some proverbs are classed as "speech with numbers," as in Proverbs 30:18-19: "There are three things which are too wonderful for me, four which I do not understand: the way of an eagle in the sky, the way of a serpent on a rock, the way of a ship in the middle of the sea, and the way of a man with a maid." Other proverbs employ comparison: "For the churning of milk produces butter, and pressing the nose brings forth blood; so the churning of anger produces strife" (Prov 30:33). Often these comparisons utilize the word "better": "Better is the poor who walks in his integrity than he who is crooked though he be rich" (Prov 28:6).

Some proverbs identify things abominable to the Lord: "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, But the prayer of the upright is His delight" (Prov 15:8). Others show the path to happiness: "He who despises his neighbor sins, but happy is he who is gracious to the poor" (Prov 14:21). A proverb taken from Judges 8:21 contains what we call a "proverbial saying": "For as the man, so is his strength."

An acrostic is when lines in a poetic saying begin with the successive letters of the alphabet. Proverbs 31:10-31 is one of several fine examples. Some proverbs are structured in contrasting "pairs": "Poor is he who works with a negligent hand, but the hand of the diligent makes rich. He who gathers in summer is a son who acts wisely, {but} he who sleeps in harvest is a son who acts shamefully" (Prov 10:4-5). In Proverbs, one may

find paradoxes: “Do not answer a fool according to his folly, or you will also be like him. Answer a fool as his folly {deserves,} that he not be wise in his own eyes” (Prov 26:4-5).

Besides the Book of Proverbs, we may identify other examples of wisdom sayings – sometimes in short, other times in long forms. One of the short forms is the riddle. Sampson provides us with the following example: “Out of the eater came something to eat, and out of the strong came something sweet” (Judg 14:14). Short forms also include allegories, such as in 2 Kings 14:9. Allegories can be lengthy as well (see Ezekiel 17). Other “long forms” include wisdom poetry (Job 28; Prov. 9), wisdom narrative (Prov 7:6-23; Ecclesiastes), and wisdom dialog (Job).

All variations of wisdom literature pursue similar goals. They summon people to seek wisdom and value it. They also challenge traditional thinking. Consequently, they may subject to criticism the way people usually think or solve problems. They call people to rethink and reevaluate how they live.

## 7. Prophecy

The genre “prophecy” encompasses two major thrusts: proclamation of salvation and announcement of judgment. Prophecy either lifts the spirit of the suffering with the hope of deliverance, or reproves the haughty spirit in opposition to God.

The “proclamation of salvation” employs the following structure. It begins with a word of assurance to the recipient, followed by a promise of God’s intervention into the situation. Then, God gives His reasons for intervening.

The following example will help illustrate this. In Isaiah 43:5-7, the prophet gives this word of assurance: “Do not fear, for I am with you.” Then, God promises His intervention: “I will bring your offspring from the east, and gather you from the west. I will say to the north, ‘Give {them} up!’ and to the south, ‘Do not hold {them} back.’” Finally, God explains why He will act: “Bring My sons from afar and My daughters from the ends of the earth, everyone who is called by My name, and whom I have created for My glory, whom I have formed, even whom I have made.” Israel is His people, created for His glory.

Much discussed is the question of Old Testament prophecy’s fulfillment. Some say these prophecies belong to Israel alone and anticipate their fulfillment during the coming messianic kingdom. Others assign their fulfillment to the Church, since the Church is now the people of God. We will discuss this issue at length in chapter 9.

The second main thrust in prophecy is the announcement of judgment. This literary type also has its own unique structure. First, God commissions the prophet to speak. Then comes the formula, “Thus says Yahweh,” or something similar. Next, through the prophet God rebukes His people. Finally, He prescribes their punishment.

We can view this structure in 1 Kings 21:17-19. God commissions His prophet with the following words: “Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, ‘Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, who is in Samaria; behold, he is in the vineyard of Naboth where he has gone down to take possession of it. You shall speak to him, saying, “Thus says the LORD, ‘Have you murdered and also taken possession?’”’” Then comes the formula, “Thus says Yahweh.” Finally, his punishment is announced: “In the place where the dogs licked up the blood of Naboth the dogs will lick up your blood, even yours.”

We take another instance from 2 Kings 1:3-4. The prophet is commissioned: “But the angel of the LORD said to Elijah the Tishbite, ‘Arise, go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria and say to them.’” Next, instead of the formula comes the rebuke: “Is it because there is no God in Israel {that} you are going to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron?” Then comes the formula, “Now therefore thus says Yahweh,” and the anticipated judgement: “You shall not come down from the bed where you have gone up, but you shall surely die.”

Clearly, by means of the “announcement of judgment” God calls the sinner to repentance and warns of coming consequences. This type of prophecy makes clear that sin has consequences. However, upon repentance God’s punishment is withdrawn.

We must make mention of the important concept “prophetic perspective.” This phenomenon is encountered when a prophecy is fulfilled progressively or in stages. For example, a prophet may predict the coming of Messiah, but the fulfillment may come partially during His first coming, and partially during His second coming. We can compare this phenomenon with a man standing before a mountain range where it appears to him that the peaks are very near to one another, when in reality there is a great distance between them. Similarly, a prophet may describe certain events as if they will occur simultaneously, when in fact a long period of time separates their fulfillment. This is “prophetic perspective.”

Isaiah 42:1-4 demonstrates this phenomenon. The words in italics relate to Messiah’s first coming, while the non-italic text awaits fulfillment at His second coming and the establishment of His earthly kingdom:

*Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one {in whom} My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations. He will not cry out or raise {His voice,} nor make His voice heard in the street. A bruised reed He will not break and a dimly burning wick He will not extinguish; He will faithfully bring forth justice. He will not be disheartened or crushed Until He has established justice in the earth; And the coastlands will wait expectantly for His law.*

Zechariah 9:9-10 follows a similar structure:

*Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout {in triumph,} O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; He is just and endowed with salvation, humble, and mounted on a donkey, even on a colt, the foal of a donkey. I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the horse from Jerusalem; and the bow of war will be cut off. And He will speak peace to the nations; and His dominion will be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.*

Daniel chapter 11 illustrates our point as well. In the first part of the chapter, we see a precise description of the Seleucid emperor Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who invaded Israel in the second century BC and subsequently oppressed God’s people. From verse 36 on, though, the prophet describes another individual, who will do greater abominations than Antiochus did. The accepted idea is that Antichrist is in view. Daniel does not distinguish the two, however, but speaks of them as a single individual.

Prophetic perspective also appears in Isaiah, chapter 19. Verses 1-17 predict God’s judgment on Egypt, which has already occurred in history. From verse 18 on, though, we read of Egypt’s coming restoration during the messianic kingdom. Similarly, Zechariah chapter 8 tells of Israel’s blessing and prosperity, both at Zechariah’s time, and in the end times.

In the above examples of prophetic perspective, the successive fulfillments occur over a long period of time. Some instances, however, require only a short period. For example, Samuel’s prophecies to Saul in 1 Kings 10:2-8 were fulfilled sequentially, yet only in the course of several years.

Passages in Isaiah 14:3-20 and Ezekiel 28:1-19 demonstrate prophetic perspective of a different type. On the one hand, they address God’s rebuke of the king of Babylon and the leader of Tyre respectively. On the other hand, some verses better relate to Satan’s fall. This case differs from the previous ones in that two future events are not in view, but judgements on pagan leaders of that day symbolically representing God’s judgment in the past on a rebellious cherubim. The “fulfillments” also take place in different spheres: on earth and in heaven.

Just as some prophecies can be fulfilled in stages, there also exist occurrences where a single prophecy is fulfilled twice in its entirety. If we hold that in some way the prophet Elijah will yet return before Christ’s second coming (see Mal 3:1), then this prophecy has two fulfillments: one at the time of John the Baptist (see

Matt 11:10), and one in the future. Moreover, David's son Solomon built a temple in his day (1 Kin 8:20), yet this prediction also applies to David's son, the Messiah (see 1 Kin 5:5). Finally, many feel that the prediction in Isaiah 7:14-16 has two fulfillments: one in a young woman during Isaiah's time, and another in Mary, the mother of the Lord.<sup>590</sup> This last case is discussed in detail in our third volume in the chapter on the humanity of Christ.

## 8. Apocalypse

The final biblical genre for our examination is "apocalypse." Like prophecy, apocalypse concerns future events, yet it differs in several respects. The following traits characterize apocalyptic literature. In apocalypse, God typically reveals Himself in a vision. Often, an angel accompanies the prophet and explains to him the elements in the vision. Naturally, the prophet will see many symbols in the vision that are often difficult for us to interpret. Symbols occur not only objects, but in numbers as well.

Apocalypse is often written in poetical style. Unlike prophecy, which addresses pressing questions facing God's people of the time and shows the path to their resolution, apocalypse concerns the ultimate resolution of the cosmic conflict between God and Satan. Since God emerges victorious in the end, this genre stresses God's sovereignty.<sup>591</sup>

Apocalypse differs from prophecy in yet another way. In prophetic utterances, God attempts to introduce reform. In apocalypse, however, there is no hope for reform. The old order is passing away and all will be made new. Apocalyptic literature usually appears during a time of crisis among the people of God. This is to be expected, since especially during crisis God's people need a word of comfort and hope for the future.

Finally, apocalypse emphasizes God's transcendence. That is, God directly intervenes in human history in supernatural ways in order to accomplish His plan. Here we note still another distinction from prophecy, where God works in a more immanent fashion by means of natural processes and the participation of people.

In general, we encounter the genre "apocalypse" in the book of Revelation, the last part of Daniel, Zechariah chapters 1-6, and Ezekiel chapters 37-48.

What value is apocalypse? First, since this genre is usually employed during times of crisis, it can serve to answer objections as to God's apparent lack of intervention in a time of trial. When people are in crisis, they typically ask, "Where is God?" "Why does He not act?" Apocalyptic literature reminds us that, in the end, God will deliver His people from all evil. Second, since biblical apocalypse promises God's people a glorious future, it can inspire perseverance, so that the people of God might stay faithful to Him in tough times.

## E. Analysis of Context

We will continue our description of the grammatico-historical approach to interpretation with an analysis of context. The analysis of context enables us to define how the material surrounding our passage affects its interpretation. The text under investigation is located in a certain section of the entire work and plays a definite role in the development of that section's flow of thought and in accomplishing the aim of the book as well. The thematic features of the book and its sections, in turn, affect the meaning our text. Therefore, it is imperative to delineate the relationships between our text and the material surrounding it.

We conduct the contextual analysis in the following manner. First, one must construct or obtain an overall outline of the entire book. This will enable us to identify the main theme of the book and where our passage fits in the development of that theme. Next, we narrow our analysis to the relationship between our text and

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<sup>590</sup>The examples of the "son of David" and the "virgin with child" are termed "typological fulfillment of prophecy," which is discussed in chapter 10.

<sup>591</sup>See Osborne, p. 221ff.

the section of the book containing it. Next, how does our passage relate to what comes immediately before and after it? Finally, we outline our passage under study.

Let us apply this technique to the passage Philippians 2:1-11. We begin by formulating an outline for the epistle as a whole and defining its main theme. We may propose the theme of Philippians as “Living out the Gospel.” The main sections of the epistle are as follows:

1. Greeting (1:1-2)
2. The effect of the gospel (1:3-11)
3. The spread of the gospel (1:12-26)
4. Our response to the gospel (1:27-2:18)
5. Coworkers for the gospel (2:19-30)
6. Threats to the gospel (3:1-19)
7. The hope of the gospel (3:20-4:9)
8. Supporting the gospel (4:10-20)
9. Farewell (4:21-23)

Next, what is the relationship between our passage and the general theme of the book? The main theme of our text is “humility in service.” We conclude, then, that humility in service is an integral part of “living out the gospel.”

We then examine the relationship of our text to the section that contains it. We locate our text in the section: “Our response to the gospel.” First, we note the importance of humility in service – it makes up part of our appropriate response to the Good News!

Second, how does our subsection, Philippians 2:1-11, relate to other subsections in the section: “Our response to the gospel?” The subsection prior to ours one could name: “Perseverance in suffering” (1:27-30). The subsection following ours is “Progress in sanctification” (2:12-18). Notable here is that subsection #1 highlights our relationship to the unbelieving world: we suffer for Christ with perseverance. Our subsection highlights our relationship within the Church: we serve one another in humility. The final subsection highlights our relationship with the Lord: we grow in holiness. Our response to the gospel thus goes in all directions, affecting all our relationships.

Third, we note a Christocentric focus in all the subsections: we suffer for Him (1:29); we follow His example of humility (2:5); and we grow in holiness in anticipation of His coming (2:16). Thus, Jesus is the source of inspiration in all these areas of spiritual life.

Finally, how do we define the relationship between our text and the surrounding context? Earlier, Paul urged the Philippian church to “conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ” (1:27). This exhortation likely applies to our passage as well (compare similar exhortations in 1:27 and 2:2). The call to humility in service, then, is part of a lifestyle “worthy of the gospel of Christ.”

Furthermore, in the previous context, Paul mentions his suffering for the gospel. As chapter 2 begins, Paul invites the Philippians to relieve his suffering and become sources of comfort for him by relating to one another in humility and self-sacrifice.

After our passage, Paul exhorts the congregation to submit to Christ (2:12-14). Note that in verses 9-11, Paul speaks of the exaltation of Christ – every knee will someday bow to Him. In 2:12-14, then, Paul is inviting believers to submit to the exalted Christ voluntarily at the present time.

The last part of an analysis of context is to outline the passage under study in detail. This will allow us to follow the author’s train of thought. Philippians 2:1-11 is broken down as follows:

1. Call to unity and unselfishness (2:1-4)
2. The example of Jesus (2:5-8)
  - a. His divine status (2:5-6)

- b. His voluntary humiliation (2:7-8)
- 3. Jesus rewarded for humility in service (2:9-11)

## F. Analysis of Key Words

Our next task in the exegetical process is to define key words in the text. Defining key terms is crucial to a proper interpretation of the text before us, since a word may have more than one meaning or shade of meaning.

### 1. Terminology

Words that have several meanings are called “polysemantic,” in distinction from homonyms, which are separate words with separate meanings, but spelled and pronounced identically. An example of homonyms in the Hebrew language is found in the term *אָנָה* (*ana*). One word of this spelling and pronunciation means “desire,” while another means “sign.”<sup>592</sup> Another instance is *מָשַׁל* (*mashal*). One term of this type means “rule,” while another designates a “proverb,” and still another means “to be similar.”<sup>593</sup> Homonyms are distinguished from polysemantic words in that the meanings of the latter are interrelated, while the former are unrelated to one another.

The Greek term *σάρξ* (*sarks*) is a polysemantic word. It has several meanings, all related to the physical state of man (meat, human being, inheritance, human judgment, human weakness) with one metaphorical meaning (human sinfulness). These related meanings, taken together, form what we call a “semantic field” of meaning. The literary device “field” is used because often word meanings can partially overlap, creating different shades of meaning between themselves. The definition of the term *σάρξ* (*sarks*) in any specific New Testament text, then, will be located somewhere on this “field” of meaning.

Another example of polysemanticism is the Greek term *κόσμος* (*kosmos*), i.e., “world.” It has three meanings in the New Testament: (1) the physical planet Earth; (2) people who live on the earth; and (3) the “world” as the sinful way people live on the earth. All these meanings are related to the earth or its inhabitants.

### 2. Word Meaning

#### a. Which Words to Study

Since a text has many words, and not all of them present difficulty for interpretation, one must choose which key words to investigate. One makes this choice based on the following criteria, listed in approximate order of importance. Words preferred for detailed study are those that: (1) greatly affect the meaning of the text; (2) do not have a clear meaning; (3) have meanings that substantially differ from one another; (4) are repeated in the passage; (5) are frequently used by the given author; (6) are rarely found in the Bible; or (7) have many synonyms.<sup>594</sup>

#### b. Appeal to the Original Languages

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<sup>592</sup>Brown F., Driver S. R., Briggs C. A. Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English lexicon. – Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977. – P. 16.

<sup>593</sup>Ibid, p. 605.

<sup>594</sup>See McKnight S. Interpreting the Synoptic Gospels // Guides to New Testament exegesis. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1988. – P. 107-108.

The second step for defining key words involves uncovering the Hebrew, Aramaic or Greek word behind the translation. God revealed Himself in the ancient languages of the Mediterranean and Near East. Therefore, to capture the meaning of His words, one must look behind the translation to the original biblical languages.

### c. Determining the “Semantic Field” of a Word

Having discovered the Hebrew, Aramaic or Greek original, we determine the limits of its “semantic field,” that is, all of its possible definitions. Specialized dictionaries of biblical languages exist to aid us in determining a word’s semantic field. The standard works employed for defining New Testament words are: BDAG (Bauer, Danker, Arndt, Gingrich), TDNT (Theological Dictionary of the New Testament), and DNTT (Dictionary of New Testament Theology).

These works are especially helpful because they examine a word’s usage not only in the New Testament, but also in the Septuagint, classical Greek, and in the works of the Church Fathers. This is important because a biblical word’s meaning is primarily determined by the way it was used about the time of the New Testament, since word meanings may change over time. Investigating the Septuagint and the Church Fathers is especially helpful, since they were written close to the time of the composition of the New Testament. Word usage in the earlier classical period, though, is less helpful.

Along with using standard texts, one may employ a concordance of Greek terms in the New Testament to identify all the passages containing that word and reach one’s own conclusions as to its New Testament usage.

The standard works for Old Testament word studies are: BDB (Brown, Driver, Briggs)<sup>595</sup>, NIDOTT (New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology), and TWOT (Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament). These works may also provide information on how the Septuagint translated the term in question, and on the meanings of related words in kindred languages to Hebrew. One may also use a Hebrew concordance to do an independent analysis of word usage in the Old Testament.

Once we have determined the semantic field of a given word, we then seek somewhere on that “field” the appropriate usage of the term in the text we are studying. If we are aware of all the possible meanings for a term, that is, if we have “covered the field,” we are in a position to pick up on subtle nuances intended by the author in employing that term. We will show an example.

Ezra 7:10 informs us that Ezra diligently studied God’s Word: “For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the LORD and to practice {it,} and to teach {His} statutes and ordinances in Israel.” The word “study” is a translation of the Hebrew verb שָׁרַשׁ (*darash*). The basic definition of this word is “to seek.”<sup>596</sup> Possibly, the author wanted to communicate that Ezra understood the study of Scripture as a long process of perfecting one’s knowledge of God and His truth. Ezra not only “studied” the Word, he “sought out” its meaning. This assumption is supported by the fact that the author could have used more conventional words for “study,” like לָמַד (*lamad*) or בִּין (*bin*).

Let’s take another example. The term אָוֶן (*aon*) appears 316 times in the Old Testament and is translated “lawlessness,” “sin,” “unrighteousness,” or “guilt.”<sup>597</sup> However, its basic idea is “to distort,” as in Psalm 38:6: “I am bent over (אָוֶן) and greatly bowed down; I go mourning all day long.” David experienced a physical “distortion” due to the psychological state he was in. Could this imply that sin can be characterized, among other things, as a “distortion” in human nature?

### d. Criterion of Context

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<sup>595</sup>Some prefer Koehler L. Baumgartner W. The Hebrew and Aramaic lexicon of the Old Testament.

<sup>596</sup>Brown, p. 205.

<sup>597</sup>Erickson M. J. Christian theology. – 2nd ed. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1998. – P. 592–593.



In our search for the appropriate meaning of the term under investigation, the most important factor to consider is context, that is, which definition best preserves the sense of the other words surrounding it. For example, in John 15:2 we read, “Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away.” The term translated “take away,” that is αἶρω (*aŭpo*), also means “lift up.” What does John mean here? Does God “lift up,” that is, give extra support to those branches not bearing fruit, or does He cut them off? Judging from the context where fruit-bearing branches are contrasted with non-fruit bearing ones, the meaning “cut off” seems correct.

Biblical interpreters have long noticed the thorny issue of the relationship between text and context. On the one hand, we claim that the meaning of a word (i.e., “text”) depends on the context in which it is located. On the other hand, the context is nothing more than an accumulation of words (i.e., “texts”). Therefore, the meaning of a context depends on the meanings of the words it contains. This mutual interdependence is known as the “hermeneutical circle,” and forces the question, “Where do we begin?” “Do we derive the meaning of the text from the context, or vice versa?”

To escape this “vicious circle,” many propose the following. It is best to begin by defining text from context. This is because it is likely that within the context, we find enough words whose meanings are already clear to aid us in defining the less clear terms. The parts of the context we do understand create a “preliminary context” to shed light on other parts. When we thereby arrive at a definition of an unclear word, it increases our understanding of the context as well, since there is now one less unclear word in it. Understanding the context better will then aid us in clarifying other unclear words. Going from text to context and back again, we progressively grow in our understanding of both. Such an approach is known as the “hermeneutical spiral,” and gives us an exit from the “hermeneutical circle.”

#### **e. Criterion of Authorial Usage**

Along with context, we also consider how an author conventionally uses our term in question. This can be accomplished with the aid of a concordance by discovering where the author uses the term and which meaning he prefers for it. We may also discover that the author assigns to this term a definition unique to him alone.

One clear example of the importance of authorial usage is the New Testament use of the word “receive” in relation to the Holy Spirit. Sometimes this word relates to the new birth, and sometimes to the baptism in the Spirit. Viewing this case in light of authorial usage, though, helps clarify the issue. When Paul or John use “receive” in relation to the Spirit, they are speaking of the new birth. When Luke uses it, though, he has Spirit baptism in view. So then, awareness of authorial usage can clarify a term’s meaning.

Another example is the usage of the phrase “eternal life.” In the Synoptic Gospels, these words designate length of life, that is, life without end. The apostle John, though, adds another usage to this – not only quantity of life, but an excellent quality of life, abundant life, life in God.

#### **f. Criterion of Theological Consistency**

After determining the appropriate meaning for our term in question based on context and authorial usage, we must complete our analysis by examining the theological context of our passage. We ask ourselves, “Is the interpretation of our text with this word meaning supported by the entire body of Scripture?” If not, we have most likely erred in our choice of word meaning.

For example, Romans 8:8 states, “Those who are in the flesh (σάρξ) cannot please God.” The term σάρξ (*sarks*) has many meanings, two of which are “body” and “sinful nature.” Logically, both meanings make sense. Yet, what did Paul have in mind: living in the body or living by one’s morally defective humanity? In light of the whole Bible, the second option is clearly preferred, since the Bible does not speak of the body as the source of sin (see Mk 7:20-23).

So then, with the aid of the above-mentioned criteria – context, authorial usage, and theological consistency – we can determine the meaning of key words in our text.

### **g. Additional Approaches to Analysis**

If one wishes to probe deeper, other techniques are available for specifying word meanings. First, we can compare synonyms. We ask, “Why did the biblical author choose this word instead of a synonym that has nearly the same meaning?” For example, in Matthew 14:2, Matthew chooses the word *παῖς* (*paic*) to describe Herod’s servant. In the Greek language, though, there are other terms for “servant,” like *δοῦλος* (*dulos*) and *σώμα* (*soma*). What was unique about *παῖς* (*paic*) that led Matthew to employ it?

We can also cite James 5:13. He writes, “Is anyone among you suffering? {Then} he must pray. Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises.” The word “sing” is *ψάλλω* (*psallo*). Why did James choose this word instead of *ᾄδω* (*ado*) or *ὑμνέω* (*humneo*)? Possibly, James preferred *ψάλλω* (*psallo*) because it is related to the word “psalm.” His readers may have recalled David the psalmist, whose life demonstrated the point James was trying to make in this passage. When David suffered, he prayed. When things went well, he sang praises to the Lord. David’s example could inspire James’ audience to turn to the Lord in all situations of life: the good and the bad.

Nonetheless, although the biblical author may well have had a special nuance in mind when he chooses one synonym over another, his choice may simply be stylistic as well. If so, then we must not seek a special meaning in his choice of synonyms. Good sources for biblical synonyms are dictionaries by Vine and Louw/Nida.

Next, we can compare the meaning of our word under study with words sharing the same root. Each word has corresponding words sharing the same root, but in different parts of speech, such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, etc. Yet, here one must use caution, since the meaning of words having the same root do not always exactly correlate. This technique, though, is helpful for rarely occurring terms, where it is difficult to identify a meaning based on how the word is used.

Some final approaches. One can investigate how the word under study was translated in ancient translations of the Old or New Testaments. In this way, we can discover how the translators understood the word. In addition, for Old Testament terms, one can compare Hebrew word meanings with corresponding words in languages related to Hebrew. This, again, is helpful if the word we seek to define is rarely used.

### **3. Common Errors in Analysis**

In our search for word meaning, we must avoid several commonly committed mistakes. First, the most common definition of a word is not necessarily the most appropriate meaning for the term under consideration in our text. Of course, chances are that the most common meaning is the correct meaning, but we must not assume that it is always so.<sup>598</sup>

Second, we should avoid appealing to a word’s etymology. The etymological meaning is the original meaning of the word when it was first coined. However, meanings of words change over time. An example from New Testament Greek is the word *γλωσσόκομον* (*glossokomon*). It was originally used to denote a case for holding the mouthpiece of a musical instrument. In the New Testament, however, it could refer to any case, even a purse (see Jn 13:29).<sup>599</sup> Another instance is the word *ὑπηρέτης* (*huperetes*), originally a “rower.” By New Testament times, however, the meaning had changed to “servant.”<sup>600</sup>

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<sup>598</sup>McKnight, p. 111.

<sup>599</sup>Cotterell P., Turner M. *Linguistics and Biblical interpretation*. – Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1989. – P. 131.

<sup>600</sup>Ibid, p. 133.

Third, the meaning of a word does not always correspond to its constituent parts. For example, the word ἐγκαλέω (*enkaleo*) consists of two parts: the preposition ἐν (a form of the preposition ἐν), which means “in,” and the verb καλέω (*kaleo*), or “call/summon.” Yet, the verb ἐγκαλέω (*enkaleo*) does not mean “call in,” but “reprove.”<sup>601</sup> Nevertheless, we must make a qualification here. Some words are so rarely encountered that it is difficult to define their meaning the preferred way – by how it was used in biblical times. In such cases, we may be forced to appeal to etymology or constituent parts to approximate its meaning.<sup>602</sup>

In addition, we must refrain from assigning to a word a contemporary meaning. For example, the Greek word δύναμις (*dunamis*) means “power.” Our word “dynamite” derives from this term. Yet, the New Testament writers knew nothing of dynamite when they employed this word. The term simply means “power.” Moreover, in Ephesians 1:14, we read that the Holy Spirit is the “pledge” (ἀρραβών - *arrabon*) of our inheritance. Yet, we cannot assign to this Greek term its contemporary meaning – an engagement ring. Finally, in 1 Corinthians 12:28, we must not translate κυβέρνησις (*kubernesis*, i.e. “administration”) with its modern equivalent “pilot.”<sup>603</sup>

Another common mistake is when an interpreter assigns to a word more than one meaning. As a rule, only one meaning is fitting for each word. There may be exceptions, though, especially in poetic passages. In John 1:5 we read, “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.” The term “comprehend” is καταλαμβάνω (*katalambano*), which can mean “comprehend” or “overcome.” It is possible that John meant both: that the darkness cannot comprehend the light, nor can it overcome it.<sup>604</sup>

Finally, one must be careful with biblical terms that also have a separate technical, theological meaning, since the two may differ. For example, the word “holy” in relation to people is usually employed in theological discussions to refer to the present condition of a person’s spiritual life. Yet in the Bible, the word “holy” can refer not only to one’s spiritual condition, but also to his/her position before God in Christ. Therefore, whenever in the Scriptures one encounters the word “holy” in relation to people, the term does not necessarily refer to a person’s spiritual walk.

#### 4. Symbolic Meanings

Until now, we have been discussing cases when words are being used with their literal meanings. Yet, the Word of God contains many examples where words are used symbolically. There are, in fact, many types of symbolic usage of words.<sup>605</sup>

One of simplest of these types is **comparison**. Here we see characteristics of one object or person represented in another. Such comparisons are often introduced by the words “like” or “as.” Jeremiah 23:29 will serve as an example: “‘Is not My word like fire?’ declares the LORD, ‘and like a hammer which shatters a rock?’” Next is the **parable**, which is merely an extended comparison. The parables of Jesus are clear examples and are often introduced by the phrase: “The kingdom of God is like...”

Related to the above is the **metaphor**. This is also a comparison, but without the introductory words “like” or “as.” Nonetheless, even without these key words, we can typically discern the non-literal use of such terms. For example, when Jesus said, “I am the door of the sheep” (Jn 10:7), he was speaking symbolically. However, sometimes the symbolism may not seem so obvious. Many feel, in fact, that Jesus’ words at the Last Supper, “This is My body” and, “This is My blood” are not metaphorical, but literally true. We can only resolve this issue by appealing not to linguistic, but to theological considerations.

Metaphors are composed of several parts: the theme, image and points of correspondence. The theme is the item being compared, while the image is the symbolic element to which the comparison is made. The

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<sup>601</sup>Ibid, p. 131.

<sup>602</sup>Greenlee J. H. A concise exegetical grammar of New Testament Greek // Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986. – P. 79.

<sup>603</sup>Cotterell, p. 134.

<sup>604</sup>Burge M. Interpreting the Fourth Gospel / Guides to New Testament exegesis // Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker, 1988. – P. 156.

<sup>605</sup>Osborne, p. 100ff.

points of correspondence are an especially important feature. One must discern which aspects of the image actually relate to the theme. In Jesus' saying, "I am the door of the sheep," He is the theme, while the door is the image. Which, then, characteristics of a door apply to Him? Certainly, not all of them. Again, such questions are answered by theological, not exegetical inquiry.

Sometimes, one or more elements of a metaphorical expression are omitted. In Colossians 1:18 we read, "He is also the head of the body, the church." There are two themes here: Jesus and the church, and two images: the head and the body. However, the points of correspondence are not elucidated. In which way is Jesus like a head, or the church like a body? In Mark 8:15 it is written, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod." Here, two elements are missing. The theme is missing – we are not told explicitly what the "leaven" refers to, but we may assume it is their teaching. In addition, points of correspondence are missing – how is their teaching like leaven?

The **allegory** is an extended metaphor. An entire episode can be written in metaphorical style with many symbolic elements. Judges 9:8-15 is an example.

Our next figure of speech is **anthropomorphism**. This is when human features are assigned to God. For example, Psalm 8:3 reads, "When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers." We know from Christ's teaching that God is a spirit (Jn 4:24), and therefore He does not have physical body parts. We must take the word "fingers," then, in a symbolic sense.

**Personification** is when human features are applied to inanimate objects. We interpret Isaiah 55:12 in this light: "For you will go out with joy and be led forth with peace; the mountains and the hills will break forth into shouts of joy before you, and all the trees of the field will clap {their} hands." The shouting of hills and clapping of trees represent joy in the kingdom of God.

**Irony** is a type of sarcasm. The speaker implies the opposite of what he/she actually says. When Michal, David's wife, said to him, "How the king of Israel distinguished himself today" (2 Sam 6:20), she really meant that he disgraced himself. Some feel the following words of Paul to the Corinthians were also meant sarcastically, as a veiled rebuke: "You are already filled, you have already become rich, you have become kings without us; and indeed, {I} wish that you had become kings so that we also might reign with you" (1 Cor 4:8).

**Synecdoche** is when one part represents the whole. 1 Chronicles 17:12 is a good example: "I will establish his throne forever." The "throne" represents the entire kingdom. In the New Testament, the word "Law" often refers to the entire Old Testament. For example, in Jn 12:34 we read, "The crowd then answered Him, 'We have heard out of the Law that the Christ is to remain forever.'" Yet, nowhere in the Pentateuch is it indicated that Messiah remains forever, only later in the prophets. Another example of synecdoche: "But on the contrary, seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter {had been} to the circumcised" (Gal 2:7). The word "circumcised" refers to the Jewish people, while the "uncircumcised" are the Gentiles.

The term **ellipsis** refers to a sentence lacking all its component parts. The Greek text of Ephesians 5:22, for example, lacks a verb: "Wives, to your own husbands, as to the Lord." We assume that the verb "submit yourselves" is implied from verse 21. **Hendiadys** is a repetition for poetic, rhetorical effect. The expression in Genesis 19:24, "fire and brimstone," serves as an example. Paul employs poetic repetition in the expression: "the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory..." (Tit 2:13). Our next figure of speech is the **apostrophe**, which is speech directed to someone not present. David called out to his departed son Absalom, "O my son Absalom, O Absalom, my son, my son!" (2 Sam 19:4).

**Apopsiopsis** is an unfinished sentence expressing deep emotion. We see this phenomenon in Genesis 3:22: "Then the LORD God said, 'Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever...'" Clearly, God felt strongly about Adam and Eve not having access to the tree of life in their fallen condition.

When one exchanges a potentially offensive saying with a more polite one, he/she is employing a **euphemism**. The sexual relations between Adam and Eve are expressed this way: "Now the man *knew* his wife Eve" (Gen 4:1, literal translation). A curious example is found in Job 2:9: "Do you still hold fast your integrity?"

Curse God and die!” In the Hebrew text stands the word בָּרַךְ (*barak*), which means not “curse,” but “bless.”<sup>606</sup> Possibly, the author of the book of Job used a euphemism in substituting the wife’s word “curse” with “bless.”<sup>607</sup>

Next is **litota**. Here, the speaker intentionally minimizes self or others to maximize another in comparison. For example, Abraham said of himself before the Lord, “I am {but} dust and ashes” (Gen 18:27). He underrates himself to exalt the Lord in comparison. Another example from Abraham’s life: Ephron undervalued his property when selling it to Abraham as a mark of respect (Gen 23:10-11), but most likely was speaking figuratively. Abraham understood the gesture and offered him the expected sum.

**Hyperboles** are exaggerated statements made to produce a strong impression. They are not to be taken literally. For example, Jesus used exaggeration when He said, “If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life crippled, than, having your two hands, to go into hell, into the unquenchable fire” (Mk 9:43). Here, Jesus intended to impress on His audience the seriousness of sin.

The final figure of speech for our investigation is the **epizeuxis**, which is the repetition of a key word for emphasis. Jesus’ famous expression: “Truly, truly I say to you” (Jn 1:51 and others) is one such instance. An Old Testament example is Isaiah 6:3: “Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts.”

How are figures of speech helpful? When we use a term in an unorthodox fashion, it may stir the hearer/reader to look at a familiar situation from a different point of view, which can lead to insight and action.

In our discussion of figures of speech, we can include a mention of idioms. Every people group has its own unique idioms that people outside that group will likely not understand. Biblical idioms are hard to pick up without help from specialized literature, like scholarly commentaries. The Hebrew expression גִּבּוֹר חַיִּל (*gibor hayil*) literally refers to a strong warrior, and sometime denotes the armies of Israel (2 Chr 13:3; 25:6; 17:16-17) or the army chief Naaman (2 Kin. 5:1). In its idiomatic use, however, it can refer to a rich man, like Boaz (Ruth 2:1) or a very capable man, such as Jeroboam (1 Kin 11:28). Another Hebrew idiom is אֲנָשִׁים רִיקִים (*anashim rikim*), which literally translates, “empty men.” Its idiomatic denotation, though, is a hooligan or a terrorist (Judg 9:4; 11:3).

Finally, symbolism is expressed not only in words, but in other ways as well. We know of symbolic numbers (Rev 13:18), names (Isa 8), colors (Rev 6), metals (Dan 2), jewels (Rev 21), etc.

## G. Analysis of Syntax

An irreplaceable part of the analysis of any passage is to examine its syntactical features. We must include in our study not only word meanings, but also the relationships between words in the text.

### 1. Morphology

The first step in a syntactical analysis concerns morphology, that is, the study of parts of speech. We are familiar with such morphological terms as “noun,” “verb,” “adjective,” “article,” etc. These parts of speech decline and occupy different cases, which adds to variation in their meaning. This is especially true in the original biblical languages, which, in distinction from English, regularly employ declensions and cases to vary meaning. Let us briefly look at 2 Chronicles 18:18 in the original Hebrew:

וַיַּרְאֵנִי אֶת־יְהוָה יוֹשֵׁב עַל־כִּסֵּאֹוּ וְכָל־צְבָא הַשָּׁמַיִם עֹמְדִים עַל־יְמִינֹו וּשְׂמֹאלֹו

I saw the LORD sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing on His right and on His left.

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<sup>606</sup>Brown, p. 138.

<sup>607</sup>At the same time, in Psalm 10:3 בָּרַךְ (*barak*) may also mean “curse.”

Let us highlight just a few of the nearly innumerable morphological features of this verse:

רָאִיתִי = verb in Hebrew perfect tense  
יוֹשֵׁב = anarthrous participle  
הַשָּׂמִים = noun with the article  
הַשָּׂמִים = plural noun  
הַשָּׂמִים = noun in the genitive case

For a thorough analysis of this verse, one must define the usage of tense, article, number, case, etc. for each term to which they apply. The options in the original biblical languages are nearly endless, far beyond our ability to treat them here.

## 2. Relationship between Words

Along with studying morphology, one should survey the relationship between the words in a text. This involves identifying the members and grammatical structure of each sentence. Each word plays a role in the expression of the intended sense. Such an analysis will oblige the interpreter to give proper attention to details in sentence structure and its effect on meaning.

Let us identify in 2 Chronicles 18:18 the members of the sentence:

- I = subject
- saw = predicate
- LORD = direct object
- sitting = adjectival participle, answering the question: "Which Lord?"
- on throne = adverbial (prepositional) phrase, answering the question: "Where?"
- His = adjective, answering the question: "Whose throne?"
- and = connecting conjunction
- all = adjective, answering the question: "Which host, or how many?"
- host = subject
- of heaven = adjectival (prepositional) phrase, answering the question: "Which host?"
- standing = predicate
- on the right and on the left = adverbial (prepositional) phrase, answering the question: "Where?"
- His = adjective, answering the question: "Whose hands?"

## 3. Word Order

A third aspect of syntactical analysis involves study of word order, which is the means by which biblical languages indicate emphasis. In oral speech, we indicate emphasis by intonation. Note how the following sentences communicate a different sense depending on voice intonation, indicated by italics.

- "Is *he* walking to church?" focuses attention on *who* is going.
- "Is he *walking* to church?" focuses attention on *how* he is going.
- "Is he walking to *church*?" focuses attention on *where* he is going.

As noted, in biblical languages, emphasis is indicated by word order. Special rules are employed to define word order, which require a knowledge of the biblical languages, as does syntactical study in general.

#### 4. Relationship between Sentences

The final element in a syntactical analysis is the determining the relationship between sentences in a passage. Since this analysis does not depend as much on knowledge of biblical languages, we can devote more attention to it. Sentences are related to one another in various ways, and the interpreter must search out these interactions. This information will aid in discovering the author's flow of thought and logic in the passage.

The method for doing this analysis is as follows.<sup>608</sup> First, we must break up the passage into its component parts, that is, sentences or phrases that contain a subject and predicate (stated or implied). Second, we must determine which sentences are syntactically connected to which others. Finally, exactly how are these syntactically connected sentences related to one another?

Our example will be from Hebrews 5:11-12. It can be divided into the following segments:

- Concerning him (Melchizedek) we have much to say,
- and {it is} hard to explain,
- since you have become dull of hearing.
- For though by this time you ought to be teachers,
- you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God,
- and you have come to need milk
- and (have) not (come to need) solid food.

Next, we must compose a list of the possible syntactical connections between sentences in Scripture, from which we will define the relationships in our text.

1. Sequence: one sentence describes some type of continuation, chronological or logical, of what is stated in the other sentence. The sentences are usually connected by the conjunction "and" (see 2 Kin 21:3-4).
2. Alternative: one sentence provides an alternative option compared to the other sentence. The sentences are usually connected by the conjunction "or" (see 1 Cor 4:21).
3. Development: one sentence continues a progression or development mentioned in the other sentence (see Rom 8:30).
4. Contrast: one sentence somehow stands in opposition to the other sentence. The sentences are usually connected by the conjunction "but" (see Gal 1:12; Gen 17:5; Gen 48:19).
5. Repetition: one sentence repeats the sense of the other sentence (see Rom 9:1; Ps 1:1; Rev 19:7).
6. Explanation: one sentence provides more detail about a specific word in the other sentence (see 1 Jn 5:1; 1 Cor 10:4), or about the other sentence in its entirety (see Gen 27:36).
7. Time: one sentence indicates the time when the action of the other sentence takes place (see Mk 15:20; Mk 1:32; Gen 24:19).
8. Place: one sentence indicates the place where the action of the other sentence occurs (see 2 Cor 3:17; Matt 18:20; Ruth 1:16).
9. Comparison: the two sentences provide a comparison of people or things (see Jn 3:14; Gen 41:13; Judg 7:12).
10. Result: one sentence describes the consequence of the action performed in the other sentence (see Rom 12:20; 1 Kin 21:13; Rom 6:18).
11. Means: one sentence describes in what way or manner the action of the other sentence was accomplished (see Col 1:29; 1 Cor 2:13).

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<sup>608</sup>See Schreiner, p. 98ff.

12. Reason: one sentence explains why the action described in the other sentence was performed (see Gal 2:12; Gen 6:13).
13. Goal: one sentence describes the goal to which the action of the other sentence is directed (see 1 Cor 9:23; 2 Sam 21:3; 1 Kin 18:42; Mk 4:11-12; Lk 5:32; 1 Cor 1:27-28; Heb 12:10).
14. Basis-Conclusion: one sentence arrives at a conclusion based on reasons stated in the other sentence (see Acts 2:15; Lk 7:47).
15. Basis-Exhortation: one sentence gives a call to action based on reasons stated in the other sentence (see 1 Cor 9:24; Ex 12:11; Matt 1:20; Rev 22:10).
16. Concession: one sentence presents a scenario that unexpectedly is not realized, as described in the other sentence (see Ex 3:5; Ps 95:8-9; Job 10:6-7; 2 Cor 8:9; 10:3, 10).
17. Question-Answer: one sentence poses an inquiry, to which the other sentence replies (see Rom 4:3; Rom 6:1).
18. Exception: one sentence describes the exclusion to the rule or statement made in the other sentence (see Gen 43:3).
19. Limitation: one sentence describes what may prevent the action of the other sentence from happening (see Num 13:28-29; 1 Sam 18:17).
20. Introduction: a sentence introduces a new topic or marks a transition in the narrative or argument (see 1 Cor 7:1; 12:1; Jer 51:14; Matt 22:2ff; Mk 12:26).
21. Background: the sentence describes the surrounding conditions in which the action described in the subsequent material takes place (see Gen 1:2-3; 1 Sam 17:41; Acts 13:5; Col 3:4).
22. Response: one sentence describes the response certain parties make to finding themselves in the conditions described in the other sentence (see Jn 2:11; Matt 23:37).
23. Nominal sentence: a conditional sentence may fill the role of a member of the main sentence, such as its subject, direct object or another member (see 1 Cor 2:9; 1 Sam 23:13).
24. Condition: one sentence describes the conditions to be fulfilled to attain the results described in the other sentence. The construction "if...then" is often used (see Lk 16:31; Ex 40:37; Judg 8:19; Mk 8:34; 8:38; 2 Cor 11:20; Col 3:1).

Let us comment more on the last listed item, the conditional sentence. Several rules apply to its interpretation. First, the converse of a conditional sentence is not necessarily true. That is, if we exchange the protasis for the apodosis and vice versa, the claim may be false. For example, the statement: "If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants," does not imply the converse: "if you are Abraham's descendants, then you belong to Christ."

Second, negating the protasis does not necessarily negate the apodosis. For example, the fact that "if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires," does not mean, "if any man does not aspire to the office of overseer, he does not desire a fine work." James 2:9 serves as another instance: "If you show partiality, you are committing sin," does not necessarily mean, "If you do not show partiality, you are not committing sin."

Finally, we must comment on how one chooses the appropriate variant from the twenty-four syntactical options listed above. First, the presence of conjunctions may determine the choice. If the conjunction γάρ (*gar*), that is "because," introduces a statement, then the relation is likely "reason." The conjunction δε (*de*), i.e., "but," usually indicates contrast, etc. Second, one must examine the context and inquire, "Which of the options for syntactical connections best fits the context?" Third, we look at theological considerations. Does the option we chose produce a sense that is theologically correct?

Now that we are acquainted with the tools for syntactical analysis, we can proceed with our examination of Hebrews 5:11-12.

- Concerning him (Melchizedek) we have much to say,



- and {it is} hard to explain,
- since you have become dull of hearing.
- For though by this time you ought to be teachers,
- you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God,
- and you have come to need milk
- and (have) not (come to need) solid food.

The sentence, “Concerning him we have much to say,” relates to the previous sentence (not shown). It provides additional information about Melchizedek, that is, it **explains** who Melchizedek is. The sentence, “It is hard to explain,” correlates with the sentence preceding in the sense of **limitation**. The sense here is that we could say much more about Melchizedek, but the difficulty of the topic limits our inquiry. The sentence, “Since you have become dull of hearing” connects to the previous sentence as the **reason** for the limitation.

The next sentences, “For though by this time you ought to be teachers” and, “You have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God,” are related to one another as **concession**. It is unexpected that after all this time the church should still be spiritually immature. Between the statements, “You have need again for someone to teach you” and, “Since you have become dull of hearing,” we again see **reason**. The next sentences, “You have come to need milk” and, “You have) not (come to need) solid food,” are in **contrast** to one another. The statement “You have come to need milk” also connects to “you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles” in the sense of **repetition** – they are saying the same thing.

Finally, we will acquaint ourselves with some supplement rules for analyzing sentences. First, there can be more than one correct option for defining relationships between statements. For example, between the sentences: “After the sun had set” and, “they {began} bringing to Him all who were ill,” the relationships “time” and “background” both apply.

In the following example, however, we must observe a certain nuance. When we read the passage: “If children, (then) heirs also” (Rom 8:17), the construction “if...then” reminds us of the relation “condition.” Yet, the relation “basis-conclusion” also applies. On the basis that we are children, we can conclude that we are also heirs. In fact, we prefer the second variant for the following reason. It is unlikely that Paul doubts the status of his audience as children of God. Therefore, his goal is not to state a condition for their being heirs, but to make a logical connection between their sonship and inheritance. Therefore, “basis-conclusion” is actually the preferred option.

Second, at times, one sentence can relate to a group of sentences, as in 1 Cor 2:6, 13):

- We do speak wisdom among those who are mature...
- ...which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual {thoughts} with spiritual {words.}

The statement: “We do speak wisdom among those who are mature,” relates to these three sentences taken together in the sense of “means.” That is, the following sentences describe just how Paul speaks wisdom.

## H. Rhetorical Features of the Text

A writer can communicate ideas not only by means of words, but also by the way he/she arranges the material. We call this feature of syntactical analysis the “rhetorical features” of the text.

### 1. Repetition

The first feature to consider is repetition. A biblical author may repeat certain elements in his text to communicate emphasis or create some other effect. He may repeat words. Chapter 13 of Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians illustrates this, where he repeatedly employs the word "love." This chapter is appropriately named the "love chapter." In Ephesians 1:3, Paul repeats the term "blessed" in three different forms: as an adjective, participle and noun: "Blessed {be} the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly {places} in Christ."

Repetition can occur in the structure of a passage.<sup>609</sup> A striking example is the messages of Jesus to the churches in Asia Minor (Rev 2-3), which follow the following pattern:

1. address to the "angel" of the church
2. greeting
3. commendation of the church
4. correction of the church
5. warning to the church
6. summons to hear the Spirit
7. promise

It is interesting to note that to the congregations in Sardis and Laodicia a word of commendation is absent. On the other hand, Jesus gives no correction to the congregations at Philadelphia or Smyrna.

We may encounter repetition of a saying. Twice in the book of Judges we read, "Every man did what was right in his own eyes" (17:6; 21:25), which stresses the pitiful spiritual condition of Israel at that time and what factor likely led to it. Mention of certain objects can be repeated, like "fire" in the history of Moses, or "stones" in the narrative of Jacob. However, repetition in some cases may just be incidental and not have any deeper meaning.

Themes may also be repeated. In the book of Genesis, three times we come across the theme of the barren woman (chps. 16, 25, 30). Four times, the firstborn loses his inheritance (chps. 21, 25-27, 37-42, 48). Events are repeated. Three times the Balaam's donkey halts (Num 22), and three times soldiers approach Elijah to seize him (2 Kin 1).

In this discussion, we must not fail to mention the technique of "chiasm." This term describes the phenomenon when themes are repeated according to a "crisscross" pattern. The themes progress in the following order, with the first and second themes appearing again toward the end:

A  
 B  
 C  
 B1  
 A1

The entire eleventh chapter of Numbers is arranged according to this structure. In the beginning, people complain about the lack of meat (11:4–10a). Then Moses complains about too much work (11:10b–15). In the middle of the chiasm, God responds and promises help (11:16–24a). First, He will respond to Moses' appeal for support, that is, we return to theme "B" (11:24b–30). In the end, God promises meat to the people – theme "A" (11:31–34).

A = meat  
 B = work

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<sup>609</sup>Osborne, p. 36.

C = God's response  
B1 = work  
A1 = meat

A variation on the chiastic structure is seen in Isaiah 6:10:<sup>610</sup>

A: Render hearts of this people insensitive,  
B: their ears dull,  
C: and their eyes dim.  
C1: Otherwise, they might see with their eyes,  
B1: hear with their ears,  
A1: understand with their hearts...

The chiasm in Genesis 4:2 has only two elements:

A: Abel was a keeper of flocks,  
B: Cain was a tiller of the ground,  
B1: Cain brought an offering to the Lord,  
A1: Abel brought an offering to the Lord.

As far as analyzing a chiasm, it possesses certain special features. First, one must study the chiasm in its entirety. Generally speaking, it would be improper to break it up and study its constituent parts in isolation. Second, frequently the central theme of the chiasm receives more emphasis than the others do.

The last type of repetition to consider is the "inclusio." This refers to instances where a passage begins and ends with the same words or expression. In Isaiah 11:1-10, for example, the passage begins and ends with a reference to the "root of Jesse":

Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit.... Then in that day, the nations will resort to the root of Jesse, who will stand as a signal for the peoples; and His resting place will be glorious.

As in the case of the chiasm, it is best to study the inclusio in its entirety and not sections of it in isolation.

## 2. Comparison

Comparison is another rhetorical device used in Scripture. A straightforward example is Philippians 2:5, where Paul compares the attitude of Christ to that of the Church: "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus."

We find a more sophisticated instance of comparison in 1 Kings 22:10-23. In verses 10-18, we observe Ahab conversing with his "prophets," while in verses 19-23 – God with His angels. When we compare these passages, we notice some interesting similarities. First, both Ahab and God are seated on their thrones. Next, Ahab's prophets are surrounding him, while the angels surround the Lord. Third, in both instances mention is made of Ramoth-gilead. Fourth, both times the counsel of one participant differs from that of the majority – in contrast to the other "prophets," Micah advises Ahab not to go to war, while a "spirit" in heaven volunteers to deceive Ahab through his "prophets."

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<sup>610</sup>Osborne, p. 39.

Discerning the rhetorical device of “comparison” here may solve a difficult theological problem in this passage. Micah is the only true prophet among the “prophets” assembled. Might we not also assume that the “spirit” who will deceive Ahab is the only evil spirit present among God’s angels? We know that God’s angels are holy and would not practice deception. It seems, then, that God simply allowed an evil spirit to give Ahab the answer he was looking for.

### **3. Contrast**

Next, we investigate instances of contrast in the text. From a theological perspective, the most important example of contrast is in Romans chapter 5. Here, Paul contrasts the curse we inherit from Adam with the blessing we receive in Christ. In Adam is death and condemnation, but in Christ – life and justification.

The passage in Philippians 2:6-11 presents us with another dramatic instance of contrast. Here we learn that the Son of God descended from the highest place in heaven to the earth, and then humbled Himself further by death on a cross. In other words, he went from the highest place to the lowest place, and then back to the highest place again when the Father exalted Him above all.

The writings of John abound with examples of this approach. He contrasts heavenly with earthly, light with darkness, children of God with children of the devil, truth with error, etc.<sup>611</sup> In 1 Corinthians 2:6-3:4, Paul contrasts various stages of development in spiritual life. There are mature and babies in Christ; spiritual, natural, and carnal people; those who are ready for meat, and those who can only tolerate milk.

Our final example will be how Peter’s behavior contrasts with Jesus’ in John chapter 18. Unlike the courage Jesus displayed on trial before the Jewish leaders, Peter showed cowardice in denying His Lord.<sup>612</sup>

### **4. Poetic Parallelism**

The fourth type of rhetoric embellishing is the use of poetic parallelism. We have already discussed this in our section on the genre of poetry, so the reader is directed to that section.

### **5. Development**

The fifth step in this process involves discovering development in the passage. This approach differs from synthetic parallelism in that the development goes beyond a pair of lines to include larger blocks of material. A classic example is Romans 5:3-5, where Paul talks about the resultant progress that believers make when going through trials:

- tribulation brings about perseverance;
- perseverance, proven character;
- proven character, hope;
- hope does not disappoint...

One may note development in the eleventh through the fourteenth chapters of Leviticus as well. In chapter 11, for a certain violation of ceremonial purity an individual is excluded from the assembly of Israel for one day. In chapter 12, – for one week. In chapters 13-14, – for life.

The entire book of Judges demonstrates development in a very creative manner. First, we must outline the cyclical nature of Israeli history at that time, delineated by the following repeating events:

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<sup>611</sup>Ibid, p. 38.

<sup>612</sup>Ibid.

1. The sons of Israel begin to do evil in the eyes of the Lord.
2. God delivers them into the hands of their enemies.
3. Israel serves their enemies for so many years.
4. Israel cries out to the Lord.
5. God answers and raises up judges.
6. The Spirit of God comes upon the judges.
7. It the power of the Spirit, the judge delivers the people.
8. The land has peace for a time.

Next, we recall the histories of the main six judges recorded in that book: Othniel, Ehud, Deborah, Gideon, Jephthah, and Sampson. We note that, with the exception of Othniel, not all of these events are mentioned in their accounts. In Ehud's history – only seven; for Deborah and Gideon, – only six with a passing mention of a seventh; for Jephthah, – five; for Sampson, – four with a passing mention of a fifth.

Block suggests that the structure of Judges itself, where mention of these stages in the cycle becomes briefer and briefer, pictorially reflects the spiritual decline of God's people at this time.<sup>613</sup> The content of the book depicts this as well. Possibly, the author adds this rhetorical device to further stress this spiritual decline.

## 6. Play on Words

Let us glance at "play on words." An author may employ similar sounding words or words with similar spelling for poetic effect. In Isaiah 5:7 we note the similar sounding words מִשְׁפָּט (*mishpat*), that is, "judgment," and מִשְׁפָּה (*mispah*), i.e., "bloodshed," and also the pair תְּדָקָה (*tsedaka*), "righteousness," and תְּדָעָה (*tsedah*), "cry." Also, in Jeremiah 1:11-12, note the following: שֹׁקֵץ (*shaker*), "almond tree," and שֹׁקֵץ (*shoker*), "to be attentive." Sometimes this feature is evident even in translation, as in 2 Corinthians 9:8, where the Greek terms παντί (*panti*), πάντοτε (*pantote*), and πᾶσαν (*pasan*) are translated, "all," "all," and "everything." An acrostic is also a play on words, where each line of a passage begins with consecutive letters of the alphabet, such as in Psalm 119 and Proverbs 31:10-31.<sup>614</sup>

## 7. Diatribe

The phenomenon of "diatribe" is when debate ensues with an imaginary opponent. Paul uses this technique to anticipate questions that might arise among his readers.<sup>615</sup> For example:

- Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the benefit of circumcision? (Rom 3:1)
- What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? (Rom 6:1)

## I. Analysis of Theological Context

In this section, we will deal with the topic "theological context." This refers to the analysis of the theology of our passage in light of the wider teaching of Scripture. We seek to discover what the Bible as a whole says about the topics addressed in our text.

This approach has common features with Brevard Childs' idea of "canon criticism." Yet, the weakness in Childs' approach is that he bypasses the historical value of the text and contents himself to study Scripture in its canonical context without reference to its historicity.

<sup>613</sup>Block D. I. Judges, Ruth // Clendenin E.R. New American Bible commentary. – Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1999.

<sup>614</sup>Osborne, p. 180.

<sup>615</sup>Хабаров О. Реферат по экзегезе Рим. 1:13-17. – М.: Евангельская Теологическая Семинария, 2008.

The analysis of theological context closely coincides with a time-tested theological tool called the “analogy of faith” used by the Reformers of the Church. This principle teaches that the Bible is best interpreted when we compare Scripture with Scripture.<sup>616</sup> We also take into consideration Dyck’s advise that the Bible is not an anthology of books, but a book in itself with an inner cohesiveness.<sup>617</sup>

How is the examination of the theological context helpful? First, such an enterprise can expand our understanding of the topics in question. The better we know what other passages say about the themes in our text, the better we understand our text. Second, it is valuable as a check on our preliminary interpretation of the passage. If the teaching we derive from it does not line up with the whole-Bible witness, then we must adjust our interpretation.

The investigation of the theological context involves several steps. First, we identify the theological and ethical themes in our passage. Since we already performed this task when doing our preliminary reading of the text (see above), we may borrow material from that analysis.

We will take a simple example to illustrate this step in the exegetical process. In Luke 2:36-38, we read of the prophetess Anna, who met the infant Jesus in the temple. These few verses touch on several biblical themes: the ministry of a prophetess, the life of a widow, wholehearted dedication to the Lord, and the announcement that Messiah has come. Next, we delineate what is the primary and which are the secondary themes in this passage. It seems that Anna’s announcement of the coming Messiah takes priority over the rest. Delineation of primary from secondary themes is important in that it allows us to focus more attention on the primary one.

Giving attention to topics that may easily mislead the reader is also vital. For example, in Philippians 2:10-11 we read, “...so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” If we compare this with Romans 10:13: “Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved,” it creates the impressions that all will someday confess Christ and be saved. However, a whole-Bible analysis on that theme will reveal that this is not so. Therefore, when studying Philippians 2:9-10, one must take into consideration the entire teaching of the Bible on salvation.

Our next step is to discover what the author of our passage teaches on these topics, especially the primary one, in his other writings. If we are studying the theme of Jesus’ messiahship from Luke 2:36-38, we will expand our search to see what else Luke writes about Messiah in his Gospel and in the book of Acts. Then, we want to know what the New Testament and the Bible as a whole says on the topic. Thus, we form “circles” of context for our passage: the author, the Testament, and the Bible as a whole.

We must also take into consideration the concept of “progressive revelation.” This refers to the fact that many biblical themes or doctrines undergo development or clarification in the course of time in the context of the biblical canon. In other words, God did not reveal everything He intended to reveal immediately to Moses in the Pentateuch. He revealed His truth progressively over the entire canon.

Therefore, we must discover exactly where our passage is located in this progressive revelation. What did God already reveal about the themes in our text before it was written, and what did He reveal subsequently? At the same time, we reject the claim that later revelation contradicts earlier revelation. We allow only clarification, specification or development of earlier biblical themes.

The biblical teaching on the Messiah undergoes a definite development. In earlier biblical books, such as Samuel and Kings, the Messiah is simply the king of Israel. Saul and David were called God’s anointed, or “messiah.” Later, though, God made known that a future Messiah would be king not only of Israel, but also of the entire world. Jesus later revealed, to everyone’s surprise, that Messiah was not only a political figure, but also a Savior from sin. Finally, in John’s writings and the Epistles, we see Messiah presented as God Himself in the flesh.

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<sup>616</sup>Dyck E. Canon as context for interpretation // Dyck E. The act of Bible reading. – Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1996. – P. 44.

<sup>617</sup>Ibid.

The biblical teaching on Satan and demons serves as another example of this phenomenon. In the beginning of the canon, all that God revealed about the powers of evil was the existence of a sly serpent. Later, in the historical books, we encounter the phrase “an evil spirit from the Lord,” which informs us that, although evil powers exist in the world, they are not equal to God, but rather under His ultimate authority. In the prophetic books of Isaiah and Ezekiel, we learn that Satan is a fallen cherub. Daniel informs us of the existence of an entire hierarchy of demons. In the book of Zechariah and the book of Job (which entered the canon late), we encounter for the first time the name “Satan.” In the New Testament, of course, we gain much more insight into the forces of evil.

If God revealed His truths progressively and the fullest versions are found at the end of the canon, then why is it needful to study His earlier revelations? We may well have cases where later biblical authors omit details in God’s plan that were covered in earlier revelation, which the later author expects his audience to already know. Therefore, the best plan is to study out biblical themes and doctrines from beginning to end.

Let us look at an example of we have just claimed. The Old Testament presents a wholistic picture of the human being. We do not see there a clear demarcation of the human spirit, soul, and body. Yet, the New Testament clearly points out these distinctions. On the one hand, we accept the New Testament picture as the more theologically developed. Nonetheless, we should not minimize the Old Testament contribution to this question. Although humans do indeed possess component parts (spirit, soul, body), they are so closely intertwined and interdependent that the idea of humanity’s “wholeness” remains relevant. A human being without one of these components is not a whole person.

In conclusion, we may briefly mention a variation on the theme of progressive revelation advanced by Walter Kaiser. He agrees that later revelation never contradicts earlier revelation, but also rejects the idea that anything fundamentally new is added in the course of canonical revelation. He feels that the entirety of God’s revelation, at least in seminal form, can be found in the Pentateuch. Nonetheless, it is difficult to see the entirety of Christian doctrine in the Pentateuch alone.

## **J. Application of the Text**

One of the most challenging questions in hermeneutics is how to apply a Scriptural text in modern times. What does the Bible have to say to us today? We recognize that the Bible was not originally addressed to us, but to people living in the ancient world. Gordon Fee comments,

God did not choose to give us a series of timeless, non-culture-bound theological propositions to be believed and imperatives to be obeyed. Rather he chose to speak his eternal word *this* way, in historically particular circumstances in every kind of literary genre.<sup>618</sup>

When we do an exegetical analysis of a text, we uncover what the text *meant* to the people of that day. What does it *mean*, though, for us now? Should we observe the Sabbath (Ex 20:8), refrain from eating pork (Lev 11:7), sell all our possessions (Matt 19:21), or wash one another’s feet (Jn 13:14)?

The question of Scripture application was problematic in the Early Church as well. The apostles deliberated on the issue of Gentile believers keeping the Law of Moses. They decided, “For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these essentials...” (Acts 15:28). The same task stands before the Church today – how does the Bible relate to us in our day? The question of application typically arises in three areas: who can claim certain promises of Scripture, who must obey certain commands of Scripture, and who must follow certain examples set in Scripture?

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<sup>618</sup>Fee, *Gospel and Spirit*, p. 33.

A vital aspect of this analysis is discovering the general principles that underlie the text under examination. Specific promises, commands, and examples are based on general biblical principles. Although specific verses may apply just to their original intended audience, general principles tend to have a wider application.

For example, God's will for His people throughout the ages has been holiness. Yet, that principle can find different expressions at different times. In the Old Testament, in the context of "holiness," much emphasis was placed on observing ceremonial purity as prescribed in the Law of Moses, as well as certain external behaviors. Yet, in the New Testament, ceremonial purity is no longer required, and equal if not more emphasis is placed on inner attitude than external behavior. Therefore, the principle of holiness can find expression in various ways at various times.

In order to define the general principle underlying a text, one must ask the question, "Why did God promise or require this?" Sometimes, the text itself indicates this. For example, in Malachi 3:10 we read, "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse," and the reason is immediately given, "So that there may be food in My house." So then, God required the tithe to support the temple ministry. The principle, then, is that the ministry should be supported by offerings from the people. In addition, the Bible's teaching as a whole may aid in uncovering the general principle. Concerning support for the ministry, the New Testament confirms that God supplies through the gifts of His people (see Matt 10:10-11; 1 Tim 5:17-18; 1 Cor 9:6-14).

Having determined the principle standing behind the text, we must learn how that principle finds expression in different parts of the canon and under differing conditions.<sup>619</sup> We ask ourselves the question, "Is there only one proper expression of that principle throughout Scripture, or is there some flexibility in its application? Concerning the tithe, this system existed before the Law of Moses (Gen 28:22), was confirmed by the Law (Lev 27:30), remained in force during the time of the prophets (Mal 3:10) and the Lord Jesus (Matt 23:23).

Yet, in the epistles, although the topic of support for the ministry is often mentioned, there is no instruction on tithing. We get the impression that in the apostolic times, the principle of support for the ministry had a different expression: a freewill offering according to the disposition of one's heart (2 Cor 9:6-8)<sup>620</sup>. We see this same idea of voluntary offerings when gifts were brought for building the tabernacle in the wilderness (Ex 25:2).

On the other hand, when we look at the principle underlying Leviticus 18:22: "You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female; it is an abomination," we receive a different impression. The Bible from beginning to end condemns homosexuality (Rom 1:26-27; 1 Cor 6:9). In this case, the principle of proper sexual relations is stable in its application.

The instructions on marriage are illuminating here. The Old Testament allowed polygamy, but the New Testament does not. Here we have a case not with "flexibility" in the application of a general principle, but a new development in God's plan. In Old Testament times, it was more difficult for a man to find contentment in one wife. The New Testament, however, raises the standard because of the presence of the Holy Spirit in the believer's heart. The same is true for divorce. Jesus and the apostles imposed more restrictions in this matter, since the old order (Deut 24:1), which made allowances for people's hardness of heart (Matt 19:8), was passing away. Therefore, we must not mistake "flexibility" in application with a new direction or development in God's overall plan.

Finally, one must consider the historical conditions in which God gave the promise or command. For example, Jesus commanded His disciples to wash each other's feet (Jn 13:14-15). In that day, foot washing was a necessary part of good hygiene, since people walked in sandals. In our day, we wear shoes. Therefore, that act serves no practical goal today. Most likely, we should seek a more meaningful expression of the principle of humility and respect for others.

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<sup>619</sup>Erickson, *Evangelical interpretation*, p. 70; Fee, *Gospel and Spirit*, p. 13ff.

<sup>620</sup>At the same time, we have to consider that in 2 Corinthians, Paul is gathering an offering not for the support of regular ministry, but for a special need in the Jerusalem church.



Paul's "command" to Timothy in 1 Timothy 5:23 merits comment: "No longer drink water {exclusively,} but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments." Clearly, the issue was Timothy's health, and the wine was meant as a medicinal treatment. This is not to be understood as a general exhortation to drink alcohol.

Another key element in this analysis is to ascertain whether or not the biblical practice differed from the societal norms of that day. In Deuteronomy 18:14, God forbids His people to practice the occult. Yet, at that time, its practice was widespread outside of Israel. If the biblical practice differs from the societal norm, then it would be hard to claim that it was simply a concession to avoid offending those outside the fellowship of God's people. Therefore, chances are, this is a practice with universal application.

On the other hand, if a biblical practice and societal norms overlap, this does not necessarily mean that the practice is simply a concession for the sake of outsiders. For example, Scripture teaches, Old Testament and New, that children should obey their parents. Yet, this was the accepted practice in society as well. Nonetheless, this biblical practice is not culturally determined, but universal in scope. It just happens to coincide with societal order.

Some also recommend that we consider how a certain practice found in Scripture might be perceived in modern society. Possibly, a practice well accepted in antiquity may have the opposite effect today.<sup>621</sup> How would people today, for example, react to believers giving one another a "holy kiss" (Rom 16:16; 1 Cor 16:20; 2 Cor 13:12)? Nonetheless, one must exercise caution here, as Podnyuk warns,

It is very dangerous to adapt a biblical command to modern societal norms. There are times when God's principles will markedly differ from the behavior of unbelievers (see Rom 12:2), although that is not necessarily the intended effect. The criteria for adapting prescribed behavior to modern culture is not conformity to contemporary standards, but whether or not the application correctly expresses the principle established by God.<sup>622</sup>

In summary, the following questions may aid us in finding the proper application for issues raised in our text under study:

1. What principle stands behind the promise, command or example set in Scripture? In other words, why was this necessary?
2. Is this principle applied the same way throughout Scripture, or is there some flexibility in its expression?
3. Is the practice altered because of a new development introduced into God's plan?
4. Were there some special historical circumstances that determined how that principle was applied in that particular case?
5. Does the biblical practice differ from the social norm of that time?
6. Will people in our day misunderstand or misinterpret this biblical practice?

We will propose several examples of how these questions might illuminate the application of Scripture, citing one biblical promise, one biblical command, one example set by people in biblical times.

### **Joshua 1:3**

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<sup>621</sup>Erickson, *Evangelical interpretation*, p. 75-76; Fee, *Gospel and Spirit*, p. 13.

<sup>622</sup>Поднюк С. Методы изучения Библии. – Р. 55.

Does the promise of God, made to Joshua in Joshua 1:3, have any application to New Testament believers today? We read, “Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses.”

First, we ask the question, “Why did God give this promise?” Israel was preparing to advance on Canaan, and God was promising them victory in battle. As far as the general principle implied here, God has consistently promised His people victory in different endeavors depending on the situation. His victory, though, comes in different ways at different times. In the Old Testament, “victory” usually meant success in war, while the New Testament stresses spiritual triumphs (see 2 Cor 2:14). Only when Christ returns in glory will the Church have political dominion (see Rev 19). Therefore, this promise/principle is realized in different ways at different times.

Special historical conditions play a role in our interpretation as well. God originally promised the inheritance of Canaan to Abraham, and the promise was passed on to Isaac and Jacob. Therefore, God’s promise of victory to Joshua was simply the fulfillment of the promise He earlier made to Abraham, and its direct application concerns only national Israel of that time.

Summing up, we conclude that the promise of victory in a general sense applies to God’s people of all time. This particular promise, though, applies only to Joshua in his capacity as leader of God’s people, Israel. Ultimate political victory awaits the Church at Christ’s coming.

### **Psalms 150:4**

In Psalm 150:4, we read the following exhortation: “Praise Him with timbrel and dancing; praise Him with stringed instruments and pipe.” Should (or must) believers dance before the Lord?

If we seek to know the reason for this exhortation, we find it in verses 2 of this psalm, where believers are urged to exalt God “according to His excellent greatness.” God is great, and therefore greatly to be praised. Verse 6 continues this thought: “Let everything that has breath praise the LORD.” So then, it is appropriate for the praises of God to find fullest expression, even with one’s feet.

As far as the whole-Bible testimony on that topic, Scripture enjoins God’s people to praise Him by various means: voice, hands, bowing, dance, musical instruments. Dancing is mentioned elsewhere as well (Ps 149:3; 2 Sam 6:14; Ex 15:20; Acts 3:8). At the same time, our Lord gave us the overall guiding principle for the worship of God – that it should be done in Spirit and truth (Jn 4:24), that is under the direction and inspiration of the Spirit. We also note that the apostles do not mention the worship dance in their epistles, yet they rarely touch on the subject of worship in general.

From a historical perspective, we know that dancing was a usual expression of joy and celebration in ancient Jewish culture. Concerning its perception in modern culture, though, people today perceive dancing not so much as an act of celebration, but as a romantic gesture.

In summary, we affirm the general principle that God should be praised with enthusiasm. Since in Scripture dancing is included among the appropriate expressions of praise to God, it should be welcomed (but not required) in the Church today on the condition that it is done in the Spirit, not in the flesh.

### **Acts 4:32**

In Acts 4:32, we gain insight as to how the Early Church in Jerusalem conducted its affairs: “Not one {of them} claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them.” Should believers today imitate this practice and hold all things in common?

Why did the Early Church do this? First, the love of Christ in them certainly motivated them to a shared life, which included sharing their possessions. They also prayed together, shared meals together, that is, enjoyed close fellowship among themselves. Sharing possessions was simply one more expression of their common life in Christ.

At the same time, although the themes of “fellowship” and “mutual love” are dominant throughout the New Testament, only here are they expressed in financial equality. In other New Testament passages, we see both poor and rich participating in the life of the Church. There is no specific *command* to distribute property, although rich members are urged to be generous to the poor. If we look at the question from a historical perspective, it seems that the Jerusalem saints were, in general, financially challenged, and so, such a system was of practical value.

In summary, we affirm the biblical principles of “fellowship,” “mutual love,” and “care for the poor.” However, in light of the fact that the New Testament nowhere requires the distribution of property, we cannot legislate this practice for all generations of believers in all places. At the same time, nothing should prevent believers who voluntarily wish to adopt this system from doing so.

## **K. Conclusions**

Our main goal in the study of any biblical text is to uncover and express as best we can the author’s intention. We want to know what exactly the author intended to communicate to his audience through the text he composed. To accomplish this task, we employ the grammatico-historical method of analysis. We delve into the world of the biblical author, studying its history, culture and language, giving attention to key word meanings, syntactical features, etc.

Through such an investigation, we obtain information that assists us in identifying the author’s intended meaning in the text. Since, in general, the authorial intent of both human author and divine author overlap, discovering the human author’s intent uncovers the meaning God intended to communicate by means of the text as well. However, discovering what the text meant for its original audience alone is not adequate. We must discover in it universal principles that apply to all and seek their application to believers today.

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## IV. The Relationship between the Testaments

### Chapter 8: Is Old Testament Law for the Church?

It has long been discussed whether or not New Testament believers need to observe Old Testament law or simply New Testament teaching. What standard should believers live by in their everyday lives? Does the Old Testament still have a place in the formation of Christian ethics? The present chapter is devoted to this topic.

#### A. Biblical Survey

##### 1. The Old Testament Teaching about the Law

The concept of “law” dates back to the beginning of human history. In the Garden of Eden, God established a law forbidding Adam and Eve from partaking of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen 2:17). The goal of this command was to test the faith of Adam and Eve, who were expected to trust God completely, and also to provide them an opportunity to express their love for God through obedience. So then, the law was established as a means of fellowship in the context of personal relationship between God and His creation.

It is remarkable that after this initial command concerning the forbidden fruit, God gave no other specific directives. Nonetheless, humans possessed an inherent understanding of God’s standards (possibly attained by the act of eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil?) which made them accountable to Him. As a result of violating this standard, Cain was driven from God’s presence (Gen 4:14) and the ancient world perished in the Flood (Gen 6:5).

Aside from the above-mentioned individuals, the Bible also speaks of others who pleased God in their day. Enoch “walked” with God (Gen 5:22), as did Noah (Gen 6:8).<sup>623</sup> In addition, of Noah it is written that he was “a

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<sup>623</sup>Schreiner T. R. The commands of God // Hafemann S. J., House P. R. Central themes in Biblical theology: Mapping unity in diversity. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007. – P. 70-72.

righteous man, blameless in his time” (Gen 6:9). The words “righteous” (צַדִּיק - *tsakik*) and “blameless” (תָּמִים - *tamim*) imply agreement with a certain standard. Also interesting is how God described Abraham’s behavior: “Abraham obeyed Me and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes and My laws” (Gen 26:5). The words “charge,” “commandments,” “statutes,” and “laws” also describe the Law of Moses (see 1 Kin 2:3) and imply not only obedience to personal directives given to Abraham by God, but also a lifestyle in conformity to God’s standards.<sup>624</sup>

Perception of the “unwritten law” found expression (though imperfectly) in the law codes of ancient peoples, which, in some respects, found resonance with the Law of Moses. This is especially noticeable in the Sumerian laws and the Babylonian codex of Hammurabi.<sup>625</sup> They touch on such Old Testament themes as sacrifices, memorials, purity, tithes, circumcision, appeals to God, holy feasts, vows, marriage laws, inheritance of the first-born, elders, murder, etc. Nonetheless, significant differences exist between Old Testament laws and Near Eastern ethical codes. For example, the former tended to favor the rich, while the latter treated all the same, not overlooking the poor.

Although God’s law existed in one form or another from the start of history, it found a higher expression in the Law of Moses, particularly in the Ten Commandment (Ex 20:2-17; Deut 5:6-21). The Law of Moses included not only moral laws, but also community rules and instructions for rituals. Hosea 6:6 outlines the distinction between moral and ceremonial law: “I delight in loyalty (moral law) rather than sacrifice (ceremonial law), and in the knowledge of God (moral law) rather than burnt offerings (ceremonial law).” Nonetheless, the Law does not divide itself into such categories – all the commandments are mixed together throughout the Law. Even the Ten Commandments contain a ceremonial law regarding the Sabbath (Ex 20:8).

The word “law” itself is the Hebrew תּוֹרָה (*torah*), whose basic definition is “instruction.” Therefore, the Law of Moses had not only a legal, but also a pedagogical function. At the same time, one must consider that in the Old Testament context, the Law was used primarily as a legislative tool, and not as an inspirational model. We note that synonyms to the term תּוֹרָה (*torah*) also have a legislative connotation: מִצְוָה (*mitsvah* - commandment), מִשְׁפָּט (*mishpat* - judgments), חֻקָּה (*huka* - ordinance), עֵדוּת (*aduth* - testimony), פְּקוּד (*pekud* - precept) and דְּבָר (*dabar* - word). All these, except for the last, carry a legal tone. Additionally, the word תּוֹרָה (*torah*) is associated with such verbs as “fulfill” (Josh 22:5), “observe” (1 Chr 22:12), “conduct oneself” (Deut 27:26) and “listen” (Isa 42:24).<sup>626</sup> Again, the legal aspect is stressed. Finally, the Septuagint translates the term תּוֹרָה (*torah*) by the word νόμος (*nomos*), i.e., “law.”<sup>627</sup>

One must note that the Law of Moses was given in the context of God’s covenant with Israel.<sup>628</sup> Long before the giving of the Law, God established a covenant with Abraham and his descendants (Gen 17:7). In faithfulness to His covenant (Ex 2:24), God delivered His people from their slavery in Egypt, which He mentions when He establishes the Law (Ex 20:2).<sup>629</sup> Therefore, it would be mistaken to conclude that observance of the Law was a requirement to enter the covenant. Israel received that status as a gift of God’s grace. Keeping the Law was also not a requirement for preserving the covenant. Israel consistently violated God’s Law, yet God,

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<sup>624</sup>Keil and Delitzsch feel that Genesis 26:5 simply means that Abraham fulfilled all that God expected of him personally (Keil C. F., Delitzsch F. Commentary on the Old Testament. – Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996. – V. 1. – P. 173).

<sup>625</sup>See the discussion in Harrison R. K. Law in the Old Testament // Bromiley G. W. The international Standard Bible encyclopedia. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988. – V. 3. – P. 78-84. To compare this ancient law codes with the Law of Moses, see Appendix B.

<sup>626</sup>Schreiner, p. 66-67.

<sup>627</sup>Moo D. J. The Law of Christ as the fulfillment of the Law of Moses: A modified Lutheran view // Strickland W. G. Five views on Law and Gospel. – Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1993. – P. 336.

<sup>628</sup>Westerholm especially promoted this teaching (Westerholm S. Israel’s law and the Church’s faith. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988. – C. 47), yet he mistakenly claims that in harmony with the Old Testament system, preservation of covenant relation with God depends on the personal obedience of the believer.

<sup>629</sup>Schreiner, p. 73.

although He punished Israel's disobedience, never rejected His people, but remained faithful to His covenant with them.<sup>630</sup>

On the basis of the statements above, many commentators deny that the Old Testament taught salvation by works. Schreiner writes in this vein, "His gracious redeeming work precedes any commands. The law must be interpreted in the context of grace."<sup>631</sup> Sprinkle claims, "'Legalism' that makes 'law-keeping' a means of salvation is not taught in the Old Testament."<sup>632</sup> Motyer concurs, "Grace precedes law; the law of God is not a system of merit whereby the unsaved seek to earn divine favor but a pattern of life given by the Redeemer to the redeemed so that they might know how to live for his good pleasure."<sup>633</sup>

Even the structure of the Torah indicates these covenant relationships. It has long been recognized that the structure of the Torah resembles the covenant agreement between suzerains and their vassals in antiquity.<sup>634</sup> When a suzerain conquered a territory, he would promise the conquered people support and protection, but also dictated to them the conditions for life under his authority. All the elements of the suzerain-vassal treaty can be found in God's covenant with Israel. Therefore, it is improper to view God's covenant with Israel as a sort of mutual agreement between God and His people. Rather, it is an expression of God's authority over His redeemed nation.

At the same time, we note that unlike the suzerain-vassal treaty, God's commands are not given randomly according to the whim of a suzerain, but reflect His holy nature. Observance of the Law is simply the imitation of God, as the Law states, "You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy" (Lev 19:2).<sup>635</sup> Motyer compares God's reflection in the Law with God's reflection in humanity: "Humankind is the living, personal image of God; the law is the written, perceptual image of God."<sup>636</sup>

Although the Law of Moses was given in the context of God's covenant with Israel, it nonetheless has a universal character. It is interesting to note that when Gentiles joined the congregation of God's people, they were required to keep the Law just as Israel did (Num 15:15-16; compare with Lev 17:8-15; 18:26). In addition, Scripture records that God punished Gentiles for violations for the Law he gave to Israel (Lev 18:24-27; Ps 119:118-119; Prov 14:34; Isa 24:5-6). Here we see an overlap between the "unwritten law," accessible to all people, and the "written law," given to the Israeli people.

It is often felt that the Law is just a burden, which humanity must bear. Yet, the Old Testament does not speak of the Law in this way. The psalmist claims that the Law is better than "thousands of gold and silver {pieces}" (Ps 119:72), and leads to peace (Ps 119:165), freedom (Ps 119:45), and consolation (Ps 119:92). He loves the Law and meditates on it (Ps 119:97).<sup>637</sup> Reflection on the Law makes accessible "streams of water," yields "fruit in its season," and bring prosperity in "whatever (one) does" (Ps 1:2-3). According to Moyter, God did not deliver Israel from Egyptian bondage in order to lead it into another bondage under the Law (Ex 20:2).<sup>638</sup>

Even though the Old Testament speaks very positively about the Law, the history of Israel demonstrates that they rarely observed it. Even at Mount Sinai, they made an idol to worship. Such behavior characterized Israel throughout the Old Testament dispensation. The remnant of Israel, having returned from the Babylonian captivity, gives the following survey of Israel's failure:

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<sup>630</sup>We keep in mind, though, that apostates from the covenant individually jeopardized their relationship with God, but the people of God as a corporate entity remained in the covenant.

<sup>631</sup>Schreiner, p. 73.

<sup>632</sup>Sprinkle J. M. Law // Elwell W. A. Evangelical dictionary of biblical theology. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1966. – P. 469.

<sup>633</sup>Motyer J. A. Law, Biblical concept of. // Elwell W. A. Evangelical dictionary of theology. – 2nd Edition. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001. – P. 674.

<sup>634</sup>Zuck R. B. A Biblical theology of the Old Testament (electronic ed.). – Chicago: Moody Press, 1991. – P. 36.

<sup>635</sup>Motyer, p. 675.

<sup>636</sup>Ibid.

<sup>637</sup>Moyter, p. 468; VanGemeren W. A. The law is the perfection of righteousness in Jesus Christ: A reformed perspective // Strickland W. G. Five views on Law and Gospel. – Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1993. – P. 27.

<sup>638</sup>Moyter, p. 468.



And admonished them in order to turn them back to Your law. Yet they acted arrogantly and did not listen to Your commandments but sinned against Your ordinances, by which if a man observes them he shall live. And they turned a stubborn shoulder and stiffened their neck, and would not listen. However, You bore with them for many years, and admonished them by Your Spirit through Your prophets, yet they would not give ear. Therefore You gave them into the hand of the peoples of the land (Neh 9:29-30).

God foresaw Israel's failure and warned Moses: "Behold, you are about to lie down with your fathers; and this people will arise and play the harlot with the strange gods of the land, into the midst of which they are going, and will forsake Me and break My covenant which I have made with them" (Deut. 31:16). In anticipation of their failure, God provided for His people the sacrificial system for the forgiveness of sins. Through confession of sin and making sacrifices, God's people could obtain cleansing from transgressions of the Law.

However, the Old Testament itself reveals that the Law of Moses could not produce an obedient people. What Israel needed was a circumcision of heart. Only an internal transformation would make God's people a holy people. God "dreamed" of this transformation of His people: "Oh that they had such a heart in them, that they would fear Me and keep all My commandments always, that it may be well with them and with their sons forever!" (Deut 5:29). Consequently, God promised: "Moreover the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul" (Deut 30:6). The prophets also predicted that this time of spiritual renewal would come. God promised through Ezekiel:

And I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them. And I will take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances and do them. Then they will be My people, and I shall be their God (Ezek 11:19-20).

Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances" (Ezek 36:25-27).

Similarly, through Jeremiah, God spoke of the establishment of a new covenant (Jer 31:31-34):

"Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the LORD. "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the LORD, "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the LORD, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

In this light, we can better understand Deut. 30:11-14, where one gets the impression that Israel was capable of keeping the Law:

For this commandment which I command you today is not too difficult for you, nor is it out of reach. It is not in heaven, that you should say, “Who will go up to heaven for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?” Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, “Who will cross the sea for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?” But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may observe it.

When one attempts to interpret this passage, one must remember the following. First, the passage is located in a context predicting the future apostasy of Israel (chps. 30-32). It would seem to create a contradiction to claim, on the one hand, that Israel’s covenant failure was inevitable, and on the other, that Israel was capable of obeying the Law. In addition, the surrounding context speaks of a time already after Israel’s apostasy and future political restoration (30:1-5), during which God will accomplish the circumcision of their hearts (30:6-8). Since there never was a time in Israel’s history comparable to this, in Deuteronomy 30:11-14, Moses must be speaking of a future time of spiritual renewal for God’s people.<sup>639</sup>

In summary, we can say that the law played an important, if not central role in God’s Old Testament plan, even before the days of Moses. Besides the specific command concerning the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, humans had an inner sense of God’s standards of proper behavior, which made them accountable to God and liable to punishment for its violation. His universal moral standard found a higher expression in the Law of Moses, which was given in the context of God’s covenant with Israel. Along with commandments and precepts, God granted the sacrificial system for forgiveness of sins. Nonetheless, Israel constantly strayed from their covenant and disobeyed God’s commandments. Therefore, the Old Testament concludes with a promised change in how God will sanctify His people. He will introduce a new covenant, where a transformation the human heart will occur.

## 2. The Law in the Gospels

When we examine the attitude toward the Law that existed at the beginning of the first century AD, we see a marked departure from the Old Testament view. The first century Jew viewed the Law not so much as a guide for holy living in the context of a covenant of grace, but as a means to gain personal acceptance with God. People asked Jesus, in fact, what they must *do* to “inherit eternal life” (Mk 10:17) or “*work* the works of God” (Jn 6:28). Similarly, the brother in the parable of the Prodigal Son complained that he did not receive his *due* (Lk 15:29).<sup>640</sup> In response to this misunderstanding of the purpose of the Law, Jesus told a parable about a Pharisee, who tried to justify himself before God, and a tax collector, who relied on God’s mercy. Only the latter was justified (Lk 18:9-14).<sup>641</sup>

This spirit of legalism reigned in Israel at that time mainly due to the influence of the Pharisees. They insisted on obedience even beyond the commandments of the Law, building a “hedge” of extra requirements around the Law to prevent anyone from even approaching a violation of the latter. These extra requirements are clearly reflected in the Jewish Mishna (3rd c.) and Talmud (6th c.), yet the tendency towards legalism was present in the first century as well, as evident, for example, in the stringent attitude of the Pharisees toward Sabbath keeping (Matt 12:1-7; Lk 13:14; Jn 5:10).

Summarizing the situation in the first century, Jesus reproved the Pharisees that they “tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are unwilling to move them with {so much as} a

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<sup>639</sup>Strickland, W. The inauguration of the Law of Christ with the Gospel of Christ: A dispensationalist view // Strickland W. G. Five views on Law and Gospel. – Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1993. – P. 250. The apostle Paul saw the text in this light and applied it to the preaching of the gospel (See Rom 10:6-8).

<sup>640</sup>Scott J. Jewish Backgrounds of the New Testament. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1995. – P. 275-276.

<sup>641</sup>Спринкл, р. 360. Nonetheless, Nickelsburg notes that in the intertestamental period we still see an awareness of human sinfulness and the need for forgiveness from God (see Tobit 3.2-5; Psalms of Solomon 3.1-10; 4.5-7). Nickelsburg W.E. Ancient Judaism and Christian origins. – Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003. – P. 42ff.

finger” (Matt 23:4). Some feel that the “weary and heavy-laden,” of whom Jesus spoke in Matthew 11:29, are those trying to serve God under the yoke of the Pharisees (or possibly the Law itself, cf. Acts 15:10-11). Jesus promised deliverance from that tyranny: “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” (Matt 11:28-30).

In this light, we also receive insight into Jesus’ attitude to the Scriptures as a whole. He forbade any addition to the Law or appeal to anything else but Scripture as the authoritative source for spiritual truth, which included religious tradition. We do not know exactly when the accumulation of Jewish tradition began, but by the third century AD, it was clearly dominant, as reflected in the Mishna, then the Talmud. Yet, the New Testament testifies of its influence already in the first century AD.

Jesus consistently reacted negatively to such an estimation of human traditions. One can understand His objection to changes in God’s commandments regarding important matters such as honoring parents (Mk 7:9-13), yet even in seemingly minor points, like washing before a meal, He opposed such a system (Mk 7:1-8). Jesus summarized His view: “Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men” (Mk 7:8).

We know that Jesus Himself kept the Law of Moses and so taught His disciples. A key passage in this regard in Matthew 5:17-20:

Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others {to do} the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches {them,} he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses {that} of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

Later in this chapter, namely in verses 21-48, Jesus gives commentary on several commandments of God’s Law. In each case, he presents a deeper, more thoroughgoing application of these commands, creating a higher moral standard than required by the Law of Moses.<sup>642</sup> Thus, in verses 21-48, Jesus explains His statements made in verses 17-20. Unlike the Pharisaical alterations to the Law, however, Jesus possesses divine sanction for raising the standard. He was also anticipating the introduction of the “new covenant,” which would include heart transformation for God’s people.

In this key passage, Jesus’ first aim is to announce that He came not to abolish the Law, but fulfill it (v. 17-18). He emphasizes His point by claiming, “Until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.” In light of the fact that the Gospel of Matthew speaks of Jesus as the fulfillment of the Old Testament, it is fair to assume that He fulfills the Law by His impeccable behavior. It is not by mistake that He refers to both the “Law” and the “Prophets.” He fulfills both the same way – by His manner of living.

Interestingly, during His baptism, Jesus assured John the Baptism that baptizing Him was appropriate by saying (recorded only by Matthew): “...in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness” (Matt 3:15). Here, we encounter the same words attributed to the Lord in Matthew 5:17-20, namely πληρώω (*pleroo*), “fulfill,” and δικαιοσύνη (*dikaïosune*), “righteousness.” Also significant is that Jesus said that He came not to “keep” the Law, but to “fulfill” it. By means of His perfect obedience to the Law and sacrificial death, the goal and intent of the Law was “fulfilled” in Him, both in its ceremonial, and in its moral aspect. Jesus is the

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<sup>642</sup>Some believe that in Matthew 5:21-48, Jesus is not commenting on the Law, but is correcting distortions to the Law introduced by the Pharisees. Yet, against this view is the fact that Jesus directly quotes the Law in His commentary on it, except for the phrase “and hate your enemy” in verse 43. This addition may well be a Pharisaical saying, or possibly an implication from the Old Testament related to Israel’s attitude toward their enemies among the Gentiles.

“incarnation” of the Law. Consequently, any further application of the Law must be accomplished in the context of relationship with Him.<sup>643</sup>

Jesus’ second aim in this passage was to show the continuation of the sense of the Old Testament law in the new covenant. He said, “Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others {to do} the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches {them,} he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven” (v. 19). We know that Jesus was born at a time when the Law was still in effect (see Lk 2:21-24) and, therefore, He lived in perfect conformity to it.<sup>644</sup>

At the same time, while He lived in concord with the Law, He indicated that in the future, He would alter it. In Matthew 5:21-48, He spoke of the intensification of the Law – that it would concern not only external behavior, but also internal attitude; not only justice, but also mercy.<sup>645</sup> Therefore, Jesus expected from His disciples moral living on a higher level than the Sinaitic Law.<sup>646</sup> This attitude is also reflected in Jesus’ conversation with a ruler who kept the commandments “from his youth” (Lk 18:18-25). His rejection of Jesus’ directive: “Sell all that you possess and distribute it to the poor,” revealed that, although he sought to keep the Law, He did not love God more than all else, that is, with all his heart.

In addition, Jesus demonstrated His authority to change the Law in other respects as well. He declared Himself the “Lord of the Sabbath” (Lk 6:5), who is exempt from the “two-drachma” tax (Matt 17:24-27),<sup>647</sup> and declared “all foods clean” (Mk 7:19). Blomberg well summarizes the essence of this point:

All of the Old Testament remains normative and relevant for Jesus’ followers (2 Tim 3:16), but none of it can rightly be interpreted until one understands how it has been fulfilled in Christ. Every Old Testament text must be viewed in light of Jesus’ person and ministry and the changes introduced by the new covenant he inaugurated.<sup>648</sup>

So then, although the essence of the Law in the sense of proper ethical behavior carries over from Old Testament to New, nonetheless, in Christ the expression of God’s moral standard undergoes alteration. Jesus is greater than Moses, as demonstrated at His transfiguration, when in the presence of Moses, the Voice from heaven declared, “Listen to *Him* (Jesus)” (Matt 17:5).

In the strength of His authoritative position, Jesus could say of the Law: “You have heard that the ancients were told... but I say to you...” (Matt 5:21ff). The apostle John also comments on the alteration in God’s program: “For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ” (Jn 1:17). Thus, these words of Jesus to His disciples find fulfillment: “Every scribe who has become a disciple of the kingdom of heaven is like a head of a household, who brings out of his treasure things new and old” (Matt 13:52). Jesus’ disciples find value in the Law of Moses (“things old”), yet apply it in the light of its fulfillment in Christ (“things new”).

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<sup>643</sup>Schreiner, p. 97-99; Moo D. J. The Law of Christ as the fulfillment of the Law of Moses: A modified Lutheran view // Strickland W. G. Five views on Law and Gospel. – Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1993. – P. 353.

<sup>644</sup>When we study Jesus’ attitude toward the Law, we must keep in mind that He lived during a transitional period between the old and new covenants. Therefore, not all that He says about the Law will apply to the New Testament believer. For example, in the cases of bringing sacrifices (Matt 5:24) and paying tithes (Matt 23:23), Matthew “simply records what Jesus said to his contemporaries who lived under Old Testament law” (Schreiner T. R. The commands of God // Hafemann S. J., House P. R. Central themes in Biblical theology: Mapping unity in diversity. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007. – P. 96-97).

<sup>645</sup>We recognize, of course, that the Old Testament also directs attention to a person’s inner condition (Ex 20:17) and to love for others (Lev. 19:18). Nonetheless, the Old Testament unquestionably does give greater stress to external behavior and justice. In addition, Goldingay thinks that the Old Testament speaks more of what not to do, while the New Testament – what to do (Goldingay J. Models for Interpretation of Scripture. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995. – P. 103).

<sup>646</sup>Douglas Moo hesitates to speak of “deepening” the Law here. He feels that in Matthew 5, Jesus is already replacing the old Law with His own new law (Moo, p. 349).

<sup>647</sup>Schreiner, c. 97.

<sup>648</sup>Blomberg, C. Matthew // The New American commentary. – Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1992. – P. 103-104.

We should interpret Matthew 11:11-13 in this light. Here, Jesus comments on His predecessor, “Among those born of women there has not arisen {anyone} greater than John the Baptist!” This means that not only is Jesus greater than Moses, but John the Baptist is as well. John enjoys this status due to the fact that he lived in this transitional time between the covenants, when the old was exiting and the era of Christ was being introduced. God’s new order so exceeds the old that even “the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he (John the Baptist).”

Therefore, the role of the Law among God’s people will not be as it was before, since “the Law and the Prophets {were proclaimed} until John; since that time the gospel of the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it” (Lk 16:16). Nonetheless, there is still a place for the Law, as noted in the parallel passage in Luke, where immediately after this saying we read, “But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one stroke of a letter of the Law to fail” (Lk 16:17).<sup>649</sup>

Jesus’ third goal in Matthew 5:17-20 is revealed in verse 20: “For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses {that} of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.” We know that the Pharisees strove with all their might to observe the Law in every detail. Yet, Jesus reveals here that to enter the kingdom one must have perfect obedience (Matt 5:48). If someone fails to fulfill not only the Law of Moses, but the expanded variant Jesus proposed, he is “liable to the court” (v. 22), “guilty {enough to go} into the fiery hell” (v. 22), “to be thrown into prison” (v. 25), and “to be thrown into hell” (v. 29-30).

This means that a mere human has no hope of salvation through the Law. However, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.” (Matt 5:3-6).<sup>650</sup> So then, salvation comes not to those who seek righteousness through the Law, but to who rely on God’s mercy (Lk 18:10-14).

We must not neglect to mention possibly the most significant observation Jesus makes on the Law. In answer to the question, “Which is the greatest of the commandments,” He replies,

The foremost is, “Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.” The second is this, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” There is no other commandment greater than these (Mk 12:28-31).

From Deuteronomy 6:4-5 and Leviticus 19:18, Jesus draws out the heart of the Law, its essence. In this way, He gives the Law its proper orientation and direction.

This orientation toward mercy found abundant expression in the ministry of Jesus in contrast to the less compassionate approach of the Pharisees. When the Pharisees objected to Jesus’ eating with tax collectors and sinners, He retorted, “But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire compassion, and not sacrifice’” (Matt 9:13). Jesus responded the same way when the Pharisees challenged His disciples for gathering grain on the Sabbath (Matt 12:1-7). We also recall the well-known incident when Jesus forgave a woman caught in adultery (Jn 8:1-11).<sup>651</sup>

One final comment on Jesus’ attitude toward the Law is His recognition, at least in the opinion of many, of divisions in the Law. It appears that in Matthew 23:23, Jesus divided the Law into categories (i.e., ceremonial and moral):<sup>652</sup>

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<sup>649</sup>Gerstner J. H. Law in the New Testament // Bromiley G. W. The international Standard Bible encyclopedia: In 4 Vols. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988. – V. 3. – P. 89.

<sup>650</sup>Schreiner, p. 97.

<sup>651</sup>We recognize that the best ancient manuscripts do not contain this story. Nonetheless, many feel that Jn 8:1-11 contains a true historical narrative.

<sup>652</sup>Those who favor dividing the Law by categories propose adding a third category to the two listed here – “civil law” for administering the nation.

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others.

Yet, we must keep in mind that, even though we may logically divide the Law into such categories as “moral,” “civil,” and “ceremonial,” we cannot find such divisions in the Scriptures themselves. Moreover, as a rule, the Bible speaks of the Law as a single entity.

In conclusion, the Son of God came to earth at a transitional time in the history of God’s plan for His people. On the one hand, He supported the Old Testament system, keeping the Law of Moses. On the other hand, He declared Himself greater than Moses and the One who had authority to alter the Law. As the “fulfillment” of the Law, He became the Law’s “incarnation,” that is, its perfect expression. This means that in the future, the Law must be understood and applied in relation to the One who fulfilled it. Jesus also demonstrated that changes were coming in God’s program for His people, especially in the way they were to show compassion. Finally, our Lord showed that it was impossible for one to justify oneself before God by the works of the Law and consequently opposed the conviction of the day that righteousness was attained through personal obedience.

### **3. The Law in the Acts of the Apostles**

The early disciples continued to practice the customs of the Israeli people and observe the laws prescribed by Moses. The believers were “day by day continuing with one mind in the temple” (Acts 2:46), Peter and John went to the temple “at the ninth {hour,} the hour of prayer” (Acts 3:1), and James testified that the believers from among the Jews were “zealous for the Law” (Acts 21:20). Some of them refused to fellowship with Gentile believers, required them to be circumcised (Acts 11:2-3), and even marveled that God would save Gentiles (Acts 11:18).<sup>653</sup> It seems that the early believers were so entrapped in their culture that they failed to recognize the fundamental changes the coming of Christ introduced into the Law.

The Church’s attitude toward the Law began to change during the ministry of the apostle Paul. He appears to have been the first to speak of the inadequacy of the system of law for the believer (Acts 13:39).<sup>654</sup> He considered believing Gentiles to be fully equal to believing Jews, and did not require the former to be circumcised (Acts 15:1-2). Paul’s ministry created such a scandal among the Jews that they spread the rumor about him, that he taught “all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs” (Acts 21:21).

It is true that, from time to time, Paul himself observed certain Jewish customs (Acts 18:18; 20:16) and agreed to participate in a rite of ritual cleansing (Acts 21:23-24).<sup>655</sup> To the Jews of Rome, he claimed to have “done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers” (Acts 28:17). Yet, all these instances reflect his missionary strategy of avoiding giving offense to the Jews, so as not to hinder their conversion (see 1 Cor 9:19-22).<sup>656</sup> In Acts 16:1-3, we see that he circumcised Timothy, whose mother was Jewish, not out of respect for the Law, but “because of the Jews who were in those parts.”

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<sup>653</sup>Paul informs us that even Peter and Barnabas once refrained from eating with Gentiles (Gal 2:11-14).

<sup>654</sup>In Acts 15:10-11, Peter supported Paul’s view, possibly as a result of his experience at Cornelius’ house. He states, “Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?” (Schreiner, p. 82).

<sup>655</sup>In this connection, we can mention one more instance recorded in Acts 23:1-5. When Paul rebuked the high priest, he apologized, citing the law: “You shall not curse God, nor curse a ruler of your people” (Ex 22:28). This instance most likely reflects not so much Paul’s desire to avoid offense, as much as his honoring the moral principle contained in this command.

<sup>656</sup>Gerstner, p. 89.

However, the defining moment for determining the role of the Law in the Church (at least for the Gentiles) was the Jerusalem Council of 45 AD. After discussing the issue, the church leaders put forth the following decision:

The apostles and the brethren who are elders, to the brethren in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia who are from the Gentiles, greetings. Since we have heard that some of our number to whom we gave no instruction have disturbed you with {their} words, unsettling your souls, it seemed good to us, having become of one mind, to select men to send to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore we have sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will also report the same things by word {of mouth.} For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these essentials: that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication; if you keep yourselves free from such things, you will do well. Farewell (Acts 15:23-29).

Thus, observing the Law was not required for the Gentile believers.

Many discuss the question as to why the Council specifically required Gentiles to abstain “from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication.”<sup>657</sup> Some see in these practices a connection with idolatry and pagan temple rituals, in which, of course, believers cannot participate. Other, however, think such instructions reflect God’s general order for humanity, established at the time of Noah. Still others draw a parallel with the rules prescribed in Leviticus 17:8ff for Gentiles living among the people of Old Testament Israel.<sup>658</sup>

Another possible explanation is that such behavior by Gentile believers would hinder their fellowship with Jewish believers in Jesus, who would view these practices as reprehensible.<sup>659</sup> This would also taint the believing Gentiles witness to unbelieving Jews. Interestingly, James mentions these taboos in the context of Jewish believers who were “zealous for the Law” (Acts 21:20-25), possibly confirming our suspicion of how the Jews would reaction to such practices by Gentile believers.

#### **4. The Law in the General Epistles**

Among the authors of the General Epistles, only James specifically mentions the Law, although the designation “Law of Moses” is absent. The apostle John often refers to “commandments,” yet, one cannot be sure that he is speaking of Old Testament commands. More likely, he is referring to obedience to Christ, as seen in 1 Jn 3:23: “This is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us.” We observe the same in 1 John 2:4-5: “The one who says, ‘I have come to know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him.” Verse 6 makes clear that “His word” refers to Jesus Christ.

James’ teaching on the Law is more extensive. He speaks of the “law of liberty” (1:25; 2:12), the “perfect law,” (1:25) and the “royal law” (2:8).<sup>660</sup> It is important to note that in his first chapter, James uses the terms “word,” “perfect law,” and “law of liberty” in parallel:

But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for

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<sup>657</sup>Peterson D. G. The Acts of the Apostles // The Pillar New Testament commentary. – Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: Eerdmans, 2009. – P. 434-436.

<sup>658</sup>Others feel that the instructions in Leviticus do not correspond well to the restrictions in Acts 15:29.

<sup>659</sup>Polhill J. B. Acts // The New American commentary. – Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1995. – P. 331; Gerstner, p. 89.

<sup>660</sup>Schreiner, p. 95-96.

{once} he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the {law} of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does (Jam 1:22-25).

The former context makes clear that the term “word” refers to the gospel: “He brought us forth by the word of truth” (1:18) and, “In humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls” (1:21). Therefore, for James, the “law of liberty” is not the Law of Moses, but the gospel.<sup>661</sup>

We may call the gospel the “law of liberty” for two reasons. First, it is “law” in the sense that there is an ethical aspect to the gospel, which in many cases corresponds to the Law of Moses. Second, the gospel gives “liberty” from slavery to sin, which enables obedience. Jeremiah predicted this when he spoke of the new covenant written on the hearts of God’s people (Jer 31:31-34).<sup>662</sup>

In his second chapter, James again raises the issue of law with the expression “the royal law.” Most likely, this phrase does not refer to the command, “Love your neighbor as yourself,” since in Scripture, the term “law” never refers to just one commandment, but refers to the entire law codex.<sup>663</sup> The phrase “royal law” most likely refers to the law established by Jesus for His kingdom. We remember that Jesus adapted the Law of Moses for application to His order (Matt 5:18ff). Even though the love command is not the “royal law” itself, it nonetheless is its fulfillment. Those who so conduct themselves “do well.” The priority given by James to the love command also agrees with Jesus’ view on the God’s Law (Mk 12:28-31).

Later in the second chapter (verses 8-12), James shows that those not walking in love violate the Law in its entirety, since one violation is violation of the whole. Notice in verses 9-11, though, that James does not specifically refer to the law here as “royal” or the “law of liberty,” since his reference here is more to the function of the Law of Moses in condemning the sinner, including a direct reference to the Mosaic codex. The Law of Moses does not liberate, but condemns.

In verses 12-13, judgment according to the “law of liberty” (i.e., the gospel) is accomplished differently. An individual must seek justification not by works, but by relying on “mercy.” To receive mercy from God, though, one must be ready to show mercy to others, which is one expression of the “royal law” of love. Again, James closely follows Jesus here, who also emphasized the need to show mercy in order to receive mercy (Matt 5:7; 6:14-15; 18:33-35). Therefore, observing the “royal law” is not for the purpose of being justified before God on the basis of works, but as a means by which those benefiting from God’s mercy through the gospel can demonstrate mercy to others.

The way James uses the term “law” later in his epistle may confirm our view. In James 4:11-12 we read, “Do not speak against one another, brethren. He who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks against the law and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge {of it.} There is {only} one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy; but who are you who judge your neighbor?” Again, James appeals to his audience to show mercy in regard to other’s failings. In light of our discussion in chapter 2, we can capture still another thought from this passage. We see here the same word-combination of “law,” “mercy,” and “judgment.” Whoever wants to be judged by the “law of liberty” must show mercy to others instead of criticizing and judging them.

The Epistle to the Hebrews makes a significant contribution to the question of the Law’s application to the Church. This we might expect, since the letter was written to Jewish believers to help them properly relate to the Old Testament as believers in the Messiah Jesus. In this epistle, Jesus excels the Old Testament in all respects: He is greater than Moses, Levi, and the entire sacrificial system.

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<sup>661</sup>We also note that in both the Old Testament and the rabbinical writings, we read of the *perfect* Law of Moses (see Ps 19:7) (see Davids P. H. The Epistle of James // New international Greek Testament commentary. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982. – P. 99).

<sup>662</sup>Schreiner, p. 96.

<sup>663</sup>Moo D. J. The Letter of James // The Pillar New Testament commentary. – Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: Eerdmans; Apollos, 2000. – P. 111-112.



In general, the epistle speaks of the various Levitical regulations of the Mosaic Law (Heb 7:5, 28; 8:4; 9:19, 22; 10:8). More importantly for us is a theme that runs through the entire letter – the new covenant replaces the old. Commenting on God’s promise through Jeremiah of a new covenant, the author states, “When He said, ‘A new {covenant,}’ He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear” (Heb 8:13). In addition, in Hebrew 12:18-24, believers draw near not to Sinai, but to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant. It is vital to note here, as was mentioned earlier, that the Mosaic Law was given in the context of God’s covenant with Israel. The Law was one of the components of the Sinaitic covenant. Therefore, if the covenant goes, so does the old law.<sup>664</sup>

Let us look closer at Heb 7:11-19:

Now if perfection was through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the people received the Law), what further need {was there} for another priest to arise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be designated according to the order of Aaron? For when the priesthood is changed, of necessity there takes place a change of law also. For the one concerning whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no one has officiated at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, a tribe with reference to which Moses spoke nothing concerning priests. And this is clearer still, if another priest arises according to the likeness of Melchizedek, who has become {such} not on the basis of a law of physical requirement, but according to the power of an indestructible life. For it is attested {of Him,} “You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.” For, on the one hand, there is a setting aside of a former commandment because of its weakness and uselessness (for the Law made nothing perfect), and on the other hand there is a bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.

Here, the author speaks of the change in the high priesthood from Aaron to Melchizedek, who is a type of Christ. However, since the Law was given through the high priestly line of Levi (i.e., through Moses and Aaron), a change in priesthood means a change in the Law as well (v. 12). This was necessary, because “the Law made nothing perfect” (v. 19). It served as “a shadow of the good things to come” (Heb 10:1).

Some say that the author of Hebrews is not referring to changes in the moral law, but just the ceremonial law. The main thrust of the epistle, as we know, is the inadequacy of the old sacrificial system and the need for the perfect sacrifice of Christ. A glance at Hebrews 8:7-12, though, is sufficient to convince us that the moral law is also in view:

For if that first {covenant} had been faultless, there would have been no occasion sought for a second. For finding fault with them, He says, “Behold, days are coming, says the Lord, when I will effect a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; not like the covenant which I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; for they did not continue in my covenant, and I did not care for them, says the Lord. 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.

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<sup>664</sup>Schreiner, p. 79-80; Moo, *The Law of Christ*, p. 323.

Again, we note that the first covenant was inadequate and is replaced by the new.<sup>665</sup> The new covenant includes a change in the Law, namely in its application to participants in the new order. Obedience becomes possible, since the Law is to be written “on their hearts.” In addition, new covenant participants will have a personal knowledge of God and a personal relationship with Him.

It is true that a change in how the Law is observed does not necessarily mean that the content will change as well. We recognize that when the first recipients of this epistle read the words: “I will put My laws into their minds, and I will write them on their hearts,” they thought of the Mosaic Law. On the other hand, since Jesus fulfilled the old law and during His ministry already introduced certain changes to it, one may conclude that there will be changes not only in the method of the Law’s fulfillment, but in its content as well.

It is possible that the text from Jeremiah hints at this as well. There we read not “My Law,” but “My laws,” which may refer to God’s eternal moral standards that find expression in the context of life in Christ. At the same time, there will certainly be common features with the old law.

Therefore, the epistle to the Hebrew provides a second reason why one should not apply the Old Testament Law directly to the Church. It was not only fulfilled by Christ, but also belongs to another covenant, which is no longer in force.

## 5. The Law in the Epistles of Paul

The final view of the Law for our examination is the most hotly debated one – the teaching of the apostle Paul. The most striking feature of his view is the claim that the believer in Jesus is no longer under the Law (Rom 6:14; Gal 3:24-25; 5:18; 2 Cor 3:11).<sup>666</sup> Paul teaches that in order to make progress in one’s spiritual life, one must actually be delivered from the Law (Rom 6:14; 7:1-4; Gal 2:19-20; 2 Cor 3:6). Paul, although he was a Jew, nonetheless considered himself free from the Mosaic Law (1 Cor 9:19-22; Gal 2:19). By means of this teaching, Paul introduced into Christian faith a radical new element. If the Jerusalem council decided that the Law did not apply to Gentiles, by his example, Paul showed that the application of the Law has changed for Jewish believers in Jesus as well.

We must clarify from which “law” the believer is liberated. Many feel Paul is only speaking of the ceremonial law, that is, believers no longer need to bring sacrifices or observe feast days, yet they are obligated to keep the moral aspect of the Mosaic legislation. In part, this is so, since Paul taught that the ceremonial law was indeed fulfilled in Christ.<sup>667</sup>

On the other hand, Paul’s teaching on the Law is not limited to its ceremonial aspect. He reflects the general biblical understanding that all aspects of the Law are intertwined. He states, for example, that if a person receives circumcision (part of the ceremonial law), he is obliged to keep the entire Law (including the moral aspect) (Gal 5:3; Rom 2:25-27).<sup>668</sup> In addition, in Romans 7:1-4, when Paul speaks of dying to the Law in order to bear fruit for God, he refers to the moral law (see 7:7). So then, liberation from the Law includes not only the cancellation of sacrifices, feasts, and food laws, but liberation from the Law *in toto*.

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<sup>665</sup>Knight incorrectly claims that the Hebrew term *חדש* (*hadash* = new) is best translated here as “renewed.” The standard Hebrew dictionary of Brown, Driver, and Briggs states that the word usually refers to something totally new, like a new king (Ex 1:8), a new home (Deut 20:5), a new wife (Deut 24:5), new clothes (1 Kin 11:29-30), etc. (Brown F., Driver S. R., Briggs C. A. *Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English lexicon*. – Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 2000. – P. 294).

<sup>666</sup>Schreiner correctly states that, unlike the common view, the “schoolmaster” of Galatians 3:25 applies not to individual believers, who come to Christ through the Law’s conviction of sin, but to God’s plan of salvation in general. The Law ruled during the old covenant in order to bring God’s people as a whole to faith in Messiah. Now, its function among God’s people is exhausted (see Schreiner, p. 82-83).

<sup>667</sup>For example, the temple is the Church (1 Cor 3:16), the Passover finds fulfillment in Christ (1 Cor 5:7), circumcision happens in the heart (Col 2:11), all foods are permitted (Rom 14:2), keeping the Sabbath is not necessary (Rom 14:5). See Schreiner, p. 93-95.

<sup>668</sup>James 2:10 confirms the conviction that the Law is essentially a unity: “For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one [point,] he has become guilty of all.” (Scott, p. 327-328).

Even 1 Corinthians 9:19-22, which on first glance seems to indicate freedom from the ceremonial law alone, hints at freedom from the Law itself. When Paul responds to the anticipated objection that he is “without law,” he does not qualify his statement by stating that he remains under the moral aspect of Mosaic Law, but rather that he is under “the law of Christ.”

Some object to this interpretation of Paul, claiming that by the phrase “not under the Law,” Paul meant not liberation from the Law itself, but from the Pharisaical distortion of the Law, or that obedience to the Law was required for salvation. Yet, in every passage in Paul dealing with the Law, the context shows that he meant the Mosaic Law itself. For example: “The Law (i.e., the Mosaic Law), which came four hundred and thirty years later...” (Gal 3:17) and, “But if the ministry of death, in letters engraved on stones (i.e., the Ten Commandment)...” (2 Cor 3:7). Additionally, Paul speaks of the Law as of something to be obeyed (Rom 4:15; 5:20; Gal 3:10; 5:3), which would not apply to a distorted version of the Law.<sup>669</sup>

Moreover, according to Galatians 2:19, Paul claims that “through the Law I died to the Law.” It is highly unlikely that in the same sentence Paul would use the term “law” in two different senses: as a reference to the Mosaic Law, and as a reference to a distorted version of it. In addition, in his epistles, Paul never draws a comparison between those who correctly understand the Law, and those who do not. The contrast is always between those who fulfill the Law, and those who do not.<sup>670</sup>

Furthermore, when Paul is specifically speaking against justification by the Law, he makes that clear in the context (see Gal 2:16, 21; 5:4; Rom 3:21-24; 10:3-4).<sup>671</sup> If we reexamine the passages where Paul directly states that the believer is delivered from the Law (Gal 2:19-20; 3:25; 5:18; Rom 7:1-4; 1 Cor 9:19-22), only Galatians 3:25 relates to the question of justification. The other passages are located in the context of the believer’s sanctification.

Therefore, is it misguided to think that when Paul claims that the believer is not under the Law, he had in mind merely the ceremonial law, a distorted version of the Law, or justification through the Law. Throughout his epistles, Paul consistently uses the term “Law” to refer to the Mosaic Law itself, in its entirety.

At the same time, in Paul’s ethic, he does make room for the Law of Moses (although definitely not in the sense of being justified by it). We see that the general moral principles, on which the Law was based, as well as certain concrete commandments are adopted into the New Testament. For example, he urges obedience to parents (Eph 6:2) and forbids murder (Rom 1:29), adultery (1 Cor 6:9), stealing (Eph 4:28), lying (Col 3:9), and coveting (Eph 5:3). In Romans 13:8-10, he makes reference to five of the Ten Commandments, and reveals that they are fulfilled by those who walk in love. Love is “the fulfillment of the Law” (cf. Gal 5:14), which harmonizes with the teachings of the Lord (Mk 12:29-31). Paul recognizes Jesus as the fulfillment of the Law,<sup>672</sup> who passed it on to His disciples in a new form, for which Paul, for the first time, coins the phrase “the law of Christ” (Gal 6:2; 1 Cor 9:21).

In this vein, it is interesting to note that in his extensive treatment of Christian ethics, Paul appeals with relative infrequency to the Mosaic Law as a standard for proper behavior.<sup>673</sup> In some of these cases, Paul simply adopts the principle implied in these commands to new conditions. Paul does appeal to other sections of the Old Testament for moral guidance, but not exclusively to the Torah.<sup>674</sup> In addition, when the New

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<sup>669</sup>Schreiner, p. 68.

<sup>670</sup>Westerholm, p. 212.

<sup>671</sup>Moo, The law of Christ, p. 332.

<sup>672</sup>Yet we must distinguish this idea from what Paul writes in Rom 10:4, that “Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness.” In the context of Rom 10:4, Paul is not speaking about the believer’s sanctification, but of justification through Christ rather than through the Law.

<sup>673</sup>See 1 Tim 5:18 and 1 Cor 9:9 (Deut 25:4); 1 Cor 5:13 (Deut 17:7); 1 Cor 14:34 (?); Rom 12:19 (Deut 32:35); Eph 6:2-3 (Ex 20:12); 2 Cor 13:1 (Deut 19:15).

<sup>674</sup>For example: 1 Cor 1:31 and 2 Cor 10:17 from Jer 9:23-24; Eph 4:26 from Zech 8:16; Rom 12:20 from Prov 25:21-22; Eph 4:27 from Ps 4:4.

Testament advances a list of virtues and vices, the Law is not employed as their basis.<sup>675</sup> Moreover, it is also remarkable that in Galatians 5:18-23, Paul contrasts the works of the flesh not with requirements of the Law, but with the fruit of the Spirit.<sup>676</sup>

So then, in establishing the Christian ethic, Paul relies less on the Mosaic Law, and more on other sources.<sup>677</sup> These include: the principle of love (Rom 13:8-10; 1 Cor 13:13; Gal 5:6), the leadership of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:16-18; Rom 8:4, 14), the imitation of God (1 Cor 11:1; Eph 4:32), the believer's union with Christ (Rom 6:2, 11; Col 2:20; 3:3), the teachings of Jesus (1 Cor 7:10; Acts 20:35), and the teaching of the apostles (1 Cor 14:37; 2 Thes 3:14). These are the elements of the "law of Christ."<sup>678</sup>

Westerholm advances an interesting theory that the use of various verbs in conjunction with the word "law" may reflect its special application to the believer.<sup>679</sup> When we read about those under the law, the following verbs are used: τηρέω (*tereo*, "keep"), φυλάσσω (*fulasso*, "observe"), ποιέω (*poieo*, "do") πράσσω (*prasso*, "practice").<sup>680</sup> Yet, in reference to believers, we encounter different terms: (ἀνα) πληρόω (*anapleroo*, "fulfill") and τελέω (*teleo*, "finish, bring to completion").<sup>681</sup> It seems that the believer does not "observe" the law in the strict sense of the word, but rather "fulfills" its principles in a new form – the law of Christ. Paul's words in Romans 8:4 agree: "So that the *requirement* of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit."<sup>682</sup>

Let us return to the question of justification by the Law. As we have stated, Paul vigorously defends the position that justification comes independent from the Law. He taught that the main function of the Law was to lead not to justification, but to condemnation, so that people would become aware of their fallen condition and guilt before God (Rom 3:20; 5:20; Gal 3:19).

Since the Law was given in the context of God's covenant of grace with Israel, Paul could expect that the Jews would seek righteousness by faith, imitating the example of Abraham (Rom 4:11-12). He writes, "For if the inheritance is based on law, it is no longer based on a promise; but God has granted it to Abraham by means of a promise" (Gal 3:18).<sup>683</sup> Instead, the Jews, in general, strove to attain righteousness through personal obedience (Rom 10:1-4).<sup>684</sup> They sought "to establish their own (righteousness), did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God" (Rom 10:3), that is, the righteousness by faith.

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<sup>675</sup>Vices: see Rom 1:27; 1 Cor 6:9-10; Gal 5:19-21; Eph 4:25ff; Col 3:5-9; 2 Tim 3:2-5; Tit 3:3; 1 Pet 2:1; 1 Pet 4:3. Virtues: see Rom 12:9-21; Gal 5:22-23; Eph 4:2-3; Eph 4:25ff; Phil 2:3-4; Col 3:12ff; 1 Tim 2:15; 1 Tim 5:10; 1 Tim 6:11; 2 Tim 2:22; Heb 13:1-5; Jam 3:17; 1 Pet 2:17; 1 Pet 3:8-9.

<sup>676</sup>Westerholm, p. 205.

<sup>677</sup>In this connection, Goldingay correctly states, "While Paul occasionally notes warrant in the Torah for actions he commends,... he does not generally base his moral teaching on this foundation" (Goldingay J. Models for interpretation of Scripture. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995. – P. 103).

<sup>678</sup>Greer makes an interesting observation that the Jews of the first century developed the concept of *halakhah*, i.e. a law system based on a detailed treatment of the Law of Moses. From this project issued the Mishna and Torah. Yet, in the formation of Christian ethics, the apostles did not appeal to the Old Testament in this way (Greer R. A. The Christian Bible and its interpretation // Meeks W. A. Early Biblical interpretation. – Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1986. – P. 128-130). The reason for this was the apostles operated on a broader basis for defining Christian norms, the "law of Christ."

<sup>679</sup>Westerholm, p. 203-205.

<sup>680</sup>See Jam 2:10; Gal 5:3; 6:13; Rom 2:26; Acts 7:35.

<sup>681</sup>See Jam 2:8; Rom 8:4; 13:8, 10; Gal 5:14; 6:2.

<sup>682</sup>Two exceptions are noted here. In Romans 2:27, Gentiles must "fulfill" (τελέω) the Law, yet here we are dealing with a hypothetical situation. In addition, in Acts 21:24, James refers to Paul "observing" (φυλάσσω) the Law. However, this was for the sake of the Jews, whom James did not want Paul to offend.

<sup>683</sup>Schreiner, p. 68. In light of the verses quoted above, we may avoid the oft-encountered misunderstanding that Paul rejected the idea that the Law was given in the context of the covenant (see Westerholm, p. 45-46).

<sup>684</sup>When it is said that the Jews did not know about God's righteousness (Rom 10:3), it does not follow that they had no idea that righteousness could be obtained by faith. The word translated "know" here is ἀγνοέω (*agnoeo*), which one can translate either "not know" or "not pay attention to" (see Arndt W., Danker F. W., Bauer, W. A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature. – 3rd ed. – Chicago: University of Chicago, 2000. – P. 13). If they could not have known about it, then God could not have reproved their unbelief.

Until now, everything we have said about Paul's theology of the Law coincides with the general biblical teaching on the topic. Nonetheless, Paul makes his own unique contribution as well. He feels that the Law is not only ineffective for justifying a person before God, but is also a hindrance to spiritual growth. We hinted at this earlier when we saw how Paul insisted that one must be delivered from the Law to make progress in spiritual life (Rom 6:14; 7:1-4; Gal 2:19-20; 2 Cor 3:6). Paul clarifies this point in Romans chapter 7. There he affirms that the Law itself is holy and spiritual. The problem, though, is that people in their sinful state cannot observe it (v. 7-23). The nature of sin is such that, when the commandment comes, sin responds by producing a resistance to it. This is why Paul states, "The power of sin is the Law."<sup>685</sup>

If the Law is good, then why does the born-again individual need deliverance from it (Rom 6:14; 7:1-4; Gal 2:19-20)? How, in fact, can applying the Mosaic Law to the believer hinder his/her spiritual growth? Thomas Schreiner proposes an interesting theory to explain this.<sup>686</sup> We will employ his view with some modifications.

Schreiner proposes that the Mosaic Law was an inseparable part of God's covenant with Israel, and that one cannot divorce elements of that covenant from one another. According to that covenant, the Law defined the lifestyle of those in the covenant, and the sacrificial system provided forgiveness of covenant transgressions. In addition, the Sinaitic covenant created a distinction between Gentiles and the descendants of Jacob. Finally, the entrance rite into the covenant was circumcision, which is why Paul wrote, "I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law" (Gal 5:3).

This theory may aid us in understanding why Paul considered Peter's refusal to eat with Gentiles a rejection of the doctrine of justification by faith (Gal 2:11-16). Schreiner thinks that if an individual enters into the old covenant, he/she must observe all aspects of it and is eligible only for those benefits that it provides. Thus, Paul feels that if Peter refuses fellowship with Gentiles, he is reverting back to the old covenant by observing one of its stipulations.<sup>687</sup> If one returns to the old covenant, then he/she is deprived of the forgiveness of sins available through Christ (see Gal 5:4), since the old order provided forgiveness only through animal sacrifices, which are no longer acceptable since Christ came.

Paul's rebuke concerned not only the threat to the gospel, but also the disruption of unity in the Church between Jews and Gentiles. We recall Paul's teaching in Ephesians 2:11-16, that removal of the Law results in the unification of Jews and Gentiles in one Body, the Church.

If Schreiner is correct, that a person under the old covenant can only gain the benefits stipulated in that covenant, then those who return to the Law forfeit not only forgiveness of sins in Christ, but also the power of the Holy Spirit to overcome sin. These benefits are available only to those in the new covenant (Ezek 36:26-27; Jn 14:17; Gal 4:6; Rom 5:5). Thus, we can better understand how the Law can actually hinder one's spiritual growth.

We see, then, that in the context of the old covenant (including the Mosaic Law), the Holy Spirit does not manifest His sanctifying power (at least to the same degree) as He does in the context of the new covenant and the law of Christ. The Law of Moses is powerless to enable obedience (Rom 8:3; Gal 3:21).<sup>688</sup> It is part of the "ministry of death," which, according to God's plan, must give way to life in the Spirit (2 Cor 3:7-8, 17-18). Therefore, we now better understand Paul's rebuke to the saints in Galatia, who were reverting to the Law: "Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?" (Gal 3:3).

So then, Paul's epistles show a third reason why the Law should not be directly applied to the Church. It was not only fulfilled by Jesus (according to the Gospels), and not only belongs to another covenant (according to Hebrews), but it will hinder the sanctification of the believer.

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<sup>685</sup>We also keep in mind that any law that warns of punishment can at least partially restrict sinful behavior in humans. This is what Paul likely has in view in 1 Tim 1:8-10 (cf. Rom 13:1-7). Schreiner, p. 89.

<sup>686</sup>Schreiner, p. 85-87.

<sup>687</sup>Here, we must consider that the Law did not forbid eating with Gentiles. The problem was more likely the threat of eating non-kosher foods.

<sup>688</sup>George Knight is grossly misguided in his claim that the Law had some "hidden power," which is released in Christ (Knight G. A. F. Law and Grace: Must a Christian keep the Law of Moses? – Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1962. – P. 118).

Summarizing our findings from the Acts of the Apostles onward, we see in these books a further development of Jesus' teaching on the Law. It seems, though, that in the early history of the Church, Jewish believers held to their previous allegiance to the Mosaic legislation. At the same time, we see some advancement in that the Jewish believers did not require the Gentiles to observe the Law, and that James described the Law more in line with the teachings of Jesus.

The Epistle to the Hebrews and the teachings of Paul, however, introduced substantial changes to the application of the Law to believers. Hebrews informs us that the old covenant, including the Mosaic Law, has passed away and been replaced by the new covenant and the law "written on hearts." Paul stresses that no one can be justified by the Law, and that the Law in its original form can even hinder the spiritual growth of the believer. Nevertheless, the essence of the Law, that is, its eternal moral principles, carries over to God's new order – the law of Christ.

## 6. Conclusions

How, then, should the Law of Moses be applied to New Testament believers? Our biblical survey has revealed the following. The law, in the sense of a moral standard which defines correct behavior, exists since the beginning of time and has always had a place in God's plan. During the old dispensation, God's moral standard found expression in the Mosaic legislation, given in the context of God's covenant with Israel, which defined how one was to live under that covenant. In some cases, the Law of Moses overlapped with some pagan laws, demonstrating the remainder of moral sensitivities among the Gentiles, which the New Testament calls "conscience" (Rom 2:14-16).

Nonetheless, God warned His people Israel that they would disobey the law and forsake Him. Consequently, He promised a future spiritual renewal, during which His laws would be written on human hearts. This spiritual renewal came through Jesus Christ, who fulfilled the Law by His perfect life and thereby became its "incarnation." During His earthly ministry, He already began to introduce changes in the Mosaic Law, annulling some commands, and intensifying others. In addition, He gave orientation to the Law by establishing love for God and neighbor as the Law's primary thrust. The apostles imitated the Lord in emphasizing the centrality of love in God's plan and recognizing the applicability of God's moral principles, once expressed in the Law, to those living under the new order.

The apostle Paul warned believers not to seek justification before God through good works or law observance. He also taught that the Law of Moses could become a hindrance to a believer's sanctification. He urged the saints to live by the law of Christ, which consists of the principle of love, the leadership of the Spirit, the teachings of Jesus and the apostles, and moral principles reflected in the Law of Moses. The Church observes the Old Testament Law when it is repeated or confirmed in the New Testament.<sup>689</sup>

So then, when interpreting Old Testament Law and its application in the New Testament, the first step, as in any exegetical analysis, is to determine what the passage in question meant for its original audience. When applying it to the New Testament, one should seek corresponding material in the New Testament, especially in the epistles of the apostles, which can guide us in applying the principles of Old Testament law.

We may compare this process with opening an old computer file on a new system or in a new format. Even though the essential material may transfer without trouble, not infrequently we encounter changes in font, layout, or in other ways. Similarly, when we wish to know how to apply Old Testament truth to the Church, we need to "open" that material in a new format – the New Testament.

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<sup>689</sup>Hansen objects that an emphasis on love may lead to so-called "situation ethics," and stresses that the Christian idea of love is not random or subjective, but defined by the knowledge of Christ (Hansen, G. W. *The letter to the Philippians // The Pillar New Testament commentary*. – Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: Eerdmans, 2009. – P. 60). More precisely, we can say that it is defined by the teaching of the New Testament.

## B. Historical Survey

In the course of church history three main approaches to understanding the relation of the Mosaic Law to the Church have developed: (1) the Lutheran view, (2) covenant theology, and (3) dispensationalism.

### 1. Lutheran View

The Lutheran confession divides the contents of Scripture into two categories.<sup>690</sup> Every passage of Scripture relates either to law, or to gospel. If the given passage requires obedience to a command, it is “law.” If the passage offers salvation to the sinner, it is “gospel.” According to “law,” one must perfectly keep all commandments to obtain justification before God. According to “gospel,” salvation comes as an undeserved gift of God’s grace to the sinner. Law reveals the sinful condition of humans, while gospel announces forgiveness to the repentant sinner. Law also declares God’s punishment of sin and future judgment, while gospel justifies through faith in Jesus Christ.

We may illustrate the distinction between law and gospel from 2 Sam 12:13: “Then David said to Nathan, ‘I have sinned against the LORD.’ And Nathan said to David, ‘The LORD also has taken away your sin; you shall not die.’” David’s reply to the prophet’s rebuke, “I have sinned against the LORD,” reveals the convicting power of law. Then God’s mercy is manifest through forgiveness: “The LORD also has taken away your sin; you shall not die.” We can also compare law to gospel in Acts 2:37-38, where at the preaching of Peter, people “were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Brethren, what shall we do?’” Peter responded, “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.”

What is the role of the Old Testament Law for the New Testament believer? Lutherans answer, on the one hand, that the Law is no longer necessary, since we are justified by Christ and have no need for justification by law (1 Tim 1:9). On the other hand, it is useful in practical Christian living to guide the believer in behavior pleasing to the Lord (Rom 7:14-24). It is valuable in retraining sinful desire (Rom 8:7; 1 Cor 9:27), for consciousness of sin (Rom 7:7, 13; Gal 5:19-21) and for direction in moral living (Gal 5:22-25).

In comparison to the biblical view described above, we see in the Lutheran view both strong and weak points. On the one hand, Lutherans correctly emphasize receiving justification by faith apart from the Law, and recognize the convicting power of the Law in bringing the unbeliever to repentance and faith. On the other hand, when dividing biblical material into “law” and “gospel,” one must pay attention to what covenant the material is taken from. Old covenant commandments have an indirect application to the believer, whereas new covenant ones apply more directly. In addition, in claiming that the Law provides “direction in moral living,” they may fail to appreciate the role of “the law of Christ” in that regard.

### 2. Covenant Theology

In comparison to the above, covenant theology provides a more theologically sophisticated theory of the Mosaic Law’s role in the Church.<sup>691</sup> Here, it is felt that the Law of Moses (at least in its moral aspect) still applies to the Church and is binding on its members. Likely, the most well-known proponent of this teaching was John Calvin.

This theory operates on the following premises. The covenant that God made with Israel continues to function in the Church. There is only one, ongoing covenant between God and His people, based on His grace.

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<sup>690</sup>Mueller J. T. Christian dogmatics. – St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 1955. – P. 470-477.

<sup>691</sup>A more thoroughgoing treatment of covenant theology is given in the next chapter.

The Mosaic Law is not a rival system for obtaining justification before God on the basis of works, but a means of moral guidance for those living in the covenant established by grace.

Furthermore, because of their unbelief, disobedience and rejection of the Messiah Jesus, Israel forfeited its status as God's people and were excluded from the covenant. God's New Testament people, the Church, has replaced Israel in this exclusive covenant with God. Therefore, according to covenant theology, the Church alone qualifies as God's people, and all that the Old Testament contains, both law and promise, belongs only to the Church.

Adherents of covenant theology affirm that the Law consists in three parts: ceremonial, civil, and moral. The ceremonial aspect is the feast days, temple order, sacrificial system, priesthood, and the like. This aspect has been fulfilled by Jesus Christ and, therefore, is not binding on the Church. The civil law relates to administrative of government and also does not relate to the Church. The moral aspect, which includes commandments relating to a person's moral behavior and relationship with God and others, is still in force.

The following arguments are employed in defense of covenant theology.<sup>692</sup> First, the Law of Moses, being based on God's holy nature, does not change. As an expression of who God is, it remains unaltered. We agree that God's nature is not subject to change, and that the Law is an expression of His nature. Yet it is mistaken to think that the Mosaic Law is the only or perfect expression of God's order. In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus showed that there are yet higher ethical norms than were expressed in the Old Testament. The law of Christ is a more perfect expression of God's nature than the Mosaic legislation. Strickland writes, "God's moral standards do not change, but the concrete expressions of it may change."<sup>693</sup>

Adherents of covenant theology believe that the phrase "the law of Christ" does not refer to changes in the contents of the Mosaic Law, but only to a new way to fulfill it. The Law remains unchanged, yet the Holy Spirit is now our aid in its observance.<sup>694</sup> However, our research on the topic revealed the following: Jesus already introduced certain alterations to the old Law, the Jerusalem Council did not require Gentiles to observe the Law, and that Paul typically refers to other sources for his ethical instruction than the Law of Moses. Such observations do not support the claim that the Mosaic Law is still in force.

It is also claimed that some passages of Scripture show that God punished the Gentile world for violations of the Law (see Lev 18:24-27; Ps 119:118-119; Prov 14:34; Isa 24:5). Thus, all must keep the Law, not just Israel. However, covenant theology here neglects to consider that the Gentiles did not know the Law of Moses, but rather were ruled by conscience, which is another, but related expression of God's order. It follows, then, that God may express His moral standard in still another fashion in the Church, namely through the law of Christ.

Covenant theology also appeals to Ps 118:151-152, where we read that God's Law is eternal. If it is eternal, then it applies to everyone at all times. Yet, Hebrews 8:13 reveals that the old covenant has already passed away, which implies that the Law, which is based on it, has also. Again, we recall that Jesus changed certain aspects of the Mosaic Law. Thus, the "eternal" nature of the Law relates to the time period and covenant for which God intended it, that is the Old Testament dispensation. In addition, since aspects of the Mosaic Law carry over into the law of Christ, one may speak in this way of the Law's "eternal" nature.

Another argument advanced in favor of covenant theology is that Jesus Himself kept the Law and so taught His disciples. However, one must remember that at the time of Christ, the Mosaic Law was still in effect.<sup>695</sup> The New Testament began after Jesus' death and resurrection (Lk 22:20). Sometimes Jesus spoke from the vantage point of the old covenant, and sometimes from the new, since He lived at a transitional period between them. In addition, Jesus spoke more of obedience to Himself than of obedience to the Law. His teaching became a new standard.

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<sup>692</sup>Material taken from: Five views on Law and Gospel / Ed. W. G. Strickland – Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1993.

<sup>693</sup>Strickland, p. 272.

<sup>694</sup>VanGemenen, p. 14.

<sup>695</sup>Moo, The Law of Christ, p. 323.



What about Matthew 5:17-19, where Jesus taught that the Old Testament moral law still applied to His disciples? When we examine this passage, we note that Jesus alone “fulfilled” the Law, and therefore has the right to adapt it to new conditions in His kingdom, which He does in the following verses. This is the first step in the development of the “law of Christ.”

Covenant theology also cites cases where New Testament writers appeal to the Old Testament to define proper ethical behavior for followers of Jesus. They note references to the Ten Commandments in the New Testament, and to directives to obey God’s commandments (1 Cor 7:19; 1 Jn 2:3-5; 1 Jn 2:7-8; 1 Jn 5:2-3; 2 Jn 5; Rev 12:17; Rev 14:12) or fulfill the Law (Jam 4:11-12).

On the other hand, as we have already noted above, the New Testament appeals with relative infrequency to Old Testament law, but prefers to draw on other bases for ethics, like the principle of love, the leadership of the Spirit, the believer’s union with Christ, and the teaching of Jesus and the apostles. Since Jesus and the apostles include in their teachings aspects of Old Testament law, it is no surprise that we see some of the Ten Commandments repeated. In addition, the word “commandments” in the New Testament refers more to obedience to Christ than to Mosaic Law. Finally, in James’ epistle, we cannot equate the “law of liberty” with the Law of Moses (see discussion above).

Also in support of covenant theology, some note that Paul called the Law holy and spiritual (Rom 7:14). If the Law possesses such qualities, it must certainly be valuable for believers today. At the same, Paul’s main point in this context is not the quality of the Law, but its applicability to believers. On that account, he claims that the believer has died to the Law (Rom 7:4). Moreover, the ceremonial law is also holy, but is no longer in force.

Paul also taught that the gospel does not nullify the Law, but establishes it (Rom 3:31). In this context, though, Paul is writing not about the Law’s ability to sanctify the believer, but to condemn the unbeliever. In this way, the Law is “established.”

Next, covenant theologians argue that Paul agrees with the Law and finds “pleasure” in it (Rom 7:22). On the other hand, this verse is in a context showing that the Law cannot sanctify a believer, and that he/she needs deliverance from the Law to make progress in spiritual life.

Finally, in 2 Tim 3:16-17, Paul says of Scripture (i.e., the Old Testament) that it is “profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.” Yet, these words of Paul do not contradict his general view of the Law, since moral principles contained in the Law transfer into the law of Christ. In addition, the Old Testament contains more than just the Torah, but also other instructional and inspirational material, like the prophets, psalms, proverbs, etc. In the light of Paul’s overall teaching, it would be difficult to conclude that here he is requiring the New Testament believer to keep the Law of Moses.

Some may object that failing to apply the Law of Moses directly to followers of Jesus may lead to moral decay. Yet, Westerholm notes that, in his day, people accused Paul of the same thing (see Rom 3:8; 6:1, 15; Gal 2:17; 5:13).<sup>696</sup> Therefore, if, when we read Paul’s view of the Law, we come away wondering how the believer can be sanctified, then we are reading Paul correctly. Original readers of Paul came away with the same quandary. Yet, we have already indicated above in our section on Paul’s view of the Law how he responds to this concern.

### 3. Dispensationalism

The rival theory to covenant theology is dispensationalism.<sup>697</sup> It rose to popularity in the 19th century, especially through the work of John Darby and Charles Scofield. The latter published a well-received Bible with commentary advancing this view. Adherents of dispensationalism believe that in the course of history, God has

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<sup>696</sup>Westerholm, p. 198-199.

<sup>697</sup>A more detailed discussion of dispensationalism follows in the next chapter.

made various covenants with various groups of people. Consequently, His covenant with Israel differs from His covenant with the Church. This means that there are two separate “people of God”: Israel and the Church.

Instead of the term “covenant,” followers of dispensationalism use the term “dispensation,” which indicates a period of time in which God’s relationship with humans is governed by certain conditions unique to that dispensation. The “dispensations” are as follows: the dispensation of innocence (before the Fall), the dispensation of conscience (from Adam to Noah), the dispensation of human government (from Noah to Abraham), the dispensation of promise (from Abraham to Moses), the dispensation of the Law (from Moses to Christ), the dispensation of grace (from the first to the second coming of Christ), and the millennial dispensation (from the second coming until the day of judgement).

In this system, the Law of Moses in its entirety does not apply to the Church, since it was part of a different dispensation – the dispensation of the Law. Both the Old Testament law and the Old Testament promises belong to Israel. The Church has a new law – the “law of Christ,” which consists of the teachings and example of Christ, the teachings of the apostles, the principle of love, and the leadership of the Holy Spirit. The Church observes the old law only when it is repeated or confirmed in the New Testament.

In evaluating dispensationalism, we applaud its proper definition of the relation of the Church to the Mosaic Law and its recognition of the law of Christ. There are weak points of this view that we will discuss in the next chapter, but they do not concern the teaching about the Law.

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## Chapter 9: Is Old Testament Prophecy for the Church?

After discussing the role of Old Testament law in the Church, we would naturally proceed to the topic of Old Testament prophecy and its possible fulfillment in the Church. The Old Testament contains numerous promises of future glory for the people of God. Can the Church expect to participate in these blessings, or are they reserved only for national Israel? In connect with this arises the hotly debated question about who exactly the people of God are? What is the relationship between Israel and the Church? Does God still have a place for Israel in His plan? We devote this chapter to these vital topics.

### A. Biblical Survey

#### 1. God's People and Promises in the Old Testament

The history of God's people begins with Abraham, with whom God entered into covenant relationship. The key passages outlining this relationship are the following:

Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from your father's house, to the land which I will show you. And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great. And so you shall be a blessing. And I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed" (Gen 12:1-3).

"I am God Almighty; Walk before Me, and be blameless. I will establish My covenant between Me and you, and I will multiply you exceedingly.... As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you will be the father of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of you, and kings will come forth from you. I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you. I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God" (Gen 17:1-8).

God's promise to Abraham contained the following components: (1) personal blessing, (2) honor, (3) descendants, (4) land, (5) blessing to all nations, and (6) relationship with God. In addition, this covenant would be eternal. God's promises to Abraham extended to the offspring of Jacob (i.e., Israel), with whom God confirmed His covenant (Gen 26:3-4).

Inclusion of the Gentiles among God's people began early in the history of Israel. God allowed Gentiles to celebrate the Passover together with Israel (Ex 12:48-49; Num 9:14), and Moses invited Hobab (i.e., Jethro) the Midianite to share in the future blessings of God's people (Num 10:29-32). The descendants of Jethro, in fact, dwelt with Israel and had a share in the inheritance of Canaan (Judg 1:16). In his farewell song, Moses invited the Gentiles to "rejoice... {with} His people" (Deut 32:43). Later in the history of Israel, Ruth the Moabites joined the assembly of God's people in spite of the curse that excluded Moabites from the assembly (Deut 23:3).

The book of Deuteronomy gives special attention to Israel's special status with God. From the opening chapter, we see indications of God's choice of Israel and His intention to fulfill His promises to His people. He made the nation of Israel a "people for His own possession" (Deut 4:20; cf. Deut 27:9) not due to its own merit,

but because of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Deut 4:37; 9:4-5), whose family He chose “above all peoples” (Deut 10:15; cf. Deut 14:2).

A key feature of God’s plan for the Israeli people was their inheritance of the land of Canaan. In Deut 1:8 we read, “Go in and possess the land which the LORD swore to give to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to them and their descendants after them.” This inheritance would be theirs “as long as the heavens {remain} above the earth” (Deut 11:21). Even when Israel sinned, God promised restoration after chastisement (Deut 30:3-5). In other words, even when Israel violated its covenant with God, He would nonetheless remain faithful:

Yet in spite of this, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them, nor will I so abhor them as to destroy them, breaking My covenant with them; for I am the LORD their God. But I will remember for them the covenant with their ancestors, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God. I am the LORD (Lev 26:44-45).

Even after a period of apostasy, Samuel assured God’s people, “For the LORD will not abandon His people on account of His great name, because the LORD has been pleased to make you a people for Himself” (1 Sam 12:22).

Next, we examine the period of the Davidic dynasty. In 2 Sam 7:10-11, God confirmed His promise that Israel would dwell in the Promised Land, which inspired David to exclaim, “For Your people Israel You made Your own people forever, and You, O LORD, became their God” (1 Chr 17:22). God also promised that David’s throne would continue forever (2 Sam 7:16). Even if a future period of chastisement was necessary, His promise to David would stand firm (2 Sam 7:14-15; 1 Kin 11:39). Not only David’s dynasty, but also his capital, Jerusalem, occupies a special place in God’s plan (1 Kin 11:13, 36). Moreover, we again see an indication of the Gentile inclusion in the blessings of Israel. During the temple dedication, Solomon prayed,

Also concerning the foreigner who is not of Your people Israel, when he comes from a far country for Your name's sake... when he comes and prays toward this house, hear in heaven Your dwelling place, and do according to all for which the foreigner calls to You (1 Kin 8:41-43).

Not only narrative passages, but also poetic ones speak of God’s choice of Jacob and his glorious future. Israel is “the people whom He has chosen for His own inheritance” (Ps 33:12). God “will save Zion and build the cities of Judah” (Ps 69:35). He “has remembered His covenant forever, the word which He commanded to a thousand generations, {the covenant} which He made with Abraham, and His oath to Isaac. Then He confirmed it to Jacob for a statute, to Israel as an everlasting covenant, saying, ‘To you I will give the land of Canaan as the portion of your inheritance’” (Ps 105:8-11). God gave Canaan “as a heritage, a heritage to Israel His people” (Ps 135:12).

Furthermore, Jerusalem is God’s “tabernacle,” and His dwelling in “in Zion” (Ps 76:2). The Lord “loves the gates of Zion more than all the {other} dwelling places of Jacob” (Ps 87:2). There “thrones were set for judgment, the thrones of the house of David” (Ps 122:5). Concerning Jerusalem, the psalmist exclaims,

For the LORD has chosen Zion; He has desired it for His habitation. “This is My resting place forever; Here I will dwell, for I have desired it.... There I will cause the horn of David to spring forth; I have prepared a lamp for Mine anointed (Ps 132:13-14, 17).

Even when they are undergoing chastisement for covenant violations, God promises His people restoration: “You will arise {and} have compassion on Zion; for it is time to be gracious to her, for the appointed time has come” (Ps 102:13).

During the period of the divided kingdom, both Israel and Judah forgot God and spurned His covenant. Nonetheless, God always preserved a faithful remnant. For example, during Israel's apostasy in the time of King Ahab, God comforted His prophet Elijah with the words: "I will leave, in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal and every mouth that has not kissed him" (1 Kin 19:18). When the Assyrian forces invaded Judah, God again preserved a remnant (2 Kin 19:30-31). God gave special protection to Judah and Jerusalem for the sake of David, His servant. (2 Kin 8:19; 19:34; 20:6).

Nonetheless, a continual enjoyment of God's blessing and protection required obedience:

In this house and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen from all the tribes of Israel, I will put My name forever. And I will not make the feet of Israel wander anymore from the land which I gave their fathers, if only they will observe to do according to all that I have commanded them, and according to all the law that My servant Moses commanded them (2 Kin 21:7-8).

The time came, however, when first, the northern kingdom of Israel, and then the southern kingdom of Judah, were exiled from the Promised Land, and David's dynasty came to an end.

Yet, God did not withdraw His promises to His covenant people – through the prophets He promised restoration. It is interesting to note that nearly all the Old Testament prophets foretold a glorious time of restoration and prosperity for Israel. Here are a few examples:

Hosea: "'My heart is turned over within Me, all My compassions are kindled.... They will come trembling like birds from Egypt and like doves from the land of Assyria. And I will settle them in their houses,' "declares the LORD" (11:8-11; also see Hos 2:23; 3:1, 5; 6:11).

Amos: "'I will also plant them on their land, and they will not again be rooted out from their land which I have given them,' says the LORD your God" (9:15; also see Amos 3:2; 9:8-9).

Micah: "I will make the lame a remnant and the outcasts a strong nation. And the LORD will reign over them in Mount Zion from now on and forever" (4:7; also see Mic 2:12-13; 4:1-13; 5:1-15; 7:11-20).

Isaiah: "Now it will come about that in the last days the mountain of the house of the LORD will be established as the chief of the mountains, and will be raised above the hills. And all the nations will stream to it" (2:2).<sup>698</sup>

Joel: "Then the LORD will be zealous for His land and will have pity on His people. The LORD will answer and say to His people, 'Behold, I am going to send you grain, new wine and oil, and you will be satisfied {in full} with them; and I will never again make you a reproach among the nations'" (2:18-19, also see Joel 2:32; 3:1ff).

Obadiah: "On Mount Zion there will be those who escape, and it will be holy. And the house of Jacob will possess their possessions" (17).

Zephaniah: "'At that time I will bring you in, even at the time when I gather you together. Indeed, I will give you renown and praise among all the peoples of the earth, when I restore your fortunes before your eyes,' says the LORD" (3:20; also see Zeph 3:12-20).

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<sup>698</sup>Also see Isa 1:9; 6:13; 8:11-17; 10:20-22; 11:11-16; 12:1; 14:32; 17:5-6, 12-14; 28:5-6, 16-17, 21-22; 29:23.

Jeremiah: “Thus says the LORD, who gives the sun for light by day and the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar; the LORD of hosts is His name: ‘If this fixed order departs from before Me,’ declares the LORD, ‘Then the offspring of Israel also will cease from being a nation before Me forever’” (Jer 31:35-36).<sup>699</sup>

Ezekiel: “I will deliver them from all their dwelling places in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them. And they will be My people, and I will be their God. My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd; and they will walk in My ordinances and keep My statutes and observe them. They will live on the land that I gave to Jacob My servant, in which your fathers lived; and they will live on it, they, and their sons and their sons' sons, forever; and David My servant will be their prince forever.”<sup>700</sup>

Clearly, Israel’s future restoration and prosperity is one of the most frequently encountered themes in the writings of the prophets. These prophets reassure God’s people that: (1) God will always preserve a remnant, (2) Israel will return to its land, (3) the northern and southern kingdoms will be reunited, (4) Israel will triumph over its enemies, (5) God will pour out His Spirit on His people, (6) Israel will become an obedient people, (7) David (i.e., Messiah) will rule over them, (8) Messiah’s reign will extend over the whole earth, which will lead to universal peace and prosperity. These utopian conditions will exist for God’s people forever: Jerusalem “will not be plucked up or overthrown anymore forever” (Jer 31:40).

Is it also clear that God’s promises to Israel were not completely fulfilled during its restoration from Babylonian exile. Even a quick glance at Old Testament history shows that during the Second Temple Period, the spiritual and political situation in Judea could not be compared with the glorious future the prophets foretold. Along with this, prophets living in this period also spoke of a glorious time to come for Israel:

Thus says the LORD, “I will return to Zion and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. Then Jerusalem will be called the City of Truth, and the mountain of the LORD of hosts {will be called} the Holy Mountain” (Zech 8:3).

And the LORD will be king over all the earth; in that day the LORD will be {the only} one, and His name {the only} one (Zech 14:9).

We must also note that the prophecies of restoration for Israel include special blessings for Gentiles as well. God will appoint Messiah “as a covenant to the people, as a light to the nations, to open blind eyes, to bring out prisoners from the dungeon and those who dwell in darkness from the prison” (Isa 42:6-7). In those days, the Gentiles will seek the Lord together with Israel. To the God of Israel “the nations will come from the ends of the earth and say, ‘Our fathers have inherited nothing but falsehood, futility and things of no profit’” (Jer 16:19). Moreover: “Many peoples will come and say, ‘Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that He may teach us concerning His ways and that we may walk in His paths’” (Isa 2:3). Finally, Zechariah predicts:

Thus says the LORD of hosts, “{It will} yet {be} that peoples will come, even the inhabitants of many cities. The inhabitants of one will go to another, saying, ‘Let us go at once to entreat the favor of the LORD, and to seek the LORD of hosts; I will also go.’” So many peoples and mighty nations will come to

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<sup>699</sup>Also see Jer 3:14, 18; 10:16; 12:14-17; 16:14-16; 23:3-8; 24:4-7; 27:22; 29:10-15; 30:3, 8-9, 17-24; 31:4-40; 32:15, 37, 40, 44; 33:6-13, 19-26; 46:27-28; 50:4-6, 11, 17-20, 33-34; 51:5, 49-51

<sup>700</sup>Also see Ezek 5:5; 11:17, 20; 16:60-63; 17:22-24; 20:33-37, 39-41; 24:13; 28:24; 28:25-26; 34:11-16, 25-30; 36:8-15, 22ff; 37:6-28; 39:25-28; 47:13-23.



seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem and to entreat the favor of the LORD. Thus says the LORD of hosts, “In those days ten men from all the nations will grasp the garment of a Jew, saying, ‘Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you’” (Zech 8:20-23).

Many nations will join themselves to the LORD in that day and will become My people (Zech 2:11).

## **2. God’s People and Promises in the Intertestamental Period**

Although the material to follow does not necessarily reflect the biblical view, it will nonetheless be profitable to glance at how God’s people viewed the Gentiles in the intertestamental period.<sup>701</sup> For the most part, the Jews of this period held a negative view. It was thought that Gentiles were under the power of Satan, led immoral lives, were excluded from the covenant with God, worshipped idols, and despised, even sometimes persecuted Jews.

Nonetheless, God-fearing Gentiles were allowed a place among the people of God. After all, God is God over all. Such Gentiles were permitted entrance into the outer courtyard of the temple and to fellowship with Jews. Some Gentiles (so-called “proselytes”) actually converted to Judaism and received circumcision, while others (so-called “God-fearers”) merely worshipped the God of Israel without undergoing circumcision. Some intertestamental books even include a blessing for godly Gentiles (see *Sibylline Oracles*, 4.24-34, 162-70; Josephus, *Against Apion*, 2.39). Some intertestamental books speak of the Gentiles’ inclusion in the Kingdom of God.

In the end times, however, the Gentiles will oppose Israel and war against it (see *1 Enoch* 90.18-19; Philo, *On Rewards and Punishments*, 16 [95-97]; *Psalms of Solomon*, 17, 2 *Baruch* 39.7-40.2; 70.2, 6-9; 4 *Ezra* 12.32-33; 13.26-38). In the age to come, though, the Gentiles will worship Yahweh, walk according to His laws, and bring gifts to Israel (see *Testament of Simeon*, 7:1-2; *1 Enoch*, 90.30; *Sibylline Oracles*, 3.702-31; *Psalms of Solomon*, 17.31).

Not only did the Jews exert an influence over some Gentiles, but the opposite was also true. Hellenism gained momentum among some Jews, which led to their adapting Hebrew faith to the philosophical views and customs of the Greeks. Hellenism influenced Jews not only in the Diaspora, but even in Palestine.

## **3. God’s People and Promises in the Gospels**

What do the Gospels have to say about the people of God? On the one hand, God continues to be faithful to His Old Testament nation, offering them salvation through Messiah Jesus. He sent a Savior to Israel “in remembrance of His mercy, as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and his descendants forever” (Lk 1:54-55). Similarly, Zechariah exclaims that God acted “to show mercy toward our fathers, and to remember His holy covenant, the oath which He swore to Abraham our father” (Lk 1:72-73).

Jesus Himself acknowledged that He was “sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matt 15:24) and gave the directive to His disciples: “Do not go in {the} way of {the} Gentiles, and do not enter {any} city of the Samaritans; but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matt 10:5-6). In His conversation with the woman from Samaria, Jesus announced, “Salvation is from the Jews” (Jn 4:22).

In response to God’s invitation to salvation, however, the Jews, in general, rejected the promised Messiah and crucified Him (Lk 23:1-25; Jn 1:11). In some of His parables, Jesus predicted His rejection by God’s old covenant people (Matt 21:33-46; Lk 14:16-24). Israel’s behavior here differed little from its history of rejection of those sent to it by God. Jerusalem “kills the prophets and stones those sent to her” (Lk 13:34).

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<sup>701</sup>Material taken from Scott J. J. *Jewish backgrounds of the New Testament*. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1995. – P. 109-118, 335-351, and Nickelsburg W.E. *Ancient Judaism and Christian origins*. – Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2003. – P. 150-152.

Due to the rejection of the Messiah by the majority of Jews, the Israeli people will themselves be rejected. Jesus declares, “The kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people, producing the fruit of it” (Matt 21:43; cf. Lk 20:16). The original heirs of the kingdom “will be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matt 8:12). The rejection of Messiah will have not only spiritual consequences, but political ones as well. The Jews will again forfeit the Promised Land, because “you did not recognize the time of your visitation” (Lk 19:44).

Here, we see a transition in God’s relation to His people. Israel is to be replaced by a people “producing the fruit” of the kingdom. This transition is pictured by “a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment,” and “new wine in old wineskins” (Matt 9:16-17). Earlier, John the Baptist also warned that physical descent from Abraham did not guarantee inclusion in the people of God (Matt 3:9-10). The coming of Messiah creates a breach in ethnic Israel between believing and unbelieving Jews (Matt 3:12; Lk 2:34-35). Many Jews at the time of Jesus demonstrated by their behavior that they were not truly sons of Abraham, but rather sons of the devil (Jn 8:33-39). Many feel that in Matt 21:19, Jesus compared Israel with an unfruitful fig tree, which He cursed with the words: “No longer shall there ever be {any} fruit from you.”

Along with this, the Gospels contain not a few indications of the Gentiles’ inclusion in God’s kingdom. As early as the birth of Jesus, it was said of Him that He would be “a light of revelation to the Gentiles” (Lk 2:32). Jesus Himself predicted that His ministry would include outreach to Gentiles (Lk 4:25-27; cf. Matt 28:18-20). Amazed at the faith of the Roman centurion, Jesus exclaimed, “I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel. I say to you that many will come from east and west, and recline {at the table} with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven” (Matt 8:10-11). Even though, as mentioned above, Jesus was sent to the sons of Israel, He was still eager to serve foreigners (Jn 4:7-26) and even praised the faith of a Canaanite woman (Matt 15:21-28). Finally, Jesus announced that His plan was to unite all believers in Him into one fold (Jn 10:16).

Even though Jesus revealed a change in unbelieving Israel’s status and the status of believing Gentiles, He still spoke of a future conversion of national Israel. In the context of His rebuke of Jerusalem, He gave this note of hope: “For I say to you, from now on you will not see Me until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!’” (Matt 23:39). Additionally, He predicted of a time when “the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled” (Lk 21:24).

#### **4. God’s People and Promises according to the Apostles**

We draw our final thoughts on the people and promises of God from the book of Acts and the epistles of the apostles. In Acts, we see a continuation of the thematic thrust found in the Gospels, namely that the gospel must be first preached to the sons of Jacob. Peter announced to the Jews in Jerusalem: “It is you who are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant which God made with your fathers.... For you first, God raised up His Servant and sent Him to bless you by turning every one {of you} from your wicked ways” (Acts 3:25-26). Likewise, Paul’s typical strategy was to preach first to the Jews in the town he was visiting (see Acts 13:26; 18:6).<sup>702</sup> In such a way, God was honoring His ancient covenant with Israel.

Nevertheless, as it was in the days of Jesus, the majority of the Jews rejected the gospel, and, as a result, the apostles began appealing to the Gentiles. After unsuccessful ministry to the Jews of Pisidian Antioch, Paul announced, “It was necessary that the word of God be spoken to you first; since you repudiate it and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles” (Acts 13:46). After a similar experience in Rome, Paul announced to the Jews there as well, “Therefore let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will also listen” (Acts 28:28). Even though the Old

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<sup>702</sup>In his epistle to the Romans, Paul established the principle that the Jews have the honor to be the first to hear the good news of the gospel (Rom 1:16).

Testament had predicted the inclusion of the Gentiles into the people of God (which the Jerusalem Council affirmed in Acts 15:14-18), the Jews of that time did not perceive or receive it (Acts 22:21-22).

One final note from the book of Acts. On the day of Pentecost, Peter, in explaining the phenomenon of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, cites the second chapter of the book of Joel. Peter claims that what was happening at that time was the fulfillment of what Joel had predicted (Acts 2:16). This means that the promised outpouring of the Spirit found fulfillment not in Israel, as expected, but in the Church (at least at that time).

Going on to the epistles, in Peter's writings, we make an interesting observation. In the second chapter of his first epistle, he draws a parallel between Israel's status in the Old Testament and the Church's in the New:

And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For {this} is contained in Scripture: "Behold, I lay in Zion a choice stone, a precious corner {stone,} and he who believes in him will not be disappointed." This precious value, then, is for you who believe; but for those who disbelieve, "the stone which the builders rejected, this became the very corner {stone,}" and, "a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense"; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this {doom} they were also appointed. But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for {God's} own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy (1 Pet 2:4-10).

Notice here that the Church is built on the cornerstone of the Messiah of Israel (Jesus), a privilege granted to Israel in Isaiah 28:16. Concerning the natural heirs of the promise, they "stumble because they are disobedient to the word." Now, the Church occupies the place of "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for {God's} own possession." It is "now... the people of God." In this passage, Peter unmistakably affirms the change in status for Israel and the Church, which the Gospels previously foretold.

What does Paul have to say? Paul directs more attention to God's covenant with Abraham than His covenant with Israel. He claims that true descendants of Abraham are not his physical offspring, but those who imitate his faith (Gal 3:3-29). He teaches that "those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham" (v. 7) and, "those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer" (v. 9).

In addition, since Jesus is the true heir of Abraham's promise (v. 16), He becomes the source of that blessing for all who belong to Him: "And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise" (v. 29). Therefore, Paul can dare to call the Church "the Israel of God" (Gal 6:16).<sup>703</sup> Concerning God's Old Testament promises, in Christ they are "Yes" (2 Cor 1:20). Ethnic Israel, who rely on the Law, is compared to Ishmael, who is in slavery and "shall not be an heir with the son of the free woman" (Gal 4:21-31).

Paul's epistle to the Romans echoes these thoughts. True circumcision happens not in the flesh, but in the heart, and a true Jew "is one inwardly" (Rom 2:28-29).<sup>704</sup> As in the epistle to the Galatians, true descendants of Abraham are those who imitate his faith (Rom 9:6-8), and the blessing of Abraham belongs to all who possess such faith: both circumcised and uncircumcised (Rom 4:9-12). Abraham is the olive tree, to which "wild branches" (i.e., Gentile Christians), are grafted, and from which "natural branches" (i.e., unbelieving Jews) are broken off (Rom 11:17).

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<sup>703</sup>It is significant that in Paul's teaching, when a Gentile becomes a believer in Jesus, he/she is not longer considered a Gentile (see 1 Cor 12:2). Possibly, in Ephesian 4:17, Paul speaks of unbelievers in general as "Gentiles."

<sup>704</sup>Paul wrote to the church in Philippi, "We are the {true} circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus." Interestingly, even in the Old Testament, God rebuked His people as "uncircumcised in heart" (See Jer 4:4; 9:26; Lev 26:41).

So then, Paul believes in the unification of all believers in one Body of Christ. In Christ “there is no {distinction between} Greek and Jew” (Col 3:11; Gal 3:28); “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit” (1 Cor 12:13); “For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same {Lord} is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him” (Rom 10:12). To the Ephesians he writes,

For He Himself is our peace, who made both {groups into} one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, {which is} the Law of commandments {contained} in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, {thus} establishing peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity (Eph 2:14-16).

Although God’s people are a unity of believing Jews and Gentiles, in Romans 11 Paul reveals that at the end of the present age, God will bring national Israel to Himself in faithfulness to His covenant with the natural descendants of Abraham:

For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery – so that you will not be wise in your own estimation – that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, “The deliverer will come from zion, he will remove ungodliness from Jacob. This is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins” (Rom 11:25-27).

So then, God’s promise to Israel does indeed find fulfillment in His chosen people in agreement with the Old Testament expectation, since “the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable” (Rom 11:29).

Let us examine the book of Hebrews. The goal of this epistle is to urge Jewish believers not to return to the Old Testament order, but to hold fast to their faith in Christ. Throughout his entire letter, the author presents Jesus as the One who is superior to the Old Testament order in every respect. Although Hebrews does not comment on the status of Israel as God’s people, it clearly teaches that the old system has passed away and has been replaced by faith in Messiah Jesus. It is also significant that the author claims that Jeremiah’s prediction of a new covenant finds fulfillment among followers of Jesus (Heb 8:7-13). In other words, the new covenant promised to Israel in Jeremiah 31 is already active in the Church.

Concerning the book of Revelation, one must note that in the first part of the book, Israel is depicted as the enemy of God’s kingdom. The Lord Jesus even hesitates to speak of unbelieving Jews, who are persecuting the Church, as genuine Jews. They are the συναγωγή τοῦ σατανᾶ, i.e. “synagogue of Satan” (Rev 2:9; 3:9). In Revelation 11:8, Jerusalem is derogatorily called “Sodom and Egypt.”

On the other hand, believers in Jesus inherit the kingdom of God and will reign with Him on the earth (Rev 5:9-10). The Church is called “a kingdom, priests” (Rev 1:6). The devil, through the Antichrist, will persecute the Israeli people (Rev 12:13, 15). Yet, God will intervene to preserve them (Rev 12:13-16), which indicates that He is not through yet with national Israel.

## **5. Conclusions**

In summarizing the biblical view of the people and promises of God, we may conclude the following. God made a covenant with Abraham to bless him and his descendants, and through him, all peoples of the earth. This blessing to his descendants included possession of the Promised Land, i.e., Canaan. In addition, God made a covenant with David, promising him and his offspring an eternal kingdom. Although Israel (and, at times, the Davidic dynasty) violated their covenant relationship with God, He remained faithful to it, and through the prophets gave a word of hope of a future time of prosperity and spiritual renewal for Israel.

When Messiah Jesus came, He focused attention on ministry to the Jewish people, offering them participation in God's kingdom through repentance and faith in Him. The book of Acts shows that the apostles initially continued this practice. Yet, Israel rejected its Messiah and His gospel. Jesus had anticipated this and predicted a transition in God's plan – Israel would forfeit the kingdom, and believers in Him would inherit it, including believing Gentiles. At the same time, Jesus spoke of a future conversion of Israel when the "times of the Gentiles" had been fulfilled.

This transition in God's plan is clear in the epistles of the apostles. Peter wrote that the Church is "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for {God's} own possession." Yet, those who were formerly called God's people "stumbled over the stumbling stone." Paul affirmed that the true descendants of Abraham and the true Jews are those who walk by faith and have an inward circumcision of the heart. Paul also taught that in the Body of Christ, God has taken down the barrier between Jews and Gentiles, and has created one new man – the Church. This means that in Christ "there is neither Jew nor Greek." Additionally, the writer of Hebrews informs us that the old covenant has passed away and has been replaced by a new one, which is fulfilled now among followers of Jesus. Not only the book of Hebrews testifies of this fact (Heb 8:7-13), but also other key passages, such as Acts 2:16-18 and Acts 15:14-18.

Nevertheless, Old Testament promises concerning the future prosperity of *Israel* have not yet been fulfilled, and we must not interpret them symbolically, as if they refer only to the Church or to the eternal state. The Scriptures are clear that in the last days, God, who remains faithful to His covenant with Abraham and His physical descendants, will bring all ethnic Jews living at that time to faith in Messiah Jesus. Pate aptly notes that we must not speak strictly of the "replacement" of Israel by the Church. On the one hand, "What was promised to Israel has now been fulfilled in the church, in Christ, especially the Spirit and the new covenant."<sup>705</sup> Yet, on the other hand, "Although the church is a progression beyond Israel, it is not the permanent replacement of Israel (see Rom. 9–11, esp. 11:25–27)."<sup>706</sup>

Therefore, when interpreting the Old Testament promises, we must respect the original context and intention of the original author. This means that the promises to the Jewish people still await literal fulfillment in them. Yet, since the Church has been "grafted into the olive tree," i.e., the family of Abraham by faith, these promises find fulfillment in it as well, both in a spiritual and material sense. So then, the Church now enjoys the spiritual blessings of the new covenant, which Israel will inherit in the future after its conversion to faith in Messiah Jesus and subsequent spiritual renewal. Then, when Jesus returns, the Church along with converted Israel will rule the earth under the headship of Messiah Jesus.

## **B. Historical Survey**

Regarding our question of the identity of God's people and their inheritance of God's promises, there are two main schools of thought, which correspond to our previous study of God's Law in the New Testament: covenant theology and dispensationalism. In this chapter, we will look more closely at these theological movements to try to understand their basic positions better, as well as investigating their attitude toward Old Testament promises.

### **1. Covenant Theology**

#### **a. Description of Covenant Theology**

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<sup>705</sup>We must qualify the idea that all God's Old Testament promises have already been fulfilled. We are still awaiting the appearing of the messianic kingdom and the spiritual renewal of Israel.

<sup>706</sup>Pate C. M. Church, *The // Elwell W. Evangelical dictionary of biblical theology* (electronic ed.). – Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996. – P. 96.

The essence of this teaching is that there exists only one, uninterrupted covenant between God and humanity, based on His grace and stretching back to Adam.<sup>707</sup> Although the Bible mentions various covenants,<sup>708</sup> they are, in fact, one continuous and developing covenant between God and the human race. Robertson comments that all covenants “unite into a single relationship.”<sup>709</sup> The unity and uninterrupted nature of these covenants is seen in that some of them are called “eternal.”<sup>710</sup> Although one can date this theory back to the beginning of church history, its most famous proponent was John Calvin.

According to covenant theology, before the Fall, God established certain requirements for humanity, namely regarding the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. After the Fall, God established a covenant of grace with humanity, by which He promised salvation through the seed of the woman (Gen 3:15). This covenant of grace continues until now and serves as the foundation for all subsequent covenants. Adherents of covenant theology traditionally name God’s relation to humanity before the Fall the “covenant of works,” and after the Fall – “the covenant of grace.”<sup>711</sup>

God’s covenant with Noah, then, was a continuation and further development of this general covenant. God saves Noah and his family from the Flood, promises never again to flood the earth, and commands Noah to multiply and replenish the earth, similar to what He originally commanded Adam and Eve. Moreover, God’s promise to Abraham recalls the Adamic covenant as well – Canaan is the new Garden of Eden. In addition, from Abraham’s family will come the Deliverer, echoing the promise of the Seed of the woman.

In the Sinaitic covenant, God establishes the conditions in which His covenant people may enjoy the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant. God’s purpose in the Sinaitic covenant, though, was never salvation by works, since it was established with sinful people, who were not able to save themselves. Through the Davidic covenant, God promises to raise up a great leader, who will mediate the covenant blessings to God’s people. Yet, we see that the Davidic dynasty, which was eventually disbanded, never fulfilled that goal. The messianic Son of David, who now sits on David’s throne in heaven and rules over the Church, would accomplish it.

The highest expression of God’s covenant agenda is the “new covenant,” to which the Old Testament testifies (Jer 31:31-34; 32:36-41; Ezek 37:21-28). It is the culmination and fulfillment of all previous covenants between God and humanity. All that God had promised in previous covenants is realized in the new covenant. For example, when the new covenant is described in Ezekiel 37:21-28, we see allusions to the Abrahamic covenant, the Davidic covenant, and Sinaitic covenant (cf. Jer 31:31-34). Robertson writes, “In the end, all the promises of the ancient covenants of God with His people find their fulfillment in the new covenant.”<sup>712</sup>

When the new covenant came into being, it did not annul the Sinaitic covenant, but rather renewed it.<sup>713</sup> The Sinaitic covenant, namely in its moral aspect, remains in force. Yet, now God provides the means for it to be observed – the Law written on the heart by the Holy Spirit. The new covenant contains still another new element – the inclusion of the Gentiles.

The new covenant came into being through Jesus Christ. He announced the establishment of this covenant during the Lord’s Supper (Lk 22:20). The shedding of blood was necessary for the covenant’s establishment, which Jesus did through His death (Heb 9:15-20). So then, all the covenants find their fulfillment in Jesus Christ. He is the “Seed of the woman,” the “Seed of Abraham,” and the “Son of David,” through whom all the

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<sup>707</sup>Material taken from: Robertson O. P. *Covenants*. – Norcross, GA: Great Commission Publishers, 1987; and Robertson O. P. *The Christ of the covenants*. – Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishers, 1980.

<sup>708</sup>See Hos 6:7; Gen 6:18; 15:18; Ex 24:8; Ps 89:3; Jer 31:31; Lk 22:20.

<sup>709</sup>Robertson, *Christ of the covenants*, p. 26.

<sup>710</sup>The covenant with Abraham (Gen 17:7; Ps 105:8-10), the covenant with David (2 Sam 7:13, 16); the new covenant (Jer 32:40; Ezek 37:26). See Robertson, *Christ of the covenants*, p. 277; Robertson, *Covenants*, p. 102.

<sup>711</sup>Robertson prefers the titles “covenant of creation” and “covenant of redemption,” including in the first (aside from the command concerning the forbidden fruit) such as items as keeping the Sabbath, marriage relations, and the responsibility to work (Robertson, *Christ of the covenants*, p. 57, 68).

<sup>712</sup>Robertson, *Covenants*, p. 119

<sup>713</sup>Pannenberg W. *Systematic theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991-1998. – P. 473.

promised covenant blessings come. He fulfilled all the conditions required by God in all previous covenants. In Him, all God's promises are "Yes" (2 Cor 1:20).

Robertson provides the following example of the interconnectedness of all the covenants. First, the initial Passover in Egypt, which subsequently became prescribed in the Sinaitic covenant, accomplished the deliverance promised to Abraham (Gen 15:13-14). Second, in the covenant of Sinai, God mentions Israel's deliverance from Egypt in fulfillment of His promise to Abraham (Ex 20:1). In addition, God commissioned Joshua to conquer the land that He previously gave as an inheritance to Abraham and his descendants. Yet, possession of the land depended on keeping the Law (Deut 28). Furthermore, one can note a connection between the Sinaitic and Davidic covenants in that David charged his son Solomon to observe the Law of Moses (1 Chr 22:13). In the end, however, Israel forfeited the kingdom due to disobedience to the Law.

The epistles of the apostles also allegedly indicate the uninterrupted nature of the "covenant of grace." Paul apparently sees the continuation of circumcision in the rite of water baptism. Circumcision symbolizes the removal of the sinful nature in the new covenant (Col 2:12). Furthermore, Paul considers the gift of the Spirit a part of the Abrahamic covenant (Gal 3:14; cf. Ezek 36:27). It seems that over time, the Abrahamic covenant "expanded" to include elements of subsequent covenants.

Finally, proponents of covenant theology see in the oft-repeated phrase "I will be their God, and they will be My people" an indication of the interconnectedness and interdependence of the covenants.<sup>714</sup> God's purpose in all the covenants was the same – fellowship with people.

Robertson, along with other covenant theologians, suggests that the blessings promised to Israel in the Old Testament belong to the Church. In particular, the predicted reunification of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms of Israel (Jer 50:4; Ezek 34:23) is accomplished through the unification of all believers in Jesus Christ (Jn 10:16).<sup>715</sup> Israel's restoration to the Promised Land (i.e., Canaan) symbolized the coming of a new heaven and a new earth.<sup>716</sup> The prophetic predictions for the city of Jerusalem are for the Church (Heb 12:22-23; Gal 4:25-26). So then, many elements that once referred to the material blessing of Israel typologically represent spiritual blessing for the Church. The kingdom of Christ is a spiritual kingdom.<sup>717</sup>

Along with the "classic" covenant view that Israel no longer holds any special place in God's plan, there exists a more moderate view called "historical premillennialism." It teaches that there is only one people of God – the Church. At the same time, in light of Paul's teaching in Romans 8:29 and Romans chapter 11, at the end of time all national Israel, living at that time, will believe in Messiah Jesus and come into the Church. Thus, believing Jews along with believing Gentiles will compose a unified people of God and inherit together all God's promises.

## **b. Evaluation of Covenant Theology**

Covenant theology has its good and bad points. It correctly affirms the unity of God's people (see Eph 2:13-16; Rom 11:17-18). As we saw in our biblical survey, believers in Jesus are the true descendants of Abraham, and, through Christ, the Church is the heir of the blessings of Abraham and the kingdom of David. It is also correct to say that over the course of time God's covenants undergo development and find their culmination in the new covenant, which was promised in the Old Testament and established by the Lord Jesus for the Church (Lk 22:20).

Yet, there are significant problems with this approach. First, there is no recognition of the "law of Christ" replacing the Mosaic legislation, as demonstrated in the previous chapter. Second, this school of thought

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<sup>714</sup>See Gen 17:7; Ex 6:6-7; 19:4; Lev 11:45; Deut 29:13; 2 Kin 11:17; Ezek 34:24; Zech 2:11; 8:8; Heb 8:10; 2 Cor 6:16.

<sup>715</sup>Robertson, *Covenants*, p. 107.

<sup>716</sup>*Ibid*, p. 102-103.

<sup>717</sup>Bass C. B. *Backgrounds to dispensationalism*. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1960. – P. 152.

rejects the clear teaching of God's blessing for Abraham's physical descendants, i.e., ethnic Israel, for whom the Old Testament promises will also find fulfillment.

It is also misguided to think that the Church completely replaces Israel, or that the Old Testament promises to Israel typologically relate only to the Church. Here, the moderate view "historical premillennialism" is far superior to the classic view. Adherents of this view, on the one hand, hold to the unity of God's people, yet correctly view God's end time plan for national Israel. At the end, the Jews, living at that time, will turn to Messiah Jesus and will enjoy all God's blessings together with Christ's Church.

## **2. Dispensationalism**

### **a. Description of Dispensationalism**

Dispensationalism was popularized in the 19th century by John Darby, a leader among the Plymouth Brethren. It gained momentum through Charles Scofield's publication of a well-received Bible with commentary based on this view.

The term "dispensationalism" comes from the word "dispensation." According to Scofield, a dispensation is "a period of time during which man is tested in respect of obedience to some specific revelation of the will of God."<sup>718</sup> Blasing describes a dispensation as "a distinctive way in which God manages or arranges the relationship of human beings to Himself."<sup>719</sup> In other words, periodically God alters His relation to humans, establishing different requirements and offering different promises. Adherents of dispensationalism believe that in the course of human history, God made various covenants with various groups of people.

The initial dispensation was the "dispensation of innocence," which relates to the time before the Fall. The second dispensation was the "dispensation of conscience" from Adam to Noah. During that time God required obedience to conscience. The third dispensation was the "dispensation of human government" from Noah to Abraham, during which people were expected to obey human leaders. In the fourth dispensation, the "dispensation of promise" from Abraham to Moses, God expected His people to believe in the promise made to Abraham. The fifth dispensation was the "dispensation of Law" from Moses to Christ, which applied to the children of Israel, who were expected to observe the Mosaic legislation. The sixth dispensation, the "dispensation of grace," lasts from the first until the second coming of Christ and applies to the Church. In it, salvation comes by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

The final dispensation will be the "dispensation of the millennial kingdom" from the second coming of Christ to Judgement Day, when Jesus will rule upon the earth.<sup>720</sup> Classic dispensationalists believe that this period belongs exclusively to national Israel. Although during the Great Tribulation, most of the Jews will support Antichrist, a select group (144,000 in number) will be faithful to God, acknowledge Jesus as Messiah, and inherit together with Him the messianic kingdom. During the millennium, the Old Testament Law will be reenacted, as well as the temple order, the Jewish feasts, and animal sacrifices (not for the purpose of redemption, but for thanksgiving).<sup>721</sup>

It is thought that it was necessary for God to make various covenants, because none of them fully succeed. In each system, God is not able to establish His kingdom among people and secure their obedience.<sup>722</sup> According to Scofield, even God's covenant with Abraham was unsuccessful, since when the Law came, Israel rejected the way of grace offered in the Abrahamic covenant.<sup>723</sup> Early dispensationalists even claimed that the

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<sup>718</sup>Scofield C. I. Scofield reference Bible. – New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1909. – P. 3.

<sup>719</sup>Blasing C. A. Progressive dispensationalism. – Wheaton, IL: Victory Books, 1993. – P. 11.

<sup>720</sup>Blasing holds to a simpler scheme, acknowledging only four dispensations: patriarchal, mosaic, ecclesial, and Zionist (Blasing, p. 118).

<sup>721</sup>See Bass, p. 38-41, 131-139.

<sup>722</sup>Ibid, p. 19.

<sup>723</sup>Robertson, The Christ of the covenants, p. 211.



sixth dispensation, the “dispensation of grace,” will also fall short of expectations, since the Plymouth Brethren, founders of the movement, saw the Church in a pitiful condition and, therefore, separated themselves from other Christian confessions.<sup>724</sup>

Dispensationalists seek confirmation of their theory both in Scripture and in church history.<sup>725</sup> They rely heavily on the New Testament term *οικονομία* (*oikonomia*), found in Ephesians 1:10; 3:2, 9 and Colossians 1:25, which they equate with a dispensation.<sup>726</sup> In Galatians chapters 3-4, we read of a transition from the “time of the Law” to the “time of Christ.” The second century Church Father, Irenaeus, spoke of four covenants between humanity and God, and Augustine spoke of various 1000-year dispensations in history.<sup>727</sup>

Dispensationalism has undergone certain adaptations.<sup>728</sup> The original teaching, advanced by Darby and Scofield, is now called “classic dispensationalism.” In the 1960’s, some dispensationalists made modifications in the system and formed “revised dispensationalism.” In the 1990’s, still other developments took place resulting in “progressive dispensationalism.” We will investigate each in turn.

Classic dispensationalism works off the conviction that there exists two types of saved individuals: the earthly and the heavenly.<sup>729</sup> “Heavenly people” are those who, in their time, observed the requirements of their dispensation and, therefore, are worthy to participate in the resurrection from the dead and dwell eternally with God in heaven. The Church, to whom belongs the sixth dispensation, is part of this “heavenly throng.” The “earthly people” will live eternally on the new earth in immortal bodies following the culmination of the messianic kingdom. Their eternal dwelling will be the New Jerusalem. Concerning the dispensational approach to biblical interpretation (hermeneutics), the literal meaning of the text reveals God’s plan for His earthly people, whereas a typological approach shows us what He has planned for his heavenly people.<sup>730</sup>

Classic dispensationalism also teaches that the sixth dispensation was a “parenthetical dispensation.” This means that if Israel had accepted Jesus as Messiah, the fifth dispensation would have led directly into the seventh dispensation, that is, the messianic kingdom. So then, the sixth dispensation was “parenthetical” and came into existence due to Messiah’s rejection by His Old Testament people.

Classic dispensationalism also holds that the “Kingdom of God” differs from the “Kingdom of Heaven,” of which Matthew writes in his Gospel. The “Kingdom of God” is God’s personal reign over the lives of believers in Him in all dispensations. Matthew’s term “Kingdom of Heaven,” however, refers to God’s earthly reign over His people. All believers in all dispensations are participants in the Kingdom of God, but only Israel qualifies for the Kingdom of Heaven. It is thought that Jesus preached to the Jews of His day not the gospel of grace, but the gospel of the kingdom, that is, the invitation to inherit the messianic kingdom (the Kingdom of Heaven) through faith in Him. The gospel of grace was only first preached during Paul’s time. After the rapture of the Church, the gospel of the kingdom will again be preached.<sup>731</sup>

Concerning God’s covenants, the Sinaitic and Davidic covenants were made with Israel, yet debate exists about who participates in the new covenant spoken of in the Old Testament (i.e., Jeremiah 31).<sup>732</sup> Some claim that the new covenant applies only to Israel, while others theorize two “new covenants”: one for Israel and another for the Church. Still others hold that, although the new covenant is for Israel, it may typologically apply to the Church as well. As far as the Abrahamic covenant, dispensationalists assume that Abraham has two sets of offspring: physical (Israel) and spiritual (Church).

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<sup>724</sup>Bass, p. 100-109.

<sup>725</sup>Blaising, p. 111-117.

<sup>726</sup>It is worth mentioning that in these contexts, the term *οικονομία* (*oikonomia*) most likely means “administration” often in the sense of accomplishing one’s ministry.

<sup>727</sup>Bass feels that the “dispensations” suggested by the Church Fathers do not really correspond to Darby’s categories (Bass, p. 15-16).

<sup>728</sup>Blaising, p. 23.

<sup>729</sup>Ibid, p. 23-27.

<sup>730</sup>T. D. Ice claims that Darby and Scofield resorted at times to typological interpretation for the purpose of illustration (Ice T. D. Dispensational hermeneutics. – Willis W. R., Master J. R. Issues in dispensationalism. – Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1994. – C. 37).

<sup>731</sup>Bass, p. 30, 36.

<sup>732</sup>Blaising, p. 28.

“Revisional dispensationalism” suggests the following adaptations to the classic form.<sup>733</sup> First, God’s people are not separated into “heavenly” and “earthly” people. All believers share the same inheritance, whether in heaven, or on earth. However, the distinction between Israel and the Church is preserved – there are separate people of God, and He accomplishes His plans for them separately. Unlike classic dispensationalism, revisional dispensationalism rejects a typological/allegorical interpretation of Scripture. When the Old Testament talks about Israel, it means Israel alone.<sup>734</sup>

Revisionists also object to the claim made by some early dispensationalists, that during the fifth dispensation, salvation was obtained by keeping the Mosaic Law. All dispensationalists today believe that salvation has always come by grace through faith.<sup>735</sup> Walvoord states that the various dispensations propose “rules of life,” not “ways of salvation.”<sup>736</sup>

Furthermore, revisionists draw no distinction between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven. The terms are used interchangeably in Scripture. Instead, they propose different understandings of God’s kingdom. The typical view is that God has a “universal kingdom,” which concerns His sovereign position over all creation, and a “mediatorial kingdom,” which various individuals have administered in their day, like Abraham, Moses, or David. At present, God’s “mediatorial kingdom” is inoperative, but will be restored when Christ returns. Some revisionists, though, are ready to say that one can term God’s present rule over the Church as His “spiritual” or “hidden” kingdom, which, nonetheless, differs from His messianic reign through the coming Son of David.<sup>737</sup>

The final type of dispensationalism is “progressive dispensationalism.”<sup>738</sup> According to this view, each dispensation continues on and develops further in the next dispensation, that is, it “progresses.”<sup>739</sup> Additionally, progressive dispensationalists are open to more modern hermeneutical approaches and more ready to allow typological interpretation of the Old Testament.<sup>740</sup>

In progressive dispensationalism, the main character in God’s plan is Abraham, to whom God promised to bless not only his physical descendants, but also all nations through him (Gen 12:3). So then, the word of promise: “I will bless you” (Gen 12:2), which includes all the blessings of the new covenant, applies both to ethnic Israel and to the Church. The Old Testament prophets echo the hope of the Gentiles inclusion in the blessing of Abraham (Isa 49:6-8; 55:4-5). Therefore, believers in Jesus inherit the blessing of Abraham. The Church qualifies for these blessing due to their position in Christ, which includes their future participation, as Christ’ bride, in the millennial kingdom of Messiah.<sup>741</sup>

At the same time, the Church’s inheritance of Abraham’s blessing does not imply that God’s new covenant people have replaced His old covenant people. God’s Old Testament promises are fulfilled in the Church in an “inaugural” sense only. Their ultimate fulfillment belongs to Israel, the physical descendants of Abraham. By God’s grace, the Church is allowed to participate in the blessings that by rights belong to Israel.

Although progressive dispensationalism teaches that both Jews and Gentiles are equal members of Messiah’s kingdom, all dispensationalists of every variety agree that one must preserve the distinction

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<sup>733</sup>Ibid, p. 31-42.

<sup>734</sup>The only exception to this rule is that some feel that the new covenant promised to Israel in Jeremiah 31 typologically (and preliminarily) may be fulfilled in the Church.

<sup>735</sup>Bass, p. 34-35.

<sup>736</sup>Walvoord J. F. Biblical kingdoms compared and contrasted. – Willis W. R., Master J. R. Issues in dispensationalism. – Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1994. – P. 88.

<sup>737</sup>It is “hidden” because there was no revelation about it in the Old Testament. Fruchtenbaum A. G. Israel and the Church. – Willis W. R., Master J. R. Issues in dispensationalism. – Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1994. – P. 117.

<sup>738</sup>Blaising, p. 47-54, 125ff.

<sup>739</sup>Ibid, p. 47.

<sup>740</sup>Ibid, p. 36, 52.

<sup>741</sup>Johnson E. E. Prophetic fulfillment: The already and not yet // Willis W. R., Master J. R. Issues in dispensationalism. – Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1994. – P. 196.

between ethnic Jews and non-Jews. Before God, these two groups maintain their special status, and God's promises are fulfilled in them in different senses.

Progressive dispensationalism, then, differs radically from the previous two types, which consider each dispensation as a closed system to be examined separately. In fact, proponents of classic and revisional dispensationalism consider the "progressive" variety a distortion of true dispensationalism.<sup>742</sup> Unlike progressive dispensationalism, the more traditional views tend to reject any fulfillment of Old Testament promises in the Church, and feel that when New Testament authors cite Old Testament verses, it is simply for the purpose of comparison or illustration.<sup>743</sup>

The hottest dispute between progressive dispensationalism and the more traditional views, though, is the question of the Davidic covenant. Progressive dispensationalism teaches that Jesus is presently enthroned in heaven on the throne of David and rules in that capacity over the Church in anticipation of his future millennial reign on earth. Peter indicates this in his Pentecost sermon (Acts 2:34-36).

For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says: "The LORD said to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand, until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.'" Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ this Jesus whom you crucified.

Classic and revisionist dispensationalists insist that the Davidic kingdom is now on hold, to be resumed only at Jesus' second coming.<sup>744</sup> Jesus was announced the Messiah at His birth (Lk 2:11), but He does not fill that role until He comes again in glory. Progressive dispensationalists, though, do not differentiate the Davidic kingdom from the "spiritual" kingdom of Messiah. They teach a unity in God's kingdom, recognizing two aspects in it: spiritual and political, which come into force sequentially or progressively.

Dispensationalists of all types, though, insist that the New Testament never speaks of the Church as the "new Israel."<sup>745</sup> The term "Israel" always refers to the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. When, in Galatians 6:16, Paul speaks of the Church and the "Israel of God" separately, he thereby indicates their separate status before God. We see a separate listing of the two groups as well in 1 Corinthians 10:32: "Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God."

When, in Ephesians 2:15, Paul speaks of "one new man" in Christ, consisting of both Jews and Gentiles, he has in view believing Jews and believing Gentiles together in the Church. National Israel remains a separate entity and God's plan for it is accomplished separately. Similarly, Romans 2:25-29 and Romans 9:6 do not equate believing Gentiles with Jews. Paul is simply making the point that believing Jews differ from unbelieving Jews.

Furthermore, all dispensationalists affirm that God has temporarily suspended the accomplishment of His plan for Israel.<sup>746</sup> Jesus offered the kingdom to the Jews of His day through repentance, but the majority rejected it. Daniel also speaks of the suspension of God's plan for Israel in his prophecy about the 70 weeks, where the fulfillment of the final week awaits a far future date (Dan 9:24-27). God is nonetheless committed to fulfill His promises specifically to Israel, and will in time bring them to pass.

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<sup>742</sup>Ryrie C. Update on dispensationalism. – Willis W. R., Master J. R. Issues in dispensationalism. – Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1994. – P. 20.

<sup>743</sup>See Dyer C. H. Biblical meaning of "fulfillment." – Willis W. R., Master J. R. Issues in dispensationalism. – Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1994. – P. 51-74; Master J. R. The New Covenant // Willis W. R., Master J. R. Issues in dispensationalism. – Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1994. – P. 93-112; Hodges Z. C. A dispensational understanding of Acts 2 // Willis W. R., Master J. R. Issues in dispensationalism. – Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1994. – P. 167-182; Price J. R. Prophetic postponement in Daniel 9 and other texts // Willis W. R., Master J. R. Issues in dispensationalism. – Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1994. – P. 133-66.

<sup>744</sup>Ryrie, p. 22-23.

<sup>745</sup>See Fruchtenbaum, p. 118ff.

<sup>746</sup>See Price J. R. Prophetic postponement in Daniel 9 and other texts. – Willis W. R., Master J. R. Issues in dispensationalism. – Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1994. – P. 133-166.

We will conclude with further arguments in support of dispensationalism as a whole. First, God's covenant with Israel is eternal (Gen 13:15; 17:7; 2 Sam 7:16; 2 Kin 21:7). Second, Jesus predicted the fulfillment of the "the times of the Gentiles" (Lk 21:24). Third, Jesus foretold that Israel would someday cry out, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD" (Matt 23:39), i.e. Israel will acknowledge Jesus as Messiah. Moreover, Paul taught that the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable (Rom 11:29), which means that His promises to the Jews are still in force. In addition, Romans speaks of a massive Jewish conversion to Messiah during the last days (Rom 11:25-27).<sup>747</sup>

Dispensationalists also note that Jesus chose the term translated ἐκκλησία (*ecclesia*) to describe His Church. In the Septuagint, the word ἐκκλησία (*ecclesia*), as a rule, does not apply to Israel. If Jesus had meant that the Church would replace Israel, then one might expect to see it described by the term συναγωγή (*synagoge*) instead, which in the Septuagint denotes Israel. Finally, Jesus spoke of new wineskins for new wine (Mk 2:22), which again indicates the existence of two peoples of God: the old wineskins, i.e., Israel, and the new ones, i.e., the Church.

## **b. Evaluation of Dispensationalism**

One cannot dispute the claim that, according to Scripture, God will keep His covenant with the people of Israel and, in the end, lead them into His kingdom. It is unthinkable that after such a long and painful history with His Old Testament nation, God would now abandon them and renege on His covenant with Abraham. In addition, the idea of Israel's future restoration fully agrees with Paul's teaching in Romans 11. On that basis, it is fair to assume a future massive conversion of the Israeli nation to Messiah Jesus.

We may also comment that the more contemporary approaches to dispensationalism have made some needed corrections to the classic form. Based on Scripture, we may reject the mistaken distinction between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven, since in the Bible they are totally synonymous. Similarly, it is improper to divide God's people by the categories "heavenly" and "earthly" with different outcomes in eternity. We also applaud the rejection of the teaching that the fifth dispensation required salvation through the Mosaic Law. Also erroneous is the idea that God had to make various covenants because the previous ones failed. Based on our previous study, we can clearly see development in God's plan through the progression of covenants to a successful conclusion.

Dispensationalism also made a giant step forward when some began to acknowledge that the new covenant is now being fulfilled (at least in part) in the Church. Even a superficial understanding of Scripture is sufficient to see the implausibility of dispensationalism's earlier claim. Jesus clearly established the new covenant with His disciples at the Last Supper (Lk 22:20) and Paul calls himself a "minister of the new covenant" (2 Cor 3:6). One must also acknowledge that the prophecy of Joel 2:28-29 was fulfilled in the Church (Acts 2:16-21).

Progressive dispensationalism also correctly claims that Jesus Christ now reigns as Messiah, as was clearly proven earlier. In addition to what was said then, in Acts 15:14-18, James bases his claim that the Gentiles are now welcome in the Church on the fact that the "tabernacle of David" has been restored by Christ. It seems that, in the final analysis, progressive dispensationalism shares many features with the covenant theology variant "historical premillennialism" described earlier.

Yet, the dispensationalist system itself is subject to several criticisms. First, why coin a new term, i.e., "dispensation," to describe a biblical phenomenon that is otherwise clearly depicted in Scripture under the

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<sup>747</sup>Covenant theology in its classic form suggests another interpretation of Romans 11:25-27. The Greek term οὕτως (*outos*) in the beginning of verse 26 means "so," or "in this way." Therefore, the proper interpretation here is thought to be that the passage describes *in what way* all Israel will be saved – by the full number of the Gentiles coming to faith. Consequently, the word "Israel" here designates the Church.

term “covenant?” In fact, the division of the biblical material into “covenants” by some, and so-called “dispensations” by others, for the most part overlap.

We may also challenge the claim that during the millennial kingdom, the temple rituals will be reinstated, including animal sacrifices. We know that Jesus fulfilled the old covenant in its entirety, including the sacrificial system. The only passage of Scripture that may indeed support that theory is Ezekiel chapters 40-48. Yet, here we are dealing with a symbolic representation of the last days, expressed in apocalyptic form. It is improper to base an entire doctrine on such a passage without support from other didactic passages in the Bible.

Another weakness is preserving the distinction between Israel and the Church beyond the establishment of Messiah’s earthly kingdom. Both groups will reign with Christ, inherit all the promises of God, experience the resurrection from the dead, and live forever on the New Earth. Why, then, maintain this distinction? If God has already joined the Jews and Gentiles in one Body in Christ, then who has the right to divide them for the sake of consistency in a theological system?

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## Chapter 10: How Does the New Testament Understand the Old?

The abundance of Old Testament quotations found in the New Testament demonstrates the organic relationship between the testaments. In addition, Old Testament principles are carried over into the New, and Old Testament prophecies are fulfilled in it.

In the previous two chapters, we discussed how Old Testament law and promises apply to the Church. In this chapter, we will investigate how Old Testament quotations are handled in the New Testament. On first glance, it seems that in such citations, we observe changes in content and/or violations of the original Old Testament context. That is, we get the impression that New Testament authors assign a meaning to the text that the original authors never intended. We will also study the issue of typology, which we will define and discuss in the next section.

### A. Typology

#### 1. What is a “Type”?

A “type” is an Old Testament individual, object, event, or institute that represents or symbolizes another, more important individual, object, event, or institute appearing in the New Testament, or even later in the Old Testament.<sup>748</sup> The New Testament abounds with such examples, which confirms the appropriateness of this approach to interpretation. Let us suggest some examples.<sup>749</sup>

Adam is a “type” of Christ. In Adam, all people become heirs of sin and death, while in Jesus, all may obtain abundant life (Rom 5:12-21). This is why Jesus is named the “Last Adam” (1 Cor 15:45). In Hebrews chapter 7, Melchizedek serves as a type of Jesus, the great high priest. The Old Testament sacrificial system also points to Him (Heb 9-10). Jesus is both the sacrifice, and the priest who offers it. In Romans 2:29, Paul sees that circumcision symbolizes the elimination of humanity’s sinful nature in Christ.

Moreover, the author of Hebrews sees in the Sabbath a symbol of salvation by faith (Heb 4:1-10). The seventh day is God’s day of rest, which typifies receiving salvation not by works, but by faith. The Feast of Passover, during which Israel recalls its deliverance from Egypt, relates to redemption through Jesus, the Lamb of God (1 Cor 5:7-8; cf. Jn 1:29; 1 Pet 1:19). In John 3:14, Jesus speaks of the serpent Moses raised on a staff as a symbol of His death for sins. Paul parallels marriage relationships with Christ’s relationship with the Church (Eph 5:31-32). The temple may represent either Christ (Mk 14:58; Jn 2:19-22), or the Church (1 Pet 2:5; 1 Cor 3:16). Israel is also a type of the Church (1 Pet 2:9). In John’s Gospel, chapter 6, manna is a type of Christ, the “living bread.” In Luke 11:29-30, Jonah’s experience with the great fish parallels Jesus’ passion events.

Seeing the widespread use of types in the Bible, we are justified in identifying still other Old Testament types not specifically identified as such in the New Testament. For example, the “sacrifice of Isaac” (Gen 22) closely parallels the sacrifice of Christ, and many feel that it serves typologically in that role. Additionally, not only the Passover lamb, but also the entire episode of Israel’s exodus from Egypt represents salvation in Jesus. In addition, we note sufficient overlap between the histories of Joseph and Jesus to consider the former a type of the latter.

There are actually two types of typology. The first, “horizontal typology,” is when a past person/event/etc. symbolizes a future one. This is the type we are focusing on in this chapter. The second is “vertical typology,”

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<sup>748</sup>Fritsch C. T. *Biblical typology* // *Bibliotheca Sacra*. 1946-1947. 103. P. 293; 104. P. 92, 214.

<sup>749</sup>See Fritsch, 104, p. 90-92, 97-98, 218-225; Kostenberger A. J. *The mystery of Christ and the Church: Head and Body, “one flesh”* // *Trinity Journal*. 1991. 12. P. 88; Ellis E. E. *The New Testament’s use of the Old Testament* // Corley B., Lemke S. Lovejoy G. *Biblical hermeneutics*. – Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1996. – P. 57; Bray G. *Biblical interpretation, past and present*. – Downers Grove: IL: Intervarsity Press: 1996. – P. 74.

where an earthly phenomenon represents a heavenly one. A clear example is Hebrews 8:5, where the earthly tabernacle reflects the heavenly one.

## 2. Properties of a Type

How can one recognize a genuine example of typology in the Scriptures? What characterizes a “type?” Again, we repeat that a type is an Old Testament **individual, object, event, or institute** that represents or symbolizes another, more important individual, object, event, or institute appearing in the New Testament, or even later in the Old Testament. The symbolism is found not in the words in the text, but in the object, person or event itself, described by those words.

Between a genuine type and its fulfillment (or “antitype”), we will likely see a **parallel result**. This means that the two phenomenon share a common goal or effect. For example, the Old Testament sacrificial system provided forgiveness of sins. At the same time, it served as a type of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Clearly, we see a parallel result in the effect of both phenomena – the forgiveness of sins.<sup>750</sup> Another example: in Numbers 21:9, Moses made a bronze serpent, upon whom snake-bitten victims could gaze to receive healing. In John 3:14, Jesus referred to Himself as the fulfillment of that type. In both cases, healing is provided.<sup>751</sup>

Another characteristic of a genuine type is the presence of many **points of correspondence** between it and its antitype, that is, similar features. For example, much correspondence exists between Joseph and Jesus. Both were rejected by their kindred, experienced “resurrection” of a sort, saved their people – either from hunger or from sin – and were especially beloved by their “fathers.” This supports recognizing of Joseph a type of Christ.

Next, one would like to see in a genuine type **God’s intentionality**, that is, some indication that God purposely arranged the life situation of the type so that it would reflect the future antitype. For example, God arranged all the details of the Passover feast, knowing that it would someday represent the sacrifice of the Lamb of God for the sins of the world. A type is not a chance occurrence, but a divinely appointed one. Finally, we expect to see the fulfillment of a type within the **biblical context** – either in Old or New Testament.

The following cautions apply, however, to recognizing types in the Bible. First, unlike the opinion of Medieval theologians, we do not expect to see symbols in every passage of Scripture. In fact, they are relatively rare to find. Second, not all the elements of the type symbolically relate to the antitype. For example, if we are ready to acknowledge Joseph as a type of Christ, we recognize that not all the features of Joseph’s life apply to Jesus. The fact that Joseph had 11 brothers likely means nothing in relation to Christ. Joseph’s multi-colored tunic also does not apply to Jesus, nor does his two children.

Correspondingly, it is improper to seek additional information about the antitype by comparing it with the type, besides that which is already revealed in Scripture about the antitype itself. As noted above, additional details on the life of Joseph give us no deeper insight about the life of Jesus besides what the New Testament reveals. The parallels between Joseph and Jesus simply serve as a prophetic foretelling of the One who was to come.

## 3. Comparison of Types with Other Biblical Phenomena

In order to sharpen our understanding of biblical types, we will compare and contrast them to similar biblical phenomena, namely allegories, prophecy, biblical principles, and illustrations.

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<sup>750</sup>Fritsch, 104, p. 214-215.

<sup>751</sup>George T. Galatians // Dockery D. The New American commentary. – Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994. – Electronic ed. Logos Library System, 2001. – P. 339.



An allegory is a fabricated history, written in order to teach a moral lesson or theological truth.<sup>752</sup> Well known examples are Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:30-37), and Nathan's parable to David after his sin with Bathsheba (2 Sam 12:1-15). Allegory differs from typology in that allegory is non-historical, whereas typology concerns real historical persons or things.

In comparing typology with prophecy (in the sense of future prediction), we note that from the moment a prophecy is uttered, a fulfillment is expected. That is, from the very start, we know that we are dealing with a future event. For example, in Isaiah 2:2, we encounter a prophecy about the future glory of Jerusalem: "Now it will come about that in the last days the mountain of the house of the LORD will be established as the chief of the mountains." In the case of a type, however, we do not note the fulfillment until after the fact. When the biblical author wrote his narrative, he was not aware at that time that items in his story symbolized future people or events. Only after the antitype appears do we see its symbolic nature.<sup>753</sup>

We sometimes encounter a mixture of prophecy and typology, which is termed "typological interpretation of prophecy." This means that a prophetic utterance may contain a type. In Amos 9:11, for example, we read, "In that day I will raise up the fallen booth of David, and wall up its breaches; I will also raise up its ruins and rebuild it as in the days of old." The phrase "booth of David" in the original context refers to the coming messianic kingdom. Yet, in Acts 15:14-19, James applies these words to the Church of his day. Thus, for James, these prophetic words have typological significance.

Bock rightly clarifies that, in spite of the concept "typological interpretation of prophecy," we cannot rule out another fulfillment of the given prophecy in a literal sense. Amos 9:11, then, likely refers both to the Church and to the millennial kingdom of Messiah. There may also be instances when the typological fulfillment of a prophecy is the primary one, as in the case of enmity between the serpent and the seed of Eve, typologically fulfilled in Jesus' victory over Satan.

How does typology differ from the application of biblical principles? A biblical principle is a universal rule that applies to all. We encounter one in Romans 10:11: "For the Scripture says, 'Whoever believes in him will not be disappointed.'" Another is in 2 Corinthians 13:1: "This is the third time I am coming to you. 'Every fact is to be confirmed by the testimony of two or three witnesses.'" A biblical principle is usually expressed in a command, promise, or example. A type, however, is a person, thing, event or institute. Additionally, a type typically has only one fulfillment, whereas a principle has multiple applications.

We will employ Abraham as an example. Some may regard Abraham as a type of the believer in Jesus, since they are both justified by faith. We prefer, though, to consider Abraham's history as an example of the biblical principle of salvation by faith. This principle applies both to Abraham, when he believed the promise of God, and to the Christian, who puts his/her trust in the promise of salvation in Christ.

Distinguishing typology from illustration can be difficult. Illustration is recalling a similar situation from the past and comparing it to the question at hand. Jude, for example, mentions Cain, Balaam, and Korah to illustrate the ungodly behavior of people of his day (Jude 11). Yet, this does not qualify as typology, since it lacks God's intentionality. In typology, God specifically arranges the situation to serve as a symbol of the future, whereas illustration represents a random correspondence between one set of items and another. 2 Pet 2:1-5 serves as another illustration of illustration:

But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. Many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; and in {their} greed they will exploit you with false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep. For if God did not spare angels when they

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<sup>752</sup>Johnson R. M. Systematic theology is the hermeneutic // Conservative Theological Journal. 1997. 1. P. 226; Swanson J. New Nave's topical textbook. – Electronic edition. Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1994.

<sup>753</sup>Fritsch, 104, p. 214.

sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment; and did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly.

It is highly unlikely that God arranged beforehand that people living at Noah's time would sin in order to symbolize sinful individuals during Peter's time. Peter is simply making a comparison for the sake of illustration.

Another difference between illustration and typology is that one may employ a type as proof in an argument. For example, in Galatians chapter 4, Paul points out the symbolic significance of Abraham's children: Isaac and Ishmael. He uses this history to prove that the Church is God's people. An illustration, though, proves nothing, but simply brings clarity to the point in question.

## **B. Quotation of Old Testament Texts**

When we compare Old Testament passages with quotations of them in the New Testament, we often encounter differences in content. In Appendix F, we cite and detail numerous examples of this phenomenon. In general, though, the following items may explain most, if not all, of these cases.<sup>754</sup>

1. The New Testament variant may be the personal translation of the biblical writer from Hebrew or Aramaic to Greek.
2. The New Testament author may have altered the copy of the Septuagint he was using to better conform it to the original Hebrew.
3. The New Testament author may have combined Old Testament quotations in his citation.
4. The New Testament author may have used only part of an Old Testament text.
5. The New Testament author may have not intended to quote the Old Testament verbatim, but only to communicate the sense of the text in a paraphrase.
6. The New Testament author may have made grammatical or morphological changes so that the quotation would grammatically agree with his text.
7. The New Testament author may have altered the Old Testament text in an attempt to apply it to his situation or audience.
8. The New Testament writer may be bringing out an idea implied in the Old Testament text.
9. The New Testament writer may have imprecisely quoted the Old Testament text from memory.
10. Sometimes the exact limits of the quoted text is unclear. Possibly, what appears to be part of the quotation is actually the words of the New Testament author.
11. Possibly, the New Testament author utilized versions of the Hebrew text or Septuagint that we have no access to today. For example, in Qumran, Hebrew texts were discovered that likely served as the basis for the Septuagint, yet they differed from it in some ways.<sup>755</sup> Moreover, the Hebrew text was standardized only in the first century AD. Before then, other Hebrew texts may have been in circulation.<sup>756</sup>
12. The New Testament text itself may have undergone alteration in the course of transmission and copying, which would explain changes in the Old Testament quotations it contains.

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<sup>754</sup>McKnight S. *Introducing New Testament interpretation, guides to New Testament exegesis*. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1989. – V. 1. – P. 166, 170.

<sup>755</sup>Wenham J. W. *Christ and the Bible*. – Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1972. – P. 97.

<sup>756</sup>Longenecker R. N. *Biblical exegesis in the apostolic period*. – 2nd ed. – Grand Rapids, MI; Vancouver: Eerdmans; Regent College Pub, 1999. – P. 127.

13. Not everyone who quotes the Old Testament in the New is an inspired author (like Stephen in Acts 7). Sometimes even unbelievers quote the Old Testament. Errors of this type pose no threat to the doctrine of inspiration.
14. New Testament authors may not actually be intending a quotation, but simply borrowing well known phrases to express their own thoughts.<sup>757</sup>

In light of the above, we can hardly require from New Testament writers a strict correspondence of Old Testament texts with the quotations of them we possess in our present New Testament. Bahnsen comments, "Methods of quotation were not as precise in that age as they are today, and there is no reason why New Testament citations had to be verbally exact... New Testament quotations of the Old Testament need only embody an accuracy that suits the writer's purpose."<sup>758</sup>

Other interpreters, however, speak not so much of imprecision in transmission of quotations, as of intentional alteration of texts by New Testament authors. They ascribe to New Testament writers the liberty to alter the content of quotations to suit their own purposes. Marshall writes, "They feel quite free to make minor alterations that bring out the significance of the original more fully, or are purely stylistic, or are necessitated by the context."<sup>759</sup> In the words of Silva, "It is clear that there is nothing mechanical about (Paul's) method, for he feels no compulsion to quote the Septuagint verbatim."<sup>760</sup> Still others theorize that the New Testaments authors did not have authority to alter the Old Testament text, but the Holy Spirit who inspired them did. In this vein, Chafer claims,

In every case of quotation from the Old Testament in the New Testament it should be remembered that the Holy Spirit is the Author of both Testaments and that it is wholly within the province of an author, when quoting from his own writings, to change or restate anything he has written before.<sup>761</sup>

Lutheran theologian Francis Pieper even claims that emendation of Old Testament texts by New Testament authors actually proves that the Spirit inspired them to do it. They would not have dared to so treat the Holy Text otherwise.<sup>762</sup>

Our response to this claim is as follows. Introducing "minor alterations" into the Old Testament text for stylistic or contextual reasons is totally understandable. Yet, if the New Testament authors made significant alterations in the text's contents by their own spiritual authority or under the inspiration of the Spirit, they would thereby be defeating their own purpose in using the citations. They did not employ citations to underscore their own authority or bring new revelation from the Spirit, but to confirm their teaching by appealing to *another* authoritative source – the Old Testament. Therefore, it would be in their best interest to cite the quotation as literally as possible. Luther expressed a healthier attitude toward this question:

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<sup>757</sup>Bock, p. 121. Dodd feels that at times we simply are dealing with a rhetorical device or a literary allusion (Dodd C. H. *The Old Testament in the New*. – Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1963. – P. 4).

<sup>758</sup>Bahnsen G. *The Inerrancy of the autograph* // Geisler N. *Inerrancy*. – Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1980. – P. 171. Also see Nicole R. R. *The nature of inerrancy* // Nicole R. R., Michaels J. R. *Inerrancy and common sense*. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1980. – P. 84.

<sup>759</sup>Marshall I. H. *Acts* // Beale G. K., Carson D. A. *Commentary on the New Testament use of the Old Testament*. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2007. – P. 535.

<sup>760</sup>Silva M. *Galatians* // Beale G. K., Carson D. A. *Commentary on the New Testament use of the Old Testament*. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2007. – P. 797. A similar view in Beale G. K. *Handbook on the New Testament use of the Old Testament*. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2012. – P. 30.

<sup>761</sup>Chafer L. S. *Systematic theology*. – Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1993. T. 1. – C. 86. Also see Nicole R. A. *The Old Testament quotations in the New Testament with reference to the doctrine of plenary inspiration* // Youngblood R. *Evangelicals and inerrancy*. – Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1984. – P. 8; Shedd W. G. T. *Dogmatic theology* // Ed. Gomes A. W. – 3rd ed. – Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Pub, 2003. – P. 108.

<sup>762</sup>Pieper F. *Christian dogmatics*. – St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1953. – V. 1. – P. 250-251.

One must know that the evangelists are not concerned about citing every last word of the prophets; they were satisfied if they gave the same sense and showed the fulfillment.... But it is all done without prejudice to the sense and the meaning.<sup>763</sup>

We also note that New Testament authors were influenced in their choice of quotations by the type of text they preferred to employ. For example, over half of Paul's Old Testament quotations are from the Septuagint. We observe this tendency in other New Testament writers as well. This makes perfect sense in the light of the fact that most of the New Testament books were written to a primarily Greek speaking audience.

We affirm the position of Nicole: "A conscientious scholar writing nowadays in a certain language will use for his quotations from foreign sources the translation that his readers generally use."<sup>764</sup> Nicole adds the helpful thought that even if in a certain passage the Septuagint contained an error, for the sake of his readers, the New Testament author would have used it without correction, provided that the error did not interfere with the point he was trying to make.<sup>765</sup>

Also notable is that most Old Testament quotations attributed to Jesus come from the Greek text, which may indicate that the Early Church utilized a written collection of Jesus' words, translated into Greek. On the other hand, when Matthew quotes the Old Testament (aside from quotations attributed to Jesus), he employs the Hebrew version. Clearly, this is because he wrote not for Greeks, but for Jews.

In not a few cases, a New Testament author will quote the Septuagint, even when it differs from the Hebrew text.<sup>766</sup> Archer and Chirichingno have assembled the following data on quotations corresponding either to the Masoretic (Hebrew) Text, or to the Septuagint:<sup>767</sup>

- Quotations identical to the Septuagint (or nearly so) when the Septuagint is a faithful rendering of the Masoretic text: 268 cases.
- Quotations identical to the Septuagint (or nearly so) when the Septuagint is close to the Hebrew but without distorting its meaning: 50 cases.
- Quotations closer to the Masoretic text than to the Septuagint: 33 cases.
- Quotations identical to the Septuagint (or nearly so) when it differs significantly from the Masoretic text: 22 cases.
- Quotations that differ from both the Septuagint and the Masoretic text: 13 cases.

They add the following commentary: "As we have studied the 13 passages belonging to (the final) category, in no instance have we found an insoluble contradiction or discrepancy, though many cases involved bringing out the inner meaning or prophetic implication of the Old Testament verse by some kind of paraphrase."<sup>768</sup> Jerome also comments on this question, claiming that quotations taken from the Septuagint always correspond, at least in a general sense, to the Hebrew text.

Nonetheless, there are instances where the quotation chosen from the Septuagint better suits the argument of the author than the Hebrew variant, which gives the impression that the author preferred the

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<sup>763</sup>Ibid, p. 248.

<sup>764</sup>Nicole, *The Old Testament quotations in the New Testament*, p. 2.

<sup>765</sup>According to David Fuller, John Calvin also so thought (Fuller D. P. *The nature of biblical inerrancy* // *Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation*. 1972. 24. P. 49).

<sup>766</sup>For example: Paul: Gal 3:13 (Deut 21:23); Rom 15:12 (Isa 11:10); Eph 6:2-3 (Ex 20:12); Peter: 1 Pet 5:5 (Prov 3:34); 1 Pet 1:24-25 (Isa 40:6-8); 1 Pet 4:18 (Prov 11:31); Hebrews: Heb 1:6 (Ps 97:7); Heb 3:7-11 (Ps 95:7-11); Heb 11:21 (Gen 47:31); James: Jam 4:6 (Prov 3:34). On the other hand, sometimes the Hebrew Masoretic text is quoted when it differs from the Septuagint (see Appendix F).

<sup>767</sup>Archer G. L., Chirichingno G. *Old Testament quotations in the New Testament*. – Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1983. – P. xxv – xxvii.

<sup>768</sup>Ibid, p. xxxii.

Septuagint for that very reason.<sup>769</sup> Douglas Moo comments that using the most convenient text was a common rabbinic practice.<sup>770</sup> F. F. Bruce concludes, “It looks at times as if the New Testament writers enjoyed liberty to select a form of Old Testament text which promoted their immediate purpose in quoting it.”<sup>771</sup> Beale agrees that sometimes the Septuagint variant better enabled the New Testament author to show the quotation’s fulfillment in Christ.<sup>772</sup>

On the other hand, some commentators insist that the New Testament writers chose their preferred text type under the direction of the Holy Spirit. In Pinnock’s opinion, they were directed by the Spirit to choose that text type which best of all communicated the “divine meaning,” whether that was the Hebrew text or the Septuagint.<sup>773</sup> Strong claims, “Where an apparently false translation is quoted from the Septuagint, the sanction of inspiration is given to it.”<sup>774</sup>

However, this explanation runs up against the same problem that we cautioned of earlier. The New Testament writers do not cite Old Testament texts in order to introduce a new revelation from the Spirit, but rather to confirm the truth of their teaching by appealing to *another* authoritative source – the Old Testament. Yet, we cannot rule out that Jesus and the New Testament writers employed the best Old Testament text available to them at that time, which sometimes corresponds to our current Hebrew text, and sometimes to our current Septuagint. We cannot confirm exactly which texts they used in the first century.

### C. Quotations and the Old Testament Context

Another difficulty encountered in connection with Old Testament usage in the New Testament concerns an apparent lack of respect by New Testament authors for the original context from which their quotations were taken. They often seem to attribute to the Old Testament text a meaning foreign to the intended meaning of the original author. Commentators offer several explanations for this phenomenon.

#### 1. *Sensus plenior*

*Sensus plenior* is a Latin expression translated “additional meaning.” According to this theory, God enriched the text with a meaning unknown to the original author. This supposedly explains why a New Testament usage of an Old Testament text does not always correspond to its meaning in the original context. In these cases, the New Testament author employed this “additional meaning.” The *sensus plenior* theory acknowledges two authors of Scripture: the divine and the human. Consequently, the human author may not have fully understood, as Preus puts it, the “full divine implication of all his words.”<sup>775</sup>

The experience of the Old Testament prophets may be key here. In 1 Peter 1:11, the prophets sought “to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of

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<sup>769</sup>For example: (1) in Mark 7:6-7 the quotation of Isa 29:13 comes from the Septuagint, where the word μάτην (*maten* = in vain) is absent in the Hebrew; (2) Matt 21:16 contains a quote from Ps 8:2, where the word αἶνον (*ainon* = praise) fits Matthew’s context better than the Hebrew תִּזְכָּר (*az* = strength); (3) in Luke 4:18, the phrase τυφλοῖς ἀνάβλεψιν (recovery of sight to the blind) comes from the Septuagint of Isaiah 61:1 and better describes the ministry of Jesus than the Hebrew “freedom to prisoners.” See Longenecker, p. 45-46. Also, examine the following examples in Appendix F: Matt 3:3; Acts 2:25-31; Acts 15:16-17; Rom 2:24; Rom 11:26-27; Eph 4:26; Heb 1:6; Heb 1:7; Heb 2:6-8; Heb 10:5-7.

<sup>770</sup>Moo D. The problem of *sensus plenior* // Carson D. A., Woodbridge J. D. Hermeneutics, authority and canon. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1986. – P. 192.

<sup>771</sup>Bruce F. F. The canon of Scripture. – Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1988. – P. 285.

<sup>772</sup>Beale, Handbook, p. 89.

<sup>773</sup>Pinnock C. H. Biblical revelation: The foundation of Christian theology. – Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1971. – P. 83.

<sup>774</sup>Strong A. H. Systematic theology. – Philadelphia, PA: American Baptist Publication Society, 1907. – P. 234.

<sup>775</sup>Preus R. Notes on the inerrancy of Scripture // Youngblood R. Evangelicals and inerrancy. – Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1984. – P. 100.

Christ and the glories to follow.” Did they know that they had been speaking prophetically of Messiah, or did God alone know?

The Greek text of the phrase εἰς τίνα ἢ ποῖον καιρὸν (“what person or time”) can be interpreted two ways. The pronoun τίνα (*tina*) may be understood as a substantive pronoun. The translation would then be, “What person or what time.” If, however, this is an attribute pronoun, the translation would read, “What time or what kind of time.” According to the first variant, the prophets may not have known they were speaking of Messiah. In the second, they knew of Him, but simply did not know the time of His coming.<sup>776</sup> Greek grammar will permit either option.

Daniel 12:8 is a key passage as well: “As for me, I heard but could not understand; so I said, ‘My lord, what {will be} the outcome of these {events?}.’” Adherents of *sensus plenior* feel that Daniel did not understand the vision he received from the Lord. Therefore, the angel replied, “Go {your way,} Daniel, for {these} words are concealed and sealed up until the end time.” Others feel, however, that Daniel understood the essence of the vision, but sought more detail on its fulfillment. The vision was “sealed up” not in the sense of a mystery, but in the sense of its inevitable fulfillment. Daniel 8:27 is explained in a similar way.<sup>777</sup> Nevertheless, in these cases, it is more likely that Daniel, in fact, did not understand.

In the case of prophecy, then, we must allow that in most cases, the prophets did not fully know of what they were speaking. As Poythress comments, when prophets proclaim, “Thus says the LORD,” they thereby indicate that the divine author is now speaking, whose authorial intent does not need, in this case, to correspond to the human author’s intent.<sup>778</sup> It logically follows that the prophets did not understand all the consequences or ramifications of their predictions. Even in 1 Peter 1:12, we observe that their prophecies related not just to present circumstances (if at all), but to future ones: “It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you.”<sup>779</sup>

Regarding authors of the psalms, wisdom literature or biblical narrative, it is difficult to demonstrate that they were aware that their writings applied beyond their own time and typologically applied to future realities as well. Yet, Poythress argues that if the biblical writers (in any genre) were aware that they wrote Holy Scripture under the Spirit’s inspiration, then they would have expected their readers to seek in their text not only the human author’s intent, but also the “additional meaning” inserted there by the Spirit.<sup>780</sup> Whether or not the biblical authors were always aware of the inspired nature of their work, however, is an open question.

Chafer and Hodge also express doubt that the biblical writers understood all the ramifications of their sayings. Chafer writes, “Moses could hardly have known the typical significance latent in the history of Adam, Enoch, Abraham, Isaac, and Joseph, or of the typology of Christ hidden in his description of the tabernacle.”<sup>781</sup> Hodge adds,

When David said God had put “all things” under the feet of man, he probably little thought that “all things” meant the whole universe (Heb. 2:8). And Moses, when he recorded the promise that childless Abraham was to be the father “of many nations,” little thought that it meant the whole world (Rom. 4:13).<sup>782</sup>

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<sup>776</sup>Riggs J. R. The “fuller meaning” of Scripture: A hermeneutical question for evangelicals // *Grace Theological Journal*. 1986. 7. P. 224-225. Kaiser holds to the final view (Kaiser W. C. Jr. *The uses of the Old Testament in the New*. – Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1985. – P. 20-21).

<sup>777</sup>Riggs, p. 225.

<sup>778</sup>Poythress V. S. What does God say through human authors? // Conn H. M. *Inerrancy and hermeneutic: A tradition, a challenge, a debate*. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1988. – P. 84-86.

<sup>779</sup>Also noted in Compton J. M. *Shared intentions? Reflections on inspiration and interpretation in light of Scripture’s dual authorship* // *Themelios* 2008. 33. P. 27.

<sup>780</sup>Poythress, p. 98.

<sup>781</sup>Chafer, v. 1, p. 68.

<sup>782</sup>Hodge C. *Systematic theology*. – Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1997. – V. 1. – P. 165-166.

How, then, did the New Testament writers uncover this “additional meaning?” Adherents of *sensus plenior* claim that God revealed it to them by the Holy Spirit. The following passages, in fact, testify to the work of the Spirit in the lives of the authors of the New Testament: Matt 13:11 (Mk 4:11); Matt 16:17; 1 Cor 2:6-16; 2 Cor 3:14-16; Eph 3:3-10.<sup>783</sup> Franz Pieper also supports this view. He writes,

It can also be proved *a posteriori*, in the light of the New Testament, that the intended sense of the Old Testament text is none other than the one expressed in the New Testament.... the same Spirit of Christ who spoke through the Old Testament Prophets also testified through the Evangelists and Apostles. And this testimony naturally included the explanation of the Old Testament passages.”<sup>784</sup>

Finally, some commentators assure us that the intention of the divine author and the human author, nonetheless, are interconnected. As Poythress states, “We cannot simply ignore the human author and try to concentrate only on what God is saying.”<sup>785</sup>

On the other hand, an obvious weakness in the system *sensus plenior* is that it violates the fundamental principle for interpreting any text – authorial intent, that is, the meaning the human author intended to communicate in his text. Cotterell cautions that if the text’s meaning is not based on authorial intent, then we cannot discover what the text is referring to. In addition, if the grammatico-historical method cannot provide us with the full meaning of the text, then it loses its pride of place as our guide for interpreting Scripture.<sup>786</sup>

Riggs offers the following criticism of *sensus plenior*. If the grammatico-historical method cannot give us the full meaning of an Old Testament text, then how can we rule out that New Testament texts may have additional meaning as well?<sup>787</sup> In other words, what prevents us from applying the principle of *sensus plenior* to New Testament texts as well?

Although we are suspicious of the system *sensus plenior* in general, we do acknowledge, as was stated above, that the prophets likely did not fully understand the significance of their prophecies. Yet, we hesitate to equate that with *sensus plenior*, since in the case of prophecy, the meaning is determined entirely by the intent of the divine author. In prophecy, the human author contributes nothing to the meaning of the text – he merely passes on the message received from God. So then, we deny the existence of an “additional meaning,” i.e., *sensus plenior*. As far as typology goes, we acknowledge that the human author was likely unaware of its presence, but we would not consider this a feature of *sensus plenior* either, but will offer a better explanation of that phenomenon later in this chapter.

## 2. Canonical Interpretation of Scripture

Some suggest another approach for discovering the “additional meaning” in Scripture. One may uncover the “fuller” meaning of an Old Testament text when it is interpreted in the light of New Testament revelation, that is, in the light of the entire biblical canon.<sup>788</sup> This method is called the “canonical interpretation of Scripture.” We discover this additional meaning, then, in the New Testament writings.

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<sup>783</sup>Ellis, p. 57.

<sup>784</sup>Pieper, v. 1, p. 247, 249. Strong adds the thought that the same Spirit who inspired the Old Testament authors could create a new meaning for the words He previously gave to them (Strong, p. 234). Yet, we refuted this idea earlier.

<sup>785</sup>Poythress, p. 83.

<sup>786</sup>Cotterell P., Turner M. Linguistics and Biblical interpretation. – Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1989. – P. 67. Yet, here we must make the qualification that the grammatico-historical method would still be valuable in determining the literal meaning of the text. It would simply not be helpful to indicate the *sensus plenior*. One must also recall, as was stated above, that the additional meaning is not foreign to the literal one, but the former is derived from the latter.

<sup>787</sup>Riggs, p. 227.

<sup>788</sup>See Scalise C. J. From Scripture to theology. – Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1996. – P. 63.

Dyck offers the following description of this approach: “The canonical approach, at least as I wish to define it, assumes that a text must be interpreted both in relation to its own immediate historical world and to the final shape of the canon.”<sup>789</sup> In the words of Beale, “OT passages can be understood more deeply in the light of the developing revelation of later parts of the OT and especially of the NT.”<sup>790</sup>

According to the “canonical interpretation of Scripture,” the text is “pregnant” with this additional meaning, which is “birthed” or revealed through examination of the entire canon.<sup>791</sup> At the same time, the additional meaning derives from the literal meaning and is closely related to it.<sup>792</sup>

Bock feels that as God progressively reveals His plan, the Old Testament text takes on new referents, of which the original author was unaware.<sup>793</sup> For example, in Acts 4:25-27, the disciples, in speaking of opposition by the Jewish leaders, cite Psalm 2, which concerns opposition by the Gentiles to God and His Anointed Messiah. So then, the words “nations” and “peoples” obtain a new referent – unbelieving Jews. In light of developments in God’s plan, the enemies of Messiah are now the leaders of Israel. Moreover, in Genesis 3:15, we read of the serpent and the seed of the woman, which in the canonical context, refer to Satan and Christ. Psalms 22 and 69, which describe the psalmist’s afflictions, precisely correspond to the crucifixion of Jesus (see Ps 22:1, 7, 18; 69:21).<sup>794</sup> The new referent in these psalms, then, is Jesus Christ.

Other examples are suggested. In Deuteronomy 30:12-14, Moses writes that one does not have to descend to Hades to hear and observe the Law. Paul, however, relates this passage to the gospel. In the canonical context, the words “commandment” and “word” refer not to the Law of Moses, but to the gospel of Christ. Moreover, in 2 Cor 6:16-17, we see a quote from Lev 26:12. In the Old Testament passage, God promises to walk “among His people,” i.e., “Israel.” Yet in 2 Cor 6:16-17, “God’s people” are the Church. Besides this, 2 Sam 7:14 speaks of blessing on the offspring of David, yet in 2 Corinthians 6:18, the recipients of that blessing are those who are “in Christ.” In all these instances, Bock feels that this is not simply a new application of the text, but an actual change of referents.

Bock also argues that, just as a story is not finished until the final chapter is written, the meaning of a text is not determined until we examine the last canonical book. The biblical text is also compared to a seed. The seed contains potential that does not appear until it germinates. In a similar way, the “fuller” meaning of Scripture becomes apparent only upon examination of the whole Bible.<sup>795</sup>

In defense of this theory, Poythress argues that, from God’s point of view, we may view the Bible as one book. In that light, it becomes clear that the divine author progressively reveals His plan and expects that the readers will interpret the earlier passages in light of the later ones: “God intended from the beginning that his later words should build on and enrich earlier words, so that in some sense the whole of the Bible represents one long, complex process of communication from one author.”<sup>796</sup> Furthermore, he writes that when New Testament authors utilize an Old Testament text:

They are interested in showing how Old Testament passages apply to the church and to their present situation. Hence, when they discuss an Old Testament text, they consider it in the light of the rest of the Old Testament, the events of salvation that God has accomplished in Christ, and the teachings of

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<sup>789</sup>Dyck E. Canon as context for interpretation // Dyck E. The act of Bible reading. – Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1996. – P. 37.

<sup>790</sup>Beale, Handbook, p. 27.

<sup>791</sup>Moo, p. 206.

<sup>792</sup>Lasor W. S. The sensus plenior and Biblical interpretation // McKim D. A guide to contemporary hermeneutics. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986. – P. 63-64; Moo, p. 201.

<sup>793</sup>Bock, p. 114-117, 132-147.

<sup>794</sup>Noted in Riggs, p. 218.

<sup>795</sup>Noted in Lasor, Sensus plenior, p. 61.

<sup>796</sup>Poythress, p. 91.



Jesus himself.... Hence, what they say using an Old Testament passage may not always be based on the text alone but may exploit relations that the text has with this greater context.<sup>797</sup>

Another variant of this theory states that in the course of progressive revelation, a text does not obtain new referents, but simply “expands” its original meaning in the light of new information revealed later in the canon. For example, when we look at the history of Abraham, that his “faith was reckoned to him as righteousness” (Gen 15:6), we see in the light of the canon the expanded meaning of this text – that it teaches justification by faith. Paul employed this very understanding for his arguments in Romans chapter 4 and Galatians chapter 3.

Similarly, for Raymond and others, examining the canon reveals connections between texts that the biblical authors could not have anticipated.<sup>798</sup> Likewise, Vanhoozer speaks of a “thin” and “thick” interpretation of a text. The “thin” interpretation is discovered by means of the grammatico-historical method. The “thick” interpretation captures the “expanded” meaning of the text revealed by examination of the canon.<sup>799</sup>

In evaluation of this approach, we again encounter a violation of the principle of authorial intent, which is necessary for maintaining stability in the meaning of a text. Hirsch advises us to separate the *meaning* of a text from its *significance*. The meaning does not alter, but its significance may change in different situations, including application of the text later in the biblical canon. So then, we must insist on one, stable meaning, determined by authorial intent, and multiple applications (significances) of the text. In fact, the examples of contextual interpretation cited above can be easily understood not as new textual meaning, but as new applications of the text.

Douglas Moo notes that the Bible indicates that Old Testament writers sometimes, in fact, understood the prophetic or “canonical” significance of their writings. For example, it was written of David that “because he was a prophet ... he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ” (Acts 2:30-31). Likewise, Abraham “saw the day” of Christ and “rejoiced” (Jn 8:56). In addition, Jesus expected the Jewish religious leaders to understand the nature of His mission on the basis of Old Testament prophecy (Jn 3:10).<sup>800</sup> We also note the case where misunderstandings among the Jews were occasioned by a lack of attention to Scripture (Mk 12:10; Matt 21:16).<sup>801</sup> Therefore, even without the aid of the canon, the meaning of these texts was already sufficiently clear.

So then, on the one hand, it is always helpful to interpret any biblical text in the light of the whole of Scripture. On the other hand, we should never confuse the meaning of a text with the formation of doctrine, that is, exegesis with theology. Passages of Scripture, devoted to a single theme, all contribute to forming the whole-Bible teaching on that theme. Yet, in the formation of theological themes, the original meanings of the *individual passages* do not change. They do not “expand” or “thicken” their meanings, but always retain their original meaning determined by authorial intent. The *compilation* of these passages, taken together, creates something entirely new – the whole-Bible teaching on the given topic, or “theology.”

In this vein, Riggs gives this wise counsel:

Once the exegetical work has been completed, then the interpreter can proceed to set the doctrinal content of a particular passage in its total biblical context by way of gathering together what God has

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<sup>797</sup>Ibid, p. 97.

<sup>798</sup>Raymond E., Brown R. E., Schneider S. M. Hermeneutics // Brown R. E., Fitzmyer J. A., Murphy R. E. The New Jerome Biblical commentary. – London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1968. – P. 1153.

<sup>799</sup>Vanhoozer K. J. Augustinian inerrancy: Literary meaning, literal truth, and literate interpretation in the economy of Biblical discourse // Merrick J., Garrett S. M. Five views on Biblical Inerrancy. – Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013. – P. 52-53.

<sup>800</sup>Moo, p. 204.

<sup>801</sup>Warfield B. B. The works of Benjamin B. Warfield, Volume 1: Revelation and inspiration. – Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2008. – C. 88-89.

said on the topic. This is the analogy of faith of the whole of Scripture. But the analogy of faith should not be used to extricate meaning from or import meaning to texts that appeared earlier than the passage where the teaching is set forth either most clearly or perhaps for the first time. Such an exercise is eisegesis, not exegesis.<sup>802</sup>

### 3. Employment of Rabbinic Methodology

It is often thought that in their interpretation of the Old Testament, New Testament authors, being “children of their age,” imitated rabbinic methodology. For example, Toy comments on Matthew’s use of Hosea 11:1, “The principles of Scripture application of the day allowed him to take the words out of their connection, and use them as seemed to him best.”<sup>803</sup>

The Jews employed various approaches to biblical interpretation. One of these was *midrash*.<sup>804</sup> The esteemed Rabbi Hillel, who lived about the time of Christ, suggested certain rules for interpretation in line with this method. The rules are called “*middot*,” and are seven in number.<sup>805</sup>

1. *qal wa-homer*: that, which is true in a lesser instance, is also true in a greater one.<sup>806</sup>
2. *gererah shawah*: if the same word is found in different passages, then those passages are thematically connected as well.<sup>807</sup>
3. *binyan ab mikathub ‘ehad*: if a phrase is repeated, then it is a universal principle.
4. *binyan ab mishene kethubim*: a principle can be established by comparison of two passages.<sup>808</sup>
5. *kelal upherat*: a general principle can be qualified through citation of a specific example of the principle located in a different passage. On the other hand, one may also generalize specific examples to form a principle.<sup>809</sup>
6. *kayoze bo bemaqom ‘aher*: one may clarify the meaning of a text by comparing with a clearer text.<sup>810</sup>
7. *dabar halamed me ‘inyano*: the meaning of text is clarified by examining the context.<sup>811</sup>

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<sup>802</sup>Riggs, p. 223.

<sup>803</sup>Toy C. H. Quotations in the New Testament. – New York, NY: Charles Scribner’s Son, 1884. – P. 9.

<sup>804</sup>Sometimes the term *midrash* is used in a more general sense to refer to any method of interpretation employed before the composition of the Talmud (Longenecker, p. 18).

<sup>805</sup>See Longenecker, p. 20; Sloan R. B., Newman C. C. Ancient Jewish hermeneutics // Corley B., Lemke S. Lovejoy G. Biblical hermeneutics. – Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1996. – P. 37; Moo, p. 192; Scott J. J. Jewish backgrounds of the New Testament. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1995. – P. 130-131; Bray, p. 58-64.

<sup>806</sup>Supposed New Testament examples: Jn 7:23; 10:34-36; 1 Cor 9:8-11; Matt 6:26; Rom 5:9, 18; 8:32; 11:12; 2 Cor 3:17-18; Heb 2:2-4; 9:13-14; 10:28-29; 12:25 (Bray, p. 66-69; Moeller H. R. The legacy of Zion. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker: 1977. – P. 181).

<sup>807</sup>Supposed New Testament examples: Acts 2:25, 34 (“right hand”), Acts 13:34-35 (“holy”), Rom 4:7-11 (“reckoned”), Gal. 3:10, 13 (“cursed”), 1 Pet 2:4-7 (“stone”); Heb 4:1-11 (“rest”) (Greer R. A. The Christian Bible and its interpretation // Meeks W. A. Early Biblical Interpretation. – Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1986. – P. 134; Bray, c. 66-69). Scott adds another instance: Deut 17:2-7 begins with the phrase, “if there is found among you” and ends with the phrase, “by the testimony of two witnesses, or three witnesses.” This would mean that every time one met the phrase “if there is found among you,” then the matter requires two or three witnesses, even if not so stated (Scott, p. 130-131).

<sup>808</sup>Exodus 21:26-27 is an example. Only the loss of an eye or tooth is mentioned, but in principle, the loss of any body part would result in the slave’s liberation.

<sup>809</sup>An example of the second item: in Exodus 22:10 specific animals are mentioned, and then others in general. Galatians 3:28 speaks of unity in Christ of Jews and Gentiles, slaves and free, men and women, and then of Christians in general. Another example: in Romans 13:8-10, Paul forms a general principle from concrete examples (Bray, p. 66).

<sup>810</sup>Galatians 3:8, 16 is a supposed New Testament example, where Paul explains that the blessing given to Abraham (Gal 3:8) extends to all peoples through his “seed,” i.e. Christ (Gal 3:16) (Longenecker, p. 101).

<sup>811</sup>Romans 4:10-11 is an alleged New Testament example, where Paul interprets Abraham’s obtaining righteousness by faith in light of the historical context, which shows that it occurred before the giving of the Law. Hebrews 4:4-8 is another case, where the author

In the New Testament, we most frequently encounter rules №1 and №2. The first actually corresponds to common sense. Concerning the second, *gererah shawah*, we must make the qualification that the New Testament authors would not have associated passages together unless they had not only a common word, but also a common theme. Finally, some of these rules, namely №5, №6, and №7, also correspond to our grammatico-historical hermeneutic. The remainder of these rules, though, can easily lead to a distortion of Scripture.

Besides *midrash*, other Jewish interpreters, especially in Qumran, employed the method *peshet*. *Peshet* is a historico-eschatological approach. In Qumran, they thought that the entire Old Testament referred to the Qumran community and found fulfillment in it. Consequently, many Old Testament passages were interpreted symbolically, since the Old Testament does not, in fact, speak literally of Qumran.<sup>812</sup> From the point of view of *peshet*, one may see in any passage of Scripture an eschatological application or fulfillment. For example, the members of the Qumran community applied Habakkuk 2:17 to themselves.

For the violence done to Lebanon will overwhelm you, and the devastation of {its} beasts by which you terrified them, because of human bloodshed and violence done to the land, to the town and all its inhabitants.

In particular, Lebanon, which etymologically means “white,” corresponds to the Community Council of Qumran, since they wore white garb.

We take another example of *peshet* from Num 21:17-18.

Then Israel sang this song: “Spring up, O well! Sing to it! The well, which the leaders sank, which the nobles of the people dug, with the scepter {and} with their staffs.”

Again, the details in this passage supposedly relate to Qumran. The “well” is the Law of Moses, the “leaders” are those of the Qumran community, the “nobles of the people” are those that keep the Law, and the “scepter” is the teachers of Qumran.<sup>813</sup>

Nonetheless, there exists a significant difference between *peshet* and the New Testament handling of Old Testament texts. The New Testament does not present us with a fabricated fulfillment of Old Testament types, as was in Qumran, but with their genuine fulfillment in Christ. In addition, according to Qumran’s understanding of *peshet*, the hidden meaning of Old Testament texts could be discerned only by the founder of the community, the “Teacher of Righteousness.”<sup>814</sup> From the biblical point of view, though, God reveals His mysteries to His “apostles and prophets” (Eph 3:5).

Another aspect of New Testament treatment of Old Testament texts, supposedly borrowed from the Jews, is interpreting groups of Scriptures together. In Jewish tradition, certain groupings of texts obtained a set interpretation, which no longer depended on the original context of the passages. Some see this approach in Hebrews chapter 1.<sup>815</sup> There, we encounter a group of Old Testament passages that highlight the superiority of Christ to the angels. It is thought that the Early Church assigned to this group of texts a Christological interpretation, which no longer needed to be correlated with the original Old Testament context.<sup>816</sup>

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examines the historical context of the Old Testament to show that God’s promise of “rest” was not fulfilled when Israel entered Canaan (Longenecker, p. 162).

<sup>812</sup>McCartney D. G. Literal and allegorical interpretation in Origen’s *Contra Celsum* // Westminster Theological Journal. 1986. 48. P. 284-285; Virkler H. A. Hermeneutics: Principles and processes of biblical interpretation. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1981. – P. 51.

<sup>813</sup>Bruce F. F. The Epistle to the Galatians: A commentary on the Greek text. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982. – P. 218.

<sup>814</sup>Longenecker, p. 26-27.

<sup>815</sup>Also see Rom 3:10-18; 9:12-20; 10:18-21; 15:8-12; Gal 3:10-13 (Bray, p. 66).

<sup>816</sup>Ellis, p. 43.

Along with this, in the rabbis, selected verses could sometimes be connected by a key word (such as “stone” in 1 Pet 2:6-9). Also seen among Jewish interpreters were texts with commentary following, which finds parallels in (Jn 12:38-40 and Romans chps. 9-11). Yet, these structural similarities do not necessarily indicate that New Testament authors imitated the *hermeneutic methodology* of the rabbis. Something unique to the New Testament, but absent among the rabbis, is uniting two passages into one (2 Cor 6:16-18; Heb 10:37-38).

Even though some commentators are convinced that New Testament authors handled Old Testament texts in accordance with rabbinic methodology, they nonetheless qualify this by claiming that New Testament authors refrained from extreme applications of these methods. It is argued that such methodology was useful for argumentation, since it was well accepted at that time.<sup>817</sup> Silva states that New Testament writers handled the Old Testament in accordance with the conventional hermeneutic of the day.<sup>818</sup>

Augustus Strong maintains that New Testament authors used rabbinic methods selectively, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, who allowed them to employ it. Strong feels that the method used was not important, but the actual teaching advanced by it.<sup>819</sup> Thus, in his opinion, the end justifies the means.

Similarly, Enns proposes that New Testament writers discovered the Christological significance of the Old Testament through revelation by the Holy Spirit, yet expressed those insights in the methodology of their time. Thus, their use of rabbinic methods was not hermeneutical, but apologetic in nature.<sup>820</sup> Similarly, Longenecker asserts that, for the most part, Jesus employed Jewish methodology when He was confronting the Jewish religious leaders. He did so for their sake, in order to defeat them on their own “exegetical turf.”<sup>821</sup>

On the other hand, Weeks opposes the idea that Jesus and the apostles imitated the rabbis.<sup>822</sup> First, Jesus testified that the Pharisees and Sadducees did not understand the Scriptures (Matt 22:29; Jn 5:39), which means that their interpretive scheme did not lead to genuine knowledge of the truth. Second, if we allow that Jesus accommodated Himself to the hermeneutic of His day and did not correct these misguided approaches, then what prevents us from assuming that He also did so in other important doctrinal matters? This leads to the dilemma that all of Jesus’ teachings can be viewed under suspicion of accommodation.

Third, a leading Hebrew scholar, Jacob Neusner, attempted to identify in the Mishna, Talmud, and Midrash elements that date back to the first century AD. He discovered that the Pharisees infrequently utilized Scripture in their arguments. The fact that Jesus so frequently employed Scripture distinguishes His approach to Scripture from that of the Pharisees. The famous first century rabbi and teacher of the apostle Paul, Gamaliel (Acts 22:3), likewise used Scripture infrequently. Weeks claims that the more creative methodological approach of the rabbis dates back only to Aquila in the second century AD, which is after the writing of the New Testament.<sup>823</sup> In summary, Beale writes, “One should not assume that first-century Jewish and Christian exegetical approaches are mostly the same.”<sup>824</sup>

Furthermore, when Jesus and the apostles appear to use *qal wa-homer*, they may actually just be appealing to common sense. If something is true in a lesser sense, it follows logically that it is so in a greater sense as well. Besides this, cases of *gererah shawah* in the New Testament may simply be examples of verses associated by theme, and not by key words at all.

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<sup>817</sup>Enns P. Fuller meaning, single goal // Berding K, Lunde J. Gundry S. eds. Three views on the New Testament use of the Old Testament. – Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008. – P. 185.

<sup>818</sup>Silva M. The New Testament use of the Old Testament: Text form and authority // Carson D. A., Woodbridge J. D. eds. Scripture and truth. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1992. – P. 163.

<sup>819</sup>Strong, p. 233.

<sup>820</sup>Enns, p. 209-211.

<sup>821</sup>Longenecker, p. 53-54.

<sup>822</sup>Weeks N. The sufficiency of Scripture. – Edinburg: Banner of Truth, 1988. – P. 184-192.

<sup>823</sup>Yet, Ellis claims that methods similar to rabbinic ones are found in the writings of Philo, a Jewish philosopher of the early first century AD (Ellis, p. 46).

<sup>824</sup>Beale, Handbook, p. 3.

Finally, we must examine this question from an ethical point of view. Jesus and the apostles were teachers of high moral standards, which they observed in their personal lives as well. The claim that they intentionally employed methodology that clouded, rather than enlightened meaning, puts their character in question. We must not suppose that since they were “children of their age,” they were unable to properly handle Scripture. Jesus authorized the apostles to spread His gospel and gave them His authoritative understanding of the Old Testament, especially in relation to Himself. Additionally, these are inspired authors. If Scripture writers distort Scripture, then where is truth to be found?

We may voice another objection. The fact that such methodology was convincing at that time does not justify its use. If the New Testament writers defended the Christian faith with false arguments, then what kind of foundation did they lay for their converts? As soon as such converts learn of these false arguments, they may well abandon such a faith.

In light of the above considerations, we conclude that there are strong and weak points in the claim that Jesus and the New Testament authors used rabbinic methodology. On the one hand, as noted above, some elements of rabbinic interpretive methods correspond to sound hermeneutic practice, and usage of such approaches does not threaten our understanding of Scriptural inspiration. On the other hand, it is misguided to think that Jesus and the writers of the New Testament blindly imitated faulty rabbinic hermeneutics.

#### 4. Adaptation of Old Testament Texts

According to the next theory, the New Testament writers’ goal in citing Old Testament texts was to reveal the mystery of Christ. One might call this usage “Christocentric.” Proclaiming Christ in the Old Testament was more important than respecting the Old Testament context. Thus, the methodology was not as important as the goal.<sup>825</sup> The New Testament authors did not view history objectively, but from the perspective of theology – what theological truth they could find there.<sup>826</sup> In the words of Clark Pinnock, “In a sense they not only cite an old text but create a new one through their inspired, Christocentric approach.”<sup>827</sup>

This approach resembles *sensus plenior* in that the Spirit may reveal to the New Testament writers a new meaning of Old Testament texts. It is felt that the divine Author, who inspired the Old Testament writers, has the right to change or adapt the meaning of these texts. Achtemeier writes, “He is God of the future, and is free to re-create the meaning of the past by what he does in the future,” and, “The Word of God is a dynamic reality which does new things in new times.”<sup>828</sup>

Still, this approach encounters difficulties. First, as we have mentioned before, the New Testament writers did not cite the Old Testament in order to communicate a new revelation from the Spirit, but to obtain confirmation of their teaching from *another* authoritative source – the Old Testament. In the Acts of the Apostles, for example, the Church’s evangelical thrust included appeals to Old Testament authority.<sup>829</sup> New Testament evangelists sought to convince their audience of the truths already contained in the Old Testament Scriptures.<sup>830</sup>

Second, one may challenge the claim that the Holy Spirit, being the Spirit of Truth, would handle the Old Testament in such a way. Against the claim that the divine Author had the right to change the meaning of Scripture, it is more likely that He would preserve the truths He previously revealed. Third, this theory operates on the principle that the “end justifies the means.” Yet if, in order to attain a worthy goal –

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<sup>825</sup>McCartney D. G. The New Testament use of the Old Testament // Conn H. M. Inerrancy and hermeneutic: A tradition, a challenge, a debate. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1988. – P. 109.

<sup>826</sup>Ibid, p. 106.

<sup>827</sup>Pinnock, Biblical revelation, p. 188.

<sup>828</sup>Achtemeier P. J. The inspiration of Scripture: Problems and proposals. – Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1980. – P. 86-87.

<sup>829</sup>Beale, Handbook, p. 26

<sup>830</sup>Kaiser, The uses of the Old Testament, p. 17.

demonstrate Christ – incorrect methodology is employed, then what kind of result can we expect? Does not methodology affect the quality of the result?

## 5. Distinction of “Meaning” and “Significance,” and the Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament

When we examine the Old Testament quotations listed in Appendix F, in general, they present no real difficulty. Dodd affirms that early Christian writers, in general, treated the Old Testament as history.<sup>831</sup> Nevertheless, the cases assigned to the categories “New Application of an Old Testament Principle” (99 cases) and “Typological Fulfillment of an Old Testament Text” (18 cases) deserve special attention.

In most cases of “New Application of an Old Testament Principle,” the New Testament author treats the Old Testament text fairly and reasonably. For example, in 1 Peter 3:14-15, Peter applies a passage containing God’s encouragement to Israel not to fear Assyrian aggression (Isa 8:12-13) to believers in Jesus, who are faced with a new threat – hostile unbelievers. Peter does not follow Isaiah exactly when the latter writes, “It is the *LORD of hosts* whom you should regard as holy,” but instead writes, “sanctify *Christ as Lord* in your hearts.” Thus, he makes a new application of this text for those persecuted for Christ’s sake. In addition, in Hebrews 13:5, a promise to Israel is applied to the Church: “He will not fail you or forsake you” (Deut 31:6). We can be confident that if God did not forsake His Old Testament people, He will not forsake His New Testament saints either.

The concept “New Application of an Old Testament Principle” reminds us of Hirsch distinguishing the meaning from the significance of a text. The meaning does not change, but in varying situations, the significance may change, including its application in the canonical context. Thus, we posit one stable meaning, defined by authorial intent, and numerous applications (significances) of the text. The principle associated with the text in question may find various applications.

What about the 18 cases classified as “Typological Fulfillment of an Old Testament Text?” As stated previously, a “type” is an Old Testament individual, object, event, or institute that represents or symbolizes another, more important individual, object, event, or institute appearing in the New Testament, or even later in the Old Testament.<sup>832</sup>

Several factors confirm that viewing the Old Testament typologically is justified. The Old Testament frequently extends beyond itself to predict fulfillment of God’s plan in the future. Therefore, it is fair to expect typological representations of those future events as well as prophetic predictions. Moreover, the Bible is a Christocentric book. Consequently, one should expect both prophetic and typological predictions of Messiah’s advent. In addition, the unity of Scripture leads us to conclude that New Testament realities will be foreshadowed in the Old. The unity of Scripture is often expressed in the term *Heilsgeschichtliche*, or “plan of salvation,” which throughout the canon is one, unified plan.<sup>833</sup>

Consequently, when Matthew applies Hosea 11:1 – “Out of Egypt I called My son” – to the child Jesus’ return from Egypt, Israel serves as a type of Christ. Some also view Jesus as the “recapitulation” of Israel. In other words, he “summarizes” Israel in Himself. Therefore, the Exodus of Israel can represent the “exodus” of Jesus from Egypt. God’s appeal to Israel as “My son” also hints at a future fulfillment in Christ.

Furthermore, when it says of Jesus, “not a bone of Him shall be broken” (Jn 19:36), John is referring to the Passover lamb (Ex 12:46), who typologically represents Jesus Christ. David also serves as a type of Christ, when Paul associates his proclamation to the Gentiles of God’s greatness (2 Sam 22:50) with the preaching of the gospel of Christ to the Gentiles (Rom 15:9). Additionally, Beale notes that in the Old Testament, God’s commission to an individual is not always totally accomplished, leading one to expect its future fulfillment. We

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<sup>831</sup>Dodd, *The Old Testament in the New*, p. 8.

<sup>832</sup>Fritsch, 103, p. 293; 104, p. 92, 214.

<sup>833</sup>Fritsch, 103, p. 420-421; Kaiser W. The current crisis in exegesis and the apostolic use of Deuteronomy 25:4 in 1 Corinthians 9:8-10 // *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*. 1978. 21. P. 11.

may take as an example God's commission to Adam and Eve to "be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it" (Gen 1:28).<sup>834</sup>

Some commentators hold that the entire Old Testament has a typological character. Wenham claims,

Scripture from beginning to end is prophetic; that is, it is forward looking and it is Spirit-inspired. The ceremonies look forward and find their explanation in Christ, the experiences of the psalmists find their deepest fulfillment when Christ comes.... To them (the apostles) the OT as a whole and in all its parts was a witness to Christ.<sup>835</sup>

Ellis sees in the following passages a direct indication of the typological character of the Old Testament. 1 Cor 10:11 says of Israel: "Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come." The Law is "a shadow of the good things to come" (Heb 10:1). Old Testament feasts and rituals are "a {mere} shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ" (Col 2:17). Peter adds that to the prophets it was "revealed that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you" (1 Pet 1:10-12).<sup>836</sup> Beale makes the interesting observation that these "typological interpretations" in the New Testament are often termed a "fulfillment" (see Matt 1:22-23; 2:15; 13:14-15; 27:9-10; Jn 13:18; 19:24, 28, 36; Acts 2:16-21), which confirms the prophetic character of these types.<sup>837</sup>

Curiously, later Old Testament texts can relate typologically to earlier ones as well. The exile to Assyria is compared to the "exile" in Egypt (Hos 8:13; 9:3, 6; cf. 11:5). Similarly, the return from Babylon echoes the Exodus from Egypt (see Jer 23:7-8; Isa 48:20-21; 51:9-11).<sup>838</sup> Even in the Old Testament, David is viewed as a type of the Messiah (Isa 55:3-5; Jer 30:9; Ezek 34:23).<sup>839</sup> Von Rad claims that the New Testament writers simply continued this typological use of the Old Testament in their time.<sup>840</sup> This would mean that in their typological handling of the Old Testament, New Testament writers were not imitating the rabbis, but the prophets.

Therefore, in Von Rad's opinion, one is justified looking at the entire Old Testament through the prism of typology: "Whenever one of God's dealings with his people, or with an individual, is witnessed to, the possibility exists of seeing in this a shadow of the New Testament revelation of Christ."<sup>841</sup> Longenecker asserts that the early believers began their exegetical contemplations with Christ, and were ready to see him in all aspects of Old Testament history.<sup>842</sup>

Yet, we must make a qualification here. There are specific criteria for recognizing a true type in Scripture, which we delineated earlier in this chapter. In addition, one must clearly distinguish typology from allegorization, the topic of the next chapter. We must also further clarify some examples of "Typological Fulfillment of an Old Testament Text," which may seem quite exaggerated. This we will do in our next section.

It is important to observe that, unlike the theories of "*sensus plenior*," "canonical context," and "adaptation of Old Testament texts" the system "typological fulfillment" preserves authorial intent. Here, the meanings of words in the text do not change; they have no "additional" or "hidden" meanings. The symbolism is found not in the words, but in the object, person or event itself, described by those words. Each word has

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<sup>834</sup>Beale, Handbook, p. 66.

<sup>835</sup>Wenham J. W., p. 104, 108.

<sup>836</sup>Ellis, p. 53ff. Kaiser adds the following verses: Acts 3:18; 17:2-3; 1 Cor 15:3-4; Lk 1:68-79; Rom 1:2 (Kaiser, The uses of the Old Testament, p. 17-18).

<sup>837</sup>Beale, Handbook, p. 17.

<sup>838</sup>Weeks, p. 120-121.

<sup>839</sup>Moo, p. 205.

<sup>840</sup>Von Rad G. Typological interpretation of the Old Testament / Trans. J. Bright // McKim D. A guide to contemporary hermeneutics. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986. – P. 43.

<sup>841</sup>Ibid.

<sup>842</sup>Longenecker, p. 187.

only one referent. Yet, the *referent itself* may be a type, that is, have both a historical, and a symbolic application. Thomas Aquinas once compared words with signposts, pointing to their external referents. Yet, the referents themselves may also be signposts, pointing to something beyond themselves, that is, to their typological fulfillment.<sup>843</sup>

## 6. Conclusions

In summary, we conclude that the most plausible of all the proposed theories for explaining the New Testament use of the Old Testament is the final one: “Distinction of ‘Meaning’ and ‘Significance,’ and the Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament.” Yet, we have still to define how the New Testament writers determined which Old Testament texts contained types.

Longenecker proposes the plausible idea that this practice began with the Lord Jesus Himself.<sup>844</sup> He notes several examples of Jesus using typological interpretation (Matt 15:8-9; Mk 12:10-11; Jn 13:18; 15:25; and others). It is significant that Jesus sometimes refers to “fulfillment” of Old Testament types in Himself, when there was no specific prophecy in view. In the same vein, Greer feels that Jesus’ use of Psalm 110 (see Matt 22:44) gave His disciples sanction to use it in a messianic sense as well (cf. Acts 2:34-35; Heb 1:3, 13, 8:1; 10:12-13; 12:2; Rom 8:34; 1 Cor 15:25; Eph 1:20).<sup>845</sup>

Furthermore, it seems fair to assume that after His resurrection, when He met with His disciples over a period of 40 days, Jesus showed them which Old Testament texts typologically applied to Him. Shedd notes that Jesus began to explain to His disciples the Old Testament testimony about Himself after His resurrection (Lk 24:27, 44). It logically follows that He would continue to do so until His ascension (Acts 1:3).<sup>846</sup> So then, the twelve apostles, following the teaching and example of Christ, assigned to the texts of Scripture that Jesus so indicated a typological significance.

In addition, one can postulate the existence in the Early Church of a collection of so-called “testimony books” which contained selected Old Testament texts that testified of Jesus’ messiahship and His mission (possibly, as argued above, indicated by Jesus Himself). Besides this, there likely existed in the Church a general understanding that these passages were messianic.

Dodd makes a valuable contribution to this question.<sup>847</sup> Although he rejected the idea of the existence of concrete “testimony books,” he nonetheless felt that this information was passed on by oral tradition. Dodd believed that certain Old Testament passages were associated with one another, thought to bring out the essence of the gospel, and were known to Christian evangelists, apologists, and teachers of that time.<sup>848</sup> He comments on the association between these passages, “Very diverse scriptures are brought together so that they interpret one another in hitherto unsuspected ways.”<sup>849</sup>

Furthermore, in his research, Dodd observed how New Testament authors tended to employ many of the same Old Testament texts, namely: Ps 2:7; Ps 8:4-6; Ps 110:1; Ps 118:22-23; Isa 53:1; Joel 2:28-32. He adds instances where different authors cite the same key passages differently: Gen 12:3 and 22:18 (in combination); Isa 6:9-10; Isa 8:14 and 28:16 (in combination); Isa 40:3-5; Hab 2:3-4; Zech 9:9. Finally, although the key passage may have been quoted only once, other authors indirectly allude to it as well: Deut 18:15-19; Isa 41:1-2; Jer 31:31-34.

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<sup>843</sup>Steinmetz D. C. The superiority of precritical exegesis // McKim D. A guide to contemporary hermeneutics. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986. – P. 69.

<sup>844</sup>Longenecker, p. 36ff.

<sup>845</sup>Greer, p. 131-132.

<sup>846</sup>Shedd, p. 108.

<sup>847</sup>See Dodd C. H. The Old Testament in the New. – Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1963; Dodd C. H. According to the Scriptures // London: Nisbet & Co., 1952.

<sup>848</sup>Dodd, The Old Testament in the New, p. 10-11; Dodd, According to the Scriptures, p. 132.

<sup>849</sup>Dodd, According to the Scriptures, p. 109.



In summary, Dodd advanced the following list of special Old Testament passages, which, in his opinion, the Early Church considered to have messianic significance. In addition, New Testament authors could cite any part of these selected passages and, by association, the entire passage could be implied. Dodd also held the opinion that Jesus Himself may have suggested these passages.

Gen 12:3; 22:18; Deut 18:15, 19; Ps 2; 8; 22; 31; 34; 39; 41-43; 69; 80; 88; 110; 118; Isa 6-9:7, 11:1-10:28:16; 40-53 (in general); Jer 31:10-34; Dan 7, Hosea (entire book); Joel 2-3; Zech 9-14.<sup>850</sup>

So then, in the Early Church there existed an acknowledged group of passages considered to be messianic and, supposedly, suggested by Jesus Himself. Longenecker supports this opinion by noting that Jesus, Matthew, and John use the typological approach more than Paul, Luke, and Mark. This is because, unlike Paul, Luke and Mark, Matthew and John were among the company of twelve apostles who learned this approach from Jesus.

We can offer still another confirmation. Scholars have long recognized the biblical phenomenon named “the messianic secret,” which means that in the Gospels, we often note that Jesus conceals His identity and messianic role and forbids people to report His miracles. The phenomenon is most marked in the Gospel of Mark (5:43; 7:36; 8:30; 9:9, etc.). The reason why Jesus concealed His identity and mission from people “until the Son of Man rose from the dead” (Mk 9:9) is revealed in 1 Cor 2:8: “For if they had understood (the mission of Christ), they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.”

Therefore, it was necessary in Old Testament times, on the one hand, to predict the coming of Messiah and His redemptive mission, so that these predictions would serve to confirm His mission when He appeared. Yet, on the other hand, it was also necessary to conceal this information, that is, to keep the “messianic secret.” It is fair to conclude, then, that, although the Old Testament does point to the coming messianic mission, it does so in a cryptic way through prophecy and types.

In conclusion, we must make a pair of qualifications. First, we argued above that introducing a new (or even a typological) meaning or application of an Old Testament text would undermine the role of the Old Testament as a source for confirming the genuineness of New Testament teaching. Only the original meaning of Old Testament texts could serve as confirmation of the apostolic teaching, not a new meaning replacing the old one. Does this disqualify typological interpretation of the Old Testament as well?

Not necessarily. If the proposals of Dodd and Longenecker are accurate, that a collection of messianic passages existed and were acknowledged by the Church, then the readers of the New Testament could consider the generally accepted messianic interpretation of these passages authoritative. Thus, they could still serve as an “external” confirmation of apostolic teaching.

Second, the phenomenon of the “messianic secret” sheds light on the question of why modern interpreters may not advance new “exaggerated” typological interpretations of Old Testament texts today. The gospel is no longer “secret,” but “open” in the preaching of the apostles. As Paul claims, “...which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit” (Eph 3:5, 9). Therefore, one no longer needs to discover cryptic clues to the gospel, hidden in the Old Testament. Strong affirms, “The freedom of these inspired interpretations, however, does not warrant us in like freedom of interpretation in the case of other passages whose meaning has not been authoritatively made known.”<sup>851</sup>

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<sup>850</sup>Dodd mentions the following, yet expresses some doubt about them: 2 Sam 7:13-14; Ps 114; 30; Isa 39:9-14; Jer 7:1-15; Dan 12; Amos 9:11-12; Hab 1-2; Mal 3:1-6.

<sup>851</sup>Strong, p. 234.

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## V. Threats to Sound Hermeneutics

### Chapter 11: The Error of Allegorization

#### A. Characteristics of Allegorization

In our attempts to uncover symbolism in the biblical text, it is vital to distinguish the phenomenon of typology, discussed in the previous chapter, from the practice of allegorization. Allegorization is the attempt to uncover symbolism in the text when there is, in fact, none.

Certain features characterize the allegorical method (although not all instances have all these features).<sup>852</sup> First, the historical importance of the biblical account is minimized, or possibly even denied. In allegorization, the focus is not on what actually happened, but on the symbolic meaning of the things, people, or events described in the text. Second, the thing, person, or event described in the text is not actually the symbol itself, but the words used to describe it harbor the hidden meaning. The person/item itself may be totally unconnected to the symbolic meaning contained in the words describing it.

Third, in allegorization, the symbolic meaning may refer to something outside of the biblical canon, i.e., to something in Church history, in modern times, or in some other area, such as philosophy. Fourth, allegorical symbolism lacks features common to true typology, such as “parallel result,” “divine intentionality,” and “points of correspondence” (see previous chapter). Finally, allegorization includes the practice of forming general biblical principles from events described in the biblical narrative without adequate substantiation from other supporting passages.

We may clarify some of these features by examining a classic example of allegorization, proposed by the Church Father, Origen. He taught that the account of John’s baptism had a symbolic significance. Matthew 3:6 reads, “They were being baptized by him in the Jordan River.” In his interpretation of the text, Origen paid

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<sup>852</sup>Fritsch C. T. Biblical typology // *Bibliotheca Sacra*. 1946-1947. №104. P. 214; Longenecker R. N. Galatians. Hubbard D. A., Barker G. W. // *Word Biblical commentary*. – Dallas, TX: Word, 2002. – P. 209; Silva M. Galatians // Carson D.A., Guthrie D. *New Bible commentary*. – Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1994. – P. 1216-1217; Campbell D. K. Galatians // Walvoord J. F., Zuck R. B. *The Bible knowledge commentary*. – Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983-1985. – P. 603-604; Kostenberger A. J. The mystery of Christ and the Church: Head and Body, “one flesh.” *Trinity Journal*. 1991. №. 12. P. 89.

little attention to the historical event itself, i.e., John's baptism, but sought hidden meaning in the words of the text. Origen claimed that the word "Jordan" in the original language meant, "To go down."

Next, he noted that the word "Jordan" was similar to the name "Jared" (Gen 5:20), who lived at the time when "when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men" (Gen 6:4). Correspondingly, he felt that the word "Jordan" relates to the time when, in Origen's opinion, the preexistent souls of people "descend" into their bodies at birth. Yet, since John's baptism was for cleansing, what is represented here is not the incarnation of any person, but of the Son of God, Jesus Christ. Therefore, the words of Matthew 3:6, "They were being baptized by him in the Jordan River," secretly refer to the incarnation of God's Son.

One may without hesitation assign Origen's creative interpretation to the realm of allegorization. First, the historical context of passage is minimized. Second, the symbolism is not found in the event itself, i.e., the baptism, but in the words describing it. Third, the results are not parallel – John's baptism was for turning people to God, while Origen's symbolic meaning relates to God coming to people. Fourth, the "points of correspondence" are few and relatively weak.

## **B. The History of Allegorization**

Church history abounds with examples of the allegorical method. This raises the question of where and how this approach originated, and how it crept into Christians circles. In this section, we will search out allegorization's origins.

### **1. Ancient Greece**

First, we will look at the interpretative methods of ancient Greece. It is thought that allegorization first appeared among the Greeks as an attempt to vindicate the writings of Homer, since his descriptions of Greek gods not infrequently violated the moral sensibilities of his readers. Therefore, allegorization, that is, symbolic interpretation, was employed to avoid the literal implications of these more "embarrassing" passages.<sup>853</sup> Another factor, which may have promoted allegorization's development, was platonic philosophy, since Plato decried the material world and extolled the immaterial "world of ideas." Correspondingly, the hidden, spiritual meaning of a text, uncovered by the allegorical approach, was thought superior to the mundane, literal meaning.<sup>854</sup>

### **2. Jewish Exegesis**

What about allegorization among Jewish writers? Longenecker asserts that their goal in biblical interpretation was to make the Word of God relevant to the lives of the people of their day.<sup>855</sup> At times, this involved allegorical interpretation of Scripture, which arose among the Jews in the second century BC. Many feel that the Jews borrowed this practice from the Greeks for the same purpose that the latter employed it – to explain passages difficult to understand in the literal sense.<sup>856</sup>

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<sup>853</sup>Lane T. A concise history of Christian thought. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006. – P. 21.

<sup>854</sup>McCartney D. G. Literal and allegorical interpretation in Origen's *Contra Celsum* // Westminster Theological Journal. 1986. № 48. P. 282-283; Garrett D. A. Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs // Clendenin E. R. The New American commentary. – Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993. – P. 353.

<sup>855</sup>Longenecker R. N. Biblical exegesis in the apostolic period. – 2nd ed. – Grand Rapids, MI; Vancouver: Eerdmans; Regent College Pub, 1999. – P. 7.

<sup>856</sup>Kugel J. L. Early interpretation: The common background of later forms of Biblical exegesis // Meeks W. A. Early biblical interpretation. – Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1986. – P. 81ff.

The most famous of all Jewish allegorists was undoubtedly Philo of Alexandria, who lived in the first century AD and sought to harmonize the Old Testament with Greek philosophy.<sup>857</sup> Yet, since little common ground exists between the Old Testament and Greek philosophy, Philo employed allegorization in an attempt to elucidate principles of Greek philosophy from the Old Testament text.<sup>858</sup> Nonetheless, Philo did respect the historical veracity of the Old Testament as well.<sup>859</sup>

Philo appealed to allegorization when he encountered: (1) an anthropological description of God, (2) a verse difficult to understand, or (3) an apparent contradiction in the text. We see an example of the last item when Psalm 46:4 speaks of a river flowing through Jerusalem. Since such a river does not exist, Philo considered this a type of God's Word, flowing from the Jews to the outside world. Another example of Philo's allegorization: after recounting Abraham's history in Genesis 14:1-16, he proposes a spiritual interpretation. The five kings who were defeated by the four kings symbolize the five senses, which fall under the power of four vices: pleasure, desire, fear, and grief. Yet, the Word of God, symbolized by Abraham, overthrows the four vices and restores order.<sup>860</sup>

The intertestamental writings *Wisdom of Solomon* and the *Letter of Aristeas* are also tainted by allegorization.<sup>861</sup> The Targums present an allegorical interpretation of the Song of Solomon, which in its literal sense describes romantic love. The rabbis, though, viewed it as symbolically retelling the history of Israel.<sup>862</sup>

- 1:2-3:6 describes the Exodus, the meeting at Sinai, and the conquest of Canaan.
- 3:7-5:1 relates to Solomon's temple.
- 5:2-6:1 describes Israel's sin and exile.
- 6:2-7:11 shows Israel's return from exile and the rebuilding of the temple.
- 7:12-8:14 describes the dispersing of Israel by the Romans and the expectation of Messiah's coming.

Others have attempted allegorical interpretations of Song of Solomon as well. According to Abravanel, a sixth century rabbi, the book concerns Solomon's love of wisdom. Rabbi Ibn Ezra taught that Song of Solomon 7:2 contains symbols of the Great Sanhedrin, the Little Sanhedrin, and the Law of Moses.<sup>863</sup>

However, the Jews did not practice allegorization randomly. They observed certain rules for symbolic interpretation of a text. One approach, *midrash*, was developed by Rabbi Hillel, who established interpretive rules called *middot* (see chp. 13). Another method, *pesher*, is also discussed in chapter 13.

### 3. The Early Church

Some Church Fathers showed little hesitation in applying the allegorical method, likely due to Greek and Jewish precedent. Classic early examples of patristic allegorization are found in the *Epistle of Barnabas*, and in the works of Hippolytus of Rome and Justin Martyr.

The Eastern Church of antiquity hosted two competing schools of interpretation: the Alexandrian and Antiochian schools: the former championing the allegorical approach, and the latter preferring literal interpretation. A chief representative of the Alexandrian school, Clement of Alexandria, taught that the literal interpretation of the Bible was for ordinary believers, while its symbolic meaning was more suitable for mature

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<sup>857</sup>Lane, p. 21.

<sup>858</sup>McCartney, p. 284-301; George T. Galatians // Dockery D. The New American commentary. – Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994. – Electronic ed. Logos Library System, 2001. – P. 25; Garrett, p. 353.

<sup>859</sup>Sloan R. B., Newman C. C. Ancient Jewish hermeneutics // Corley B., Lemke S. Lovejoy G. Biblical hermeneutics. – Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1996. – P. 29-30.

<sup>860</sup>Philo, *On Abraham*, 232-244.

<sup>861</sup>Fritsch, №104, p. 218.

<sup>862</sup>Garrett, p. 353.

<sup>863</sup>Ibid.



saints. Clement had hopes of attracting unbelieving Greeks to Christian faith by this means as well.<sup>864</sup> His protégé, Origen, also employed allegorization, advancing the conviction that Scripture had both literal and symbolic meaning and that difficult Scriptural passages were better explained allegorically.<sup>865</sup> At the same time, Origen continued to respect the historical sense of the biblical text as well.<sup>866</sup>

Origen sought to justify his allegorical approach by comparing it to the incarnation of God's Son. Just as Jesus has both a divine and a human nature, Scripture has both a literal and symbolic sense.<sup>867</sup> He also argued that the nature of Scripture is comparable to the triune structure of the human. Humans possess spirit, soul, and body, and Scripture has a literal, moral and mystical aspect.<sup>868</sup>

Origen allegorized Genesis 1 in the following way. The separation of the waters symbolizes the separation of the inner person from the outer person, which is tainted by sin and passion. After this separation is accomplished, "heaven" is ready for beautification – the sun is Christ, and the moon is the Church. The earth is now also ready to produce fruit for God.<sup>869</sup> In another allegorical interpretation, Origen proposes that the destruction of Jericho symbolizes Christ's victory over the world. Furthermore, Moses' pogrom of the Moabites represents the removal of vice from the Christian.<sup>870</sup> Even some of Origen's contemporaries during his lifetime objected to his free use of allegorization.<sup>871</sup>

An argument commonly used by the Alexandrian school in general to defend allegorization was to appeal to Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 3:6, "For the letter kills, but the spirit gives life."<sup>872</sup>

On the other hand, adherents of the Antiochian school employed the grammatico-historical approach to interpretation.<sup>873</sup> They allowed for typology, but rejected allegorization.<sup>874</sup> Unfortunately, because certain heresies arose in the Antiochian school, namely Nestorianism, this interpretative approach fell into disrepute along with it, and in the end, the Alexandrian school came to dominate the exegetical scene in the Church.<sup>875</sup>

In the Western Church, Augustine and Jerome are noted representatives of the allegorical approach.<sup>876</sup> Augustine felt that allegorization was appropriate if it advanced Christian faith, hope, or love.<sup>877</sup> A fine example of his creative interpretive approach is his allegorical treatment of Genesis, chapter 1. The phrase, "God created the heavens and the earth" symbolized for Augustine the presence of spiritual and worldly people in the Church. The lack of light in the early creation reflects the absence of doctrine. So then, God created the firmament, that is, He gave Holy Scripture to the Church. Moreover, the gathering of the waters represents God's restraining the sinful impulses of people. Sea creatures are symbols of the sacraments, and the birds of the sky – preachers of the gospel.<sup>878</sup>

Especially intriguing is Augustine's allegorization of Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan. The man who went down from Jerusalem to Jericho is Adam, who fell into sin. The robbers who beat him represent the devil. The priest and Levite, who passed the man by, show that the Mosaic Law is unable to save. The Samaritan,

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<sup>864</sup>Bray G. Biblical interpretation, past and present. - Downers Grove: IL: InterVarsity Press:1996. – P. – 83.

<sup>865</sup>McCartney, c. 281-301; Gleason R. C. "Letter" and "Spirit" in Luther's hermeneutics // Bibliotheca Sacra. 2000. № 157. P. 470-471; Lane, c.21.

<sup>866</sup>Silva M. Has the Church misread the Bible? Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987. – P. 58, 71-72.

<sup>867</sup>McCartney, p. 290-94.

<sup>868</sup>Fritsch, №104, p. 216-218; Gleason, p. 471.

<sup>869</sup>Кураев А. Протестантам о православии. – 7-е изд. – Ростов-на-Дону: Троицкое Слово, 2003. – P. 352.

<sup>870</sup>Wainwright A. Beyond Biblical criticism. – Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982. – P. 60.

<sup>871</sup>Greer R. A. The Christian Bible and its interpretation // Meeks W. A. Early Biblical interpretation. – Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1986. – P. 181.

<sup>872</sup>Gleason, p. 469-477.

<sup>873</sup>Fritsch, №104, p. 216-218; Gleason, p. 471.

<sup>874</sup>Greer, p. 182-183.

<sup>875</sup>Bray, p. 106-107.

<sup>876</sup>Fritsch, №104, c. 216-218; McCartney, p. 285; Garrett, p. 353; George, p. 339.

<sup>877</sup>Steinmetz D. C. The superiority of precritical exegesis // McKim D. A guide to contemporary hermeneutics. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986. – P. 73-74.

<sup>878</sup>Nonetheless, Augustine held to the historicity of Genesis 1 as well (Bray, p. 125).

who helped the wounded man, is Jesus Christ. He pours wine and oil into the man's wounds, which symbolizes His blood and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Finally, the Samaritan leads the man to an inn, which represents the Church.

Another example of Augustine's work is his creative interpretation of Jesus feeding the 5000. The bread symbolizes the New Testament, that is, the teachings of Jesus. The five loaves represent the Mosaic Law, which was not able to satisfy the multitude. The fact that the people reclined on the grass demonstrates their carnal condition. Finally, the disciples gathered the leftovers in order to teach the people more truth later during their own ministries.<sup>879</sup>

Other noted allegorists include Cyril of Alexandria, Gregory of Nyssa, Eusebius and Ambrose. The early Christian exegetes tended toward Christocentricity, and in order to demonstrate the Christocentric nature of the Old Testament, they resorted to allegorization. They also found it useful in their struggle with Marcion, who challenged the Old Testament representation of God.<sup>880</sup>

#### 4. The Middle Ages

Allegorization was widely practiced in the Middle Ages as well. Adherents of this approach continued to rely on the maxim "letter and spirit," teaching that Scripture had both a literal and spiritual meaning. The actual number of possible meanings of a text varied from three to seven. Yet, most exegetes of this period subscribed to either three or four meanings for a given text.

The three/four meaning approach actually began with the Church Fathers. Origen was the first to propose three meanings: the historical, tropological (moral) and allegorical meanings. In the fifth century, Eucherius of Lyon and John Cassian continued this trend. It is thought that Gregory the Great initiated the fourfold approach, yet Augustine hinted at it in his day as well. The four senses are: historical, tropological (moral), allegorical and anagogical (eschatological). The final three make up the "spiritual" sense, as opposed to the literal, historical one.<sup>881</sup>

Later in the Middle Ages, the fourfold approach obtained the name *quadrigena*, which was expressed in the following saying:

The literal teaches what God and our ancestors did,  
The allegory is where our faith and belief is hid,  
The moral meaning gives us the rule of daily life,  
The anagogy shows us where we end our strife.<sup>882</sup>

Yet, scholars of this time did not take their interpretive task lightly. For example, in order to derive the tropological meaning, they were required to go through "a lengthy process of training ... study, method, consistency."<sup>883</sup>

It is curious to note that adherents of the *quadrigena* even used allegorization to justify their allegorical method. For example, Jesus' multiplication of the five loaves represents and substantiates the multiplication of meanings for the biblical text. In addition, when Jesus promised that in His Father's house were "many dwelling places" (Jn 14:2), He meant various interpretations of the text.<sup>884</sup> Moreover, the phrase, "A book written inside and on the back" in Revelation 5:1 symbolizes two types of interpretation: literal and spiritual.

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<sup>879</sup>Bray, p. 110.

<sup>880</sup>Ibid, p. 85-92, 97-101.

<sup>881</sup>De Lubac, p. 225.

<sup>882</sup>[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Allegorical\\_interpretation\\_of\\_the\\_Bible](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Allegorical_interpretation_of_the_Bible)

<sup>883</sup>De Lubac, p. 16.

<sup>884</sup>Ibid, p. 29-31.

Finally, an Old Testament priest wore two tunics, which allegedly corresponds to two methods of interpretation.<sup>885</sup>

As an example of the fourfold approach, we will take the term “Jerusalem.” In the literal sense, of course, this is a city in Palestine. In the allegorical sense, though, Jerusalem symbolizes the Church. In a moral (tropological) sense it represents the human soul. Finally, Jerusalem in an eschatological sense is the New Jerusalem of Revelation chapter 22.<sup>886</sup> Therefore, whenever and wherever one encounters in the biblical text the term “Jerusalem,” he/she can assign to it all these nuances.

However, during the Middle Ages, a transition occurred in Scripture interpretation. Before that time, the philosophy of Plato dominated, which postulated the existence of a world of “ideas” separate from the material world of “particulars.” In line with this view, the spiritual meaning of Scripture was defined separately from the literal meaning. Yet in the Middle Ages, the preferred philosophical worldview shifted from Platonism to Aristotelianism, which taught that these universal “ideas” resided in the particulars themselves. Applying this to hermeneutics, the exegete now sought a connection between the literal and non-literal interpretations.<sup>887</sup>

As a result of this paradigm shift, the popularity of allegorization suffered a setback.<sup>888</sup> The thirteenth century scholar, Thomas Aquinas, diligently sought out the literal meaning of the text before attempting a spiritual interpretation.<sup>889</sup> He explains his methodology as follows: “Holy Scripture sets up no confusion, since all meanings are based on one, namely the literal sense” (*Summa Theologiae*, 1a q.1, a10, ad1).<sup>890</sup> At the same time, Aquinas did not reject the existence of a symbolic meaning, but proposed that it was interconnected to the literal one: “Nothing necessary to faith is contained in the spiritual sense that Scripture does not put forward elsewhere in the literal sense” (*Summa Theologiae*, 1a q.1, a10, ad1).<sup>891</sup> Other writers of the period, who championed the literal interpretation of the text, included Peter Lombard, Hugh of Saint Victor (and especially his pupil Andrew), and John Wycliffe.<sup>892</sup>

## 5. The Reformers

The Protestant reformers universally rejected the allegorical method. Luther, for example, speaks of allegorization as “trifling and foolish fables, with which the Scriptures were rent into so many and diverse senses, that silly, poor consciences could receive no certain doctrine of anything.”<sup>893</sup> Luther also wrote, “That is why his (the Holy Spirit’s) words could have no more than one simplest meaning which we call the written one, or the literal meaning of the tongue.... One should not therefore say that the Scripture of God’s word has more than one meaning” (*Answer to Emser*, p. 178-179).<sup>894</sup> Calvin’s assessment of allegorization is similarly harsh – it is “undoubtedly a contrivance of Satan to undermine the authority of Scripture, and to take away from the reading of it the true advantage.”<sup>895</sup>

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<sup>885</sup>De Lubac, p. 225-226.

<sup>886</sup>Gleason, p. 472-473; Casselli, p. 195-196.

<sup>887</sup>Newport J. P. Contemporary philosophical, literary, and sociological hermeneutics // Corley B., Lemke S. Lovejoy G. Biblical hermeneutics. – Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1996. – P. 133-144.

<sup>888</sup>Gerson, p. 154-155.

<sup>889</sup>Moo D. The Problem of *sensus plenior* // Carson D. A., Woodbridge J. D. Hermeneutics, authority and canon. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1986. – P. 182; Steinmetz, p. 69.

<sup>890</sup>Gerson, p. 156.

<sup>891</sup>Noted in Raymond E., Brown R. E., Schneider S. M. Hermeneutics // Brown R. E., Fitzmyer J. A., Murphy R. E. The New Jerome Biblical commentary. – London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1968. – P. 1155.

<sup>892</sup>Bray, p. 139-150.

<sup>893</sup>Fritsch, №104, p. 217.

<sup>894</sup>Gerson, p. 156.

<sup>895</sup>Noted in Fritsch, №104, c. 217.

In explaining Paul's claim in 2 Corinthians 3:6 that "the letter kills, but the spirit gives life," the reformers proposed several options. Some suggested that the "letter" was the written word, while the "spirit" was the spoken word. Others said that the "letter" was the preaching of the Old Testament, but the "spirit" was the preaching of the New. A third option: the "letter" indicates study of the Word, while the "spirit" is its life application. Their most plausible option, though, was to understand the "letter" as the Law, which condemns the sinner, and the "spirit" as the Holy Spirit, who gives life to the believer.<sup>896</sup>

There were several reasons why the reformers rejected allegorization. First, it had become popular by that time to study the original biblical languages, which reinforced the importance of their literal interpretation. Second, exegetes of that time, such as Aquinas and others, were giving more attention to the historico-grammatical context of the biblical text. Finally, the Roman Catholic Church of that time had been utilizing allegorical interpretations of the Bible to support their doctrines. A literal approach to interpretation enabled the reformers to undermine the authority of Catholic teaching.<sup>897</sup>

Nonetheless, history shows that Luther was not immune to allegorization. For example, he equated Jacob's ladder (Gen 28:12) with Christ Jesus.<sup>898</sup> It seems that it was easier for him to reject the allegorical method in theory than in practice. Luther himself admitted, "It was very difficult for me to break away from my habitual zeal for allegory. And yet I was aware that allegories were empty speculation and the froth, as it were, of Holy Scriptures. It is the historical sense alone which supplies the true and sound doctrine."<sup>899</sup> We note, though, that Luther's allegorization was Christocentric and expressed in a way that could be confirmed by other passages of Scripture.<sup>900</sup>

### C. Evaluation of Allegorization

In general, allegorization is not looked upon favorably. We can highlight the following defects in the system. First, the practice itself did not originate from inspired Biblical writers, but rather has Greek and rabbinic roots. Second, allegorization promotes an anti-materialistic worldview, where the literal, historical meaning is not valued as much as the unearthly, so-called, "spiritual" interpretation. This leads to depreciating the historical nature of God's plan. Third, allegorization leads to subjective interpretation of Scripture. Any interpreter can see in any passage practically any meaning.<sup>901</sup> The allegorical method lacks specific criteria for verifying the correctness of one's interpretation.

When we view Church history, we observe that this method was often employed to support unbiblical doctrines. In addition, this method distracts the interpreter from the more painstaking, but necessary process of proper exegetical method. Similarly, adherents to this approach use it as a convenient way to find simple answers to difficult exegetical questions, instead of striving to properly apply the text's literal sense.<sup>902</sup>

One must also note that, although the allegorical approach was widely used in Church history, it was not the universal practice of the Early Church. Some Fathers preferred the literal approach, namely Tertullian, Athanasius, John Chrysostom, and Basil the Great. John Chrysostom stated, "All the things that are necessary are plain" (*3rd homily on 2 Thes*).<sup>903</sup> Basil offers the following critique of allegorization:

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<sup>896</sup>Gleason, p. 468-484.

<sup>897</sup>Ibid, p. 474-476.

<sup>898</sup>Lasor W. S. *The sensus plenior and biblical interpretation* // McKim D. A guide to contemporary hermeneutics. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986. – P. 55.

<sup>899</sup>Bray, p. 198.

<sup>900</sup>Ibid.

<sup>901</sup>McCartney, p. 295; Gleason, p. 474, 484; Garrett, p. 353-356.

<sup>902</sup>Ibid.

<sup>903</sup>Noted in Silva, *Has the Church misread the Bible*, p. 80.

I know the laws of allegory, though less by myself than from the works of others. There are those truly, who do not admit the common sense of the Scriptures, for whom water is not water, but some other nature, who see in a plant, in a fish, what their fancy wishes, who change the nature of reptiles and of wild beasts to suit their allegories, like the interpreters of dreams who explain visions in sleep to make them serve their own ends. For me grass is grass; plant, fish, wild beast, domestic animal, I take all in the literal sense. “For I am not ashamed of the gospel” ... It is this which those seem to me not to have understood, who, giving themselves up to the distorted meaning of allegory, have undertaken to give a majesty of their own invention to Scripture. It is to believe themselves wiser than the Holy Spirit, and to bring forth their own ideas under a pretext of exegesis. Let us hear Scripture as it has been written (*The Hexaemeron*, 9.1).

Proponents of allegorization defend their practice, albeit unconvincingly, as follows. They claim that the long history of this approach vindicates its value. Yet, the longevity of a practice in no way guarantees its correctness. Some cite the use of allegorization in the New Testament, namely in Galatians 4:21-31 and 1 Corinthians 9:9-10 (see below). Yet, as we shall soon see, there exist alternate explanations for the peculiarities of these passages.

Furthermore, it is claimed that the allegorical method is necessary to explain difficult, sometimes “embarrassing” passages of Scripture. The goal of exegesis, though, is to bring out the true, literal meaning of a passage, regardless of what the result might be. Allegorists also cite Psalm 78:2 in defense: “I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old.” However, the psalmist here speaks of a “parable.” A parable is a recognized figure of speech, not an allegorized biblical narrative.<sup>904</sup>

Moreover, Psalm 119:18 reads, “Open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things from Your law.” Yet here, it does not follow that the Spirit must reveal a hidden, allegorical meaning of a text. He may simply reveal its proper literal meaning. Concerning the pro-allegorical interpretation of 2 Corinthians 3:6, “The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life,” we have already offered a better alternative above.

Some have contended that the dual nature of Jesus Christ – human and divine – justifies seeking a dual meaning in Scripture – literal and symbolic. We heartily affirm the two natures of Christ, but nothing compels us to apply a duality to Scripture as well. The same response applies to the claim that the triune structure of humans – spirit, soul, and body – supports a tripartite interpretation of Scripture as well.<sup>905</sup>

Henri De Lubac offers his own defense of allegorization.<sup>906</sup> On the one hand, he affirms that Scripture records true history, but also affirms the presence of symbolic meaning as well. For this reason, the Jews did not recognize the Messiah – they limited themselves to the literal meaning only. Only through insight given by the Spirit can one discover Scripture’s hidden treasures. De Lubac further claims that the Holy Spirit not only inspired the biblical writers, but He enlivens the Word today as well, giving even more revelation than the original text contains.<sup>907</sup> De Lubac, however, confuses the concepts of revelation and insight. The Spirit enlivens the text only in the sense that He gives insight into its original meaning. He does not change the meaning or introduce a novel one.

De Lubac also appeals to Augustine, who commented on the words from Psalm 121:1, “I will lift up my eyes to the mountains; from where shall my help come,” in the sense that the “mountains” symbolize great men of God, who aid us if seeing the hidden truths of Scripture. Yet, Augustine is using allegorization here to defend the practice of allegorization, which is circular reasoning. In addition, Jesus declared that the unbelieving Jews’ problem was not their literalism, but the condition of their hearts (Jn 8:43-47).

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<sup>904</sup>McCartney, p. 294-296; Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis*, p. xlvii; Kaiser W. The current crisis in exegesis and the apostolic use of Deuteronomy 25:4 in 1 Corinthians 9:8-10 // *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*. 1978. № 21. P. 11.

<sup>905</sup>McCartney, p. 290; Gleason, p. 470-471; Fritsch, №104, p. 216-218.

<sup>906</sup>De Lubac, p. 227-228, 265-267.

<sup>907</sup>*Ibid*, p. 81.

William Lasor adds the following arguments in defense of allegorization. He claims that the literal meaning relates only to the past, but the Word of God is always relevant. Therefore, it must also possess a timeless, spiritual meaning.<sup>908</sup> Yet Lasor fails to consider that embracing a literal interpretation in no way excludes its application to life today. The Bible contains universal principles, so that any Bible passage, narrative or didactic, can find application for believers now. Lasor also argues that, by nature, language itself is symbolic, since words refer to something beyond themselves. We affirm this to be the case. Yet, according to principles of proper linguistics, words cannot refer to just any referent, but only to that which corresponds to their specific definitions.

## D. Allegorization in the New Testament?

### 1. Galatians 4:21-31

Did the apostles themselves employ allegorization in their treatment of Old Testament passages? Many feel that Galatians 4:21-31 is a classic example of the allegorical method. Here, Hagar represents the Sinaitic covenant and earthly Jerusalem, the mother of those enslaved to the Law. Sarah, on the other hand, is Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem and the mother of believers in Jesus. In describing this instance, Paul even uses the Greek term ἀλληγορούμενα (*allegoroumena*), which means to “speak allegorically.”<sup>909</sup>

Several explanations are offered for this phenomenon. First, some consider that Paul is simply using an illustration here. He has already advanced several arguments in defense of his teaching on the relationship of Law and salvation, and now he is “capping it off” with an Old Testament illustration.<sup>910</sup> On the other hand, Paul introduces this instance with the words, “Do you not listen to the law? For it is written...” This seems to indicate that Paul did not consider this an illustration, but an Old Testament evidence for his position. Illustrations cannot be used as evidence – they prove nothing.

Others see this as an example of applying a general biblical principle, namely the principle of trusting in God, and not in oneself. Abraham fathered Ishmael as an attempt to accomplish God’s plan by human methods. Isaac, however, was born as a result of trusting in God’s promises. Believers in Christ operate on the same principle of trust in Christ for salvation, not in personal holiness.<sup>911</sup> At the same time, Paul does not appear to be appealing to a general principle here, but to the very histories of Hagar and Sarah.

Still another explanation is as follows. Paul is trying to refute a false view held in the Galatian churches that employed an allegorical treatment of Sarah and Hagar to advance an erroneous teaching. Paul, in response, gives his own allegorical version of the history to describe the true way of salvation. In support of this theory, it is noted that the rabbis often compared Isaac to Ishmael, associating themselves with the former. Possibly, Paul’s opponents in Galatia were using such a version to their own advantage. In refutation, Paul surprisingly associates the Jews not with Isaac, but with Ishmael.<sup>912</sup> The weakness of this explanation, however, is that it is purely speculative. There is no hard evidence that the Galatians ever misused this Old Testament history in this way.

Finally, one may posit an appeal here not to allegorization, but to typology. Several features of this comparison seem to justify this conclusion. We note in Galatians chapter 3 that Paul has already established the principle that believers in Jesus are children of Abraham. One may assume that they are offspring of

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<sup>908</sup>Lasor, *Sensus plenior*, p. 53-57.

<sup>909</sup>Arndt W., Danker F. W., Bauer W. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature*. – 3rd ed. – Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000. – P. 46.

<sup>910</sup>Longenecker, *Galatians*, p. 199.

<sup>911</sup>Silva, p. 1216-1217.

<sup>912</sup>Longenecker, *Galatians*, p. 199-218. Reference to Barrett C. K. *The allegory of Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar in the argument of Galatians* // Friedrich J., Pöhlmann W., Stuhlmacher P. *Rechtfertigung Festschrift für Ernst Käsemann*. – Tübingen: Mohr, 1976; George, p. 334.

Abraham not by analogy with Ishmael, but with Isaac, the son of promise. Paul may be operating on this idea in Galatians 4:21-31, expanding his comparison of believers in Jesus with the offspring of Abraham.

In particular, Paul notes who the mother of these two sons is: the slave, Hagar, and the free woman, Sarah. The following statement in verse 25 gives Paul sanction to identify unbelieving Jews with children of Hagar: she “corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children.” Paul knows from experience that unbelieving Jews are in slavery to sin, and therefore qualify as children of Hagar. Also significant is that Hagar’s son, Ishmael, is Abraham’s son “according to the flesh” (v. 23), not according to promise. This also corresponds to unbelieving Jews, who are physical descendants of Abraham, but reject the promise of salvation in Messiah Jesus. In addition, the association of Hagar with unbelieving Jews allows Paul to associate her with Mount Sinai as well, since they still remain under the Sinaitic covenant. Moreover, Ishmael (and, presumably, Hagar as well) settled in Paran (Gen 21:21), not far from Sinai.<sup>913</sup>

It is important to note that these associations are made on sound historical and theological considerations, without any appeal to exaggerated exegesis, i.e., allegorization. Paul has pointed out sufficient “points of correspondence,” and the “divine intentionality” is sufficiently evident to justify his use of the histories of Hagar and Sarah as a typological expansion of his overall understanding of the symbolic nature of Abraham’s family. Additionally, Paul employs still another point of correspondence – Ishmael’s “persecution” of Isaac, which is replicated in the unbelieving Jews’ persecution of the Church (v. 29).

On the basis of the typological nature of Abraham’s family, Paul can now use this story as part of his doctrinal instruction. He warns those relying on the Law: “Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be an heir with the son of the free woman” (v. 30). In other words, the children of Abraham by analogy with Ishmael, i.e., those relying on the Law for justification, will fail to attain justification. In this way, Paul attains the goal of his argument, begun in verse 21: “Tell me, you who want to be under law, do you not listen to the law?” That is, the Law teaches that there is no justification by means of the Law.

## 2. 1 Corinthians 9:8-9

Paul appears to use the allegorical approach in 1 Corinthians 9:8-9 as well, where we encounter a citation from Deuteronomy 25:4: “I am not speaking these things according to human judgment, am I? Or does not the Law also say these things? For it is written in the Law of Moses, ‘You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing.’ God is not concerned about oxen, is He?” 1 Timothy 5:18 is a similar case.

Does Paul use Deuteronomy 25:4 here in an allegorical way when he applies it to financial support of Christian workers? In the Old Testament, the issue concerns not people, but animals. Yet, Paul applies it to the former. He asks the rhetorical question: “God is not (μή) concerned about oxen, is He?” In this sentence, the presence of the negative particle μή (*me*) conventionally requires a negative answer. Does this mean that Paul rejects the original, historical meaning and literal application of this text in relation to oxen?<sup>914</sup>

Several solutions are offered. First, some assert that Deuteronomy 25:4 is really speaking about people serving God, and not about oxen at all. The term “oxen” in Deuteronomy, then, is not to be taken literally, but symbolically. Supporting this claim is the fact that the Torah was written for people, not animals. In addition, the surrounding context addresses people, not animals.<sup>915</sup> On the other hand, one must note that other laws regarding the treatment of animals do exist. In addition, other passages specifically address support for the

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<sup>913</sup>Brisco T. V. Paran // Bromiley G. W. The international standard Bible encyclopedia. – Revised ed. – Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1979–1988. – V. 3. – P. 662.

<sup>914</sup>Kaiser, p. 11-12.

<sup>915</sup>Thiselton A. C. The First Epistle to the Corinthians: a Commentary on the Greek text. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000. – P. 685-688; Winter B. 1 Corinthians // Carson, D.A., Guthrie D. New Bible commentary. – 4th ed. – Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1994. – Electronic ed. Logos Library System, 2001. – P. 1175; Lowery D.K. 1 Corinthians // Walvoord J. F., Zuck R. B. The Bible knowledge commentary. – Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983-1985. – V. 2. – P. 523.

Levitical priesthood. Why, then, would God give another directive for supporting temple workers in such a cryptic manner?

Possibly, Paul was employing the well-known rabbinic device *qal wa-homer*, i.e. that which applies in a lesser case, applies in a greater one. In other words, if God cares about beasts of burden, He cares more for gospel workers.<sup>916</sup> In this case, we are dealing then with the application of a general biblical principle, that those who serve are worthy of reward, whether man or beast.<sup>917</sup>

Nonetheless, as noted above, the presence of the particle μή (*me*) in the question: “God is not (μή) concerned about oxen, is He,” calls for a negative response. This appears to indicate that Paul applies this verse to gospel workers alone, and not to oxen at all. Thiselton proposes, however, that in this context the particle μή (*me*) might reflect not rejection, but hesitancy. The sense would then be, “Does God really care *only* about oxen?” In this case, the oxen are included in God’s care.<sup>918</sup> Paul is likely employing an exaggerated comparison, where he only appears to disregard the oxen in order to emphasize how much more God will provide for gospel workers. Therefore, we can with confidence consider this case to be an application of a general biblical principle, and not allegorization.

## E. Conclusions

In summary, we may conclude that the practice of allegorization stands on a very weak foundation. Its lack of both biblical and logical substantiation qualifies it for exclusion. The obvious dangers associated with allegorization lead us to decry its practice.

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<sup>916</sup>Keener C. S. The IVP Bible background commentary. – Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993. – P. 471.

<sup>917</sup>Kaiser, p. 14-16.

<sup>918</sup>Thiselton, p. 686.



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## Chapter 12: Is the Church Always Right?

The role of the Church in the interpretation of Scripture has been a long-standing and hotly debated topic. The question mainly concerns the role of Church tradition in defining Christian faith. Of all Christian confessions, the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church give the greatest weight to the value of Church tradition, so we will center our discussion on these two groups.

### A. The Eastern Orthodox Position

We will begin our treatment of Church tradition with a discussion of the Eastern Orthodox view, since our evaluation of Eastern Orthodoxy's stand on Sacred Tradition will serve as a response to the Roman Catholic view as well. In our subsequent discussion of Catholicism, then, we will be able to focus on its unique conviction concerning the Pope's primacy.

#### 1. Description

The Orthodox Church claims that God reveals Himself through the spiritual experience of the Church. The Holy Spirit, who is the source of revelation, reveals God's truth to the Church community at large. Any one person is not the receipt of inspiration, but rather the entire Church body. In the Encyclical of the Eastern Patriarchs of 1848, we read, "...neither Patriarchs nor Councils could then have introduced novelties amongst us, because the protector of religion is the very body of the Church, even the people themselves, who desire their religious worship to be ever unchanged and of the same kind as that of their fathers" (№ 17).<sup>919</sup> The Church perceives this revelation in a mystical manner. It is felt that the Church has an inherent spiritual intuition that enables it to perceive God's truth.<sup>920</sup>

Sergey Bulgakov claims that this "intuitive knowledge" may initially appear in the Church's liturgical worship and only later become dogma: "The immediate, concrete experience of the Church contains the seed of dogma... from which dogma arises as the definition of truth in words and concepts."<sup>921</sup> Russian Orthodox Metropolitan Ilarion agrees: "...one must coordinate theology with Church worship practices, not correct worship practices by means of some theological concepts... dogma is divine revelation, precisely because it is born in the experience of prayer."<sup>922</sup>

Several arguments are advanced in support of the Orthodox position. First, since the Holy Spirit is active in directing the Church, it logically follows that when He reveals something, it will be done in the context of the Church. Jesus did promise that the Holy Spirit would lead the Church into all truth (Jn 16:13). Second, Jesus also promised that His presence would always be with the Church (Matt 28:20). Therefore, one may expect Him to continue to operate through the Church and reveal to it His truth. Third, the Bible describes the Church as a living and growing organism, which has a vital connection with its head, that is, with Christ. The Church will always have access to a living word from the Lord – He will regularly impart revelation to it.

Furthermore, Orthodoxy takes into consideration the historical nature of Christianity. Christianity is the record of God's intervention in human history. God continues to intervene in human history through the Church, which He personally leads and instructs. Finally, God would not leave the Church without direction in forming its doctrines. He loves His people and will personally teach them. Therefore, the Church is the recipient and preserver of God's revelation.

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<sup>919</sup>[http://orthodoxinfo.com/ecumenism/encyc\\_1848.aspx](http://orthodoxinfo.com/ecumenism/encyc_1848.aspx).

<sup>920</sup>Clendenin D. B. Eastern Orthodox Christianity. – Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker, 1994. – P. 106-116; Fairbairn D. Partakers of the Divine Nature, 1991. – P. 5-12.

<sup>921</sup>Булгаков С. Православие: Очерки учения православной церкви. – Электронный ресурс.

<sup>922</sup>Иларион (Алфеев). Православие. – В 2-х томах. – <http://www.hilarion.ru/materials/books>. – P. 133.

Orthodoxy also appeals to specific passages of Scripture that emphasize obtaining the knowledge of God through personal fellowship with Him.<sup>923</sup> Jeremiah 31:34 states, “They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they will all know Me.” In 2 Corinthians 3:3 we read, “You are a letter of Christ, cared for by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.” We also recall 2 Corinthians 3:6, “The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.”

In Orthodox thought, the Church not only receives revelation, it communicates it in the form of Sacred Tradition. In the first century, the Church expressed the revelation it received from the Lord in the form of holy texts, which became our New Testament. Before the writing of the New Testament, though, this Tradition was passed on orally. So then, the New Testament is simply the written expression of the Tradition received by the first-century Church. Later, the fourth-century Church, intuitively recognizing the spiritual quality of the 27 books of the present New Testament, canonized it. Furthermore, Orthodox note that the word “tradition” is used in the New Testament (1 Cor 11:2, 23; 15:3; 2 Пес. 2:15; 1 Tim 6:20; 2 Tim 1:12). The assumption is that Tradition preceded the writing of the New Testament and, therefore, the latter is simply one of the expressions of the former.<sup>924</sup>

At the same time, Orthodox acknowledge Scripture to be the most authoritative part of Sacred Tradition, to which all other elements of it must correspond. Orthodox scholar Andrew Kuraev writes, “We do not place (Church) experience above apostolic (preaching). We measure the patristic writings by the Evangelical standard.”<sup>925</sup> In the Orthodox Catechism of 1839 we read, “We must follow that tradition, which agrees with divine revelation and Holy Scripture.”<sup>926</sup>

Nonetheless, after the composition of the New Testament, the Holy Spirit did not abandon the Church, but continues to instruct it in all truth. He inspired (more precisely, “enlightened”) the Church Fathers to give the proper interpretation of biblical texts, and so their works are authoritative for establishing Christian doctrine. The Scriptures possess a “spiritual sense” that is revealed only to those worthy to receive it, namely the Church Fathers.<sup>927</sup>

One must note that the teachings of any one Church Father are not considered authoritative, but only those teachings found among them in common. This is especially true if the teaching has existed in Church tradition for a long time. Vincent of Lérins coined the now-famous expression: “In the Catholic Church itself, all possible care must be taken, that we hold that faith which has been believed everywhere, always, by all.”<sup>928</sup> So then, along with Holy Scripture, the teachings of the Church Fathers is another expression of Sacred Tradition.

In addition, Orthodox highly value, even consider infallible, the decrees of the early Church Councils and their decisions on cardinal truths of Christian faith.<sup>929</sup> At the same time, in line with the Orthodox conception of Church “corporality,” Bulgakov comments that councils do not so much define truth, as give expression to it: “Ecclesiastical authorities (council of bishops, or even individual bishops within their parish) are only the official organ to proclaim that, which in its own consciousness is the expression of the truth of the Church.”<sup>930</sup>

The Orthodox Church recognizes seven great Church Councils:

- Council of Nicea (325): condemnation of Arianism
- First Council of Constantinople (381): condemnation of Apollinarianism
- Council of Ephesus (431): condemnation of Nestorianism

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<sup>923</sup>Школа начальной катехизации «Исследуйте Писание: Диспут Харизматы – Православные»

<sup>924</sup>Noted in Clendenin, *Eastern Orthodox Christianity*, p. 108; Fairbairn, *Partakers*, p. 9; Railes, p. 24.

<sup>925</sup>Куряев, p. 207.

<sup>926</sup>Noted in Geisler N. L., Nix W. E. *A general introduction to the Bible*. – Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1986. – P. 129-130.

<sup>927</sup>Pelikan J. *The Christian tradition*. – Chicago, IL: Univ. of Chicago: 1974. – V. 2. – P. 18.

<sup>928</sup>[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vincent\\_of\\_L%C3%A9rins](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vincent_of_L%C3%A9rins)

<sup>929</sup>Clendenin, *Orthodoxy on Scripture and Tradition*, p. 399.

<sup>930</sup>Булгаков, электронный ресурс.

- Council of Chalcedon (451): condemnation of Eutychianism
- Second Council of Constantinople (553): condemnation of the teachings of Theodore of Mopsuestia, Theodoret and Ibas)
- Third Council of Constantinople (680): condemnation of Monophysitism.
- Second Council of Nicea (787): defense of icon veneration

In addition, Orthodoxy is ready, to a more limited degree, to recognize the doctrinal decisions of later Church Councils.<sup>931</sup> Finally, the Church expresses God's revelation in practice when conducting the Church liturgy. The seventh-century Orthodox mystic Maximus the Confessor expresses the Orthodox understanding of Tradition, summarized by Pelikan: "Authority in Christian doctrine was, then, the authority 'of a council or of a father or of Scripture.'"<sup>932</sup>

Some early Church Fathers underscored the importance of tradition in the life of the Church.<sup>933</sup> Basil the Great wrote,

Of the beliefs and practices whether generally accepted or publicly enjoined which are preserved in the Church some we possess derived from written teaching; others we have received delivered to us "in a mystery" by the tradition of the apostles; and both of these in relation to true religion have the same force. And these no one will gainsay; – no one, at all events, who is even moderately versed in the institutions of the Church. For were we to attempt to reject such customs as have no written authority, on the ground that the importance they possess is small, we should unintentionally injure the Gospel in its very vitals; or, rather, should make our public definition a mere phrase and nothing more (*On the Holy Spirit*, 27.66)

Tertullian also commented on Church practices:

And how long shall we draw the saw to and fro through this line, when we have an ancient practice, which by anticipation has made for us the state, i.e., of the question? If no passage of Scripture has prescribed it, assuredly custom, which without doubt flowed from tradition, has confirmed it. For how can anything come into use, if it has not first been handed down? Even in pleading tradition, written authority, you say, must be demanded. Let us inquire, therefore, whether tradition, unless it be written, should not be admitted. Certainly we shall say that it ought not to be admitted, if no cases of other practices which, without any written instrument, we maintain on the ground of tradition alone, and the countenance thereafter of custom, affords us any precedent (*De Corona*, 3.1-3.2).

Commenting on 2 Thessalonians 2:15, John Chrysostom writes,

Hence it is manifest, that they did not deliver all things by Epistle, but many things also unwritten, and in like manner both the one and the other are worthy of credit. Therefore, let us think the tradition of the Church also worthy of credit (*Homily on the Second Epistle of Paul to the Thessalonians*, 2.15).

Even Luther and Calvin, leaders of the Protestant Reformation, honored Church tradition and never intended to eliminate it.<sup>934</sup>

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<sup>931</sup>Clendenin, *Eastern Orthodox Christianity*, p. 106-16; Fairbairn, *Partakers*, p. 5-12.

<sup>932</sup>Pelikan, v. 2, p. 30.

<sup>933</sup>Noted in Clendenin, *Eastern Orthodox Christianity*, p. 111-114.

<sup>934</sup>McGrath A. E. *Historical theology*. – Oxford: Blackwell, 1998. – P. 167.

Moreover, in the early years of Christianity, there existed an entity called the “rule of faith,” consisting of a general understanding (i.e., tradition) among the congregations of the basic elements of Christian faith. The Early Church evaluated the truth-value of any teaching not only by apostolic writings, but also by the “rule of faith.” Irenaeus and Tertullian testify to its existence and importance:

Suppose there arose a dispute relative to some important question among us, should we not have recourse to the most ancient Churches with which the apostles held constant intercourse, and learn from them what is certain and clear in regard to the present question? For how should it be if the apostles themselves had not left us writings? Would it not be necessary, [in that case,] to follow the course of the tradition which they handed down to those to whom they did commit the Churches? (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.4.1).

Our appeal, therefore, must not be made to the Scriptures; nor must controversy be admitted on points in which victory will either be impossible, or uncertain, or not certain enough. But even if a discussion from the Scriptures should not turn out in such a way as to place both sides on a par, (yet) the natural order of things would require that this point should be first proposed, which is now the only one which we must discuss: “With whom lies that very faith to which the Scriptures belong. From what and through whom, and when, and to whom, has been handed down that rule, by which men become Christians?” For wherever it shall be manifest that the true Christian rule and faith shall be, *there* will likewise be the true Scriptures and expositions thereof, and all the Christian traditions (Tertullian, *The Prescription against Heretics*, 19).

Concerning the Orthodox view of Scripture, it is important to note that the Bible is thought not to contain all truths necessary for the life and success of the Church. It is claimed that God cannot be contained in a book. The Bible cannot contain all that God could reveal about Himself. At the end of his Gospel, the apostle John wrote, “And there are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they were written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that would be written” (Jn 21:25). In his third epistle John adds, “I had many things to write to you, but I am not willing to write {them} to you with pen and ink; but I hope to see you shortly, and we will speak face to face” (3 Jn 13-14).<sup>935</sup> Therefore, the preferred method to receive revelation from God consists of vital fellowship with Him in the context of the Church.<sup>936</sup> Maximos Aghiorgoussis comments,

The Holy Bible, and more specifically the New Testament, does not contain all the doctrine and teachings of Christ. The Church, which has produced the Bible, does not completely submit itself to only one of the *epiphenomena* of its life, even if it is the most authoritative one, the Holy Scriptures. An important part of the teachings and doctrine of Christ continues to be present and handed down to the generation of Saints through other means and ways that are also part of the life of the Church, a life in the Holy Spirit.<sup>937</sup>

Kuraev also affirms,

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<sup>935</sup>Noted in Geisler, *Roman Catholics and Evangelicals*, p. 182.

<sup>936</sup>Кypaев, p. 195-207.

<sup>937</sup>Fairbairn D. *Eastern Orthodoxy through Western eyes*. – Louisville, KY Westminster: John Knox Press, 2002 – P. 15. Quotation from Maximos Aghiorgoussis, *Contemporary Eastern Orthodox thought: The traditionalist voice*. – Belmont, MS.: Buechervertriesbanstalt, 1982. – P. 104.

True, Orthodoxy indeed asserts that God did not cease to reveal His will to people after the final apostle placed the final period in his book. True, although we may not speak of the divine inspiration of the works of the Fathers, we nonetheless sense their divine enlightenment.<sup>938</sup>

In addition, Orthodox teach that Scripture can be properly interpreted only with the aid of other elements of Sacred Tradition. They ask the question, “What good is an inspired Bible unless we also have an infallible interpretation?”<sup>939</sup> Russian scholar Georges Florovsky observes that the Orthodox view arises from the inner memory of the Church – only this inner memory can uncover the hidden meaning of the text.<sup>940</sup> In the words of the Russian philosopher Aleksey Khomyakov: “Truth is not attained by individual reflection, but only by corporate reflection, interconnected by love. This means that only the mind of the Church can be the organ for knowing the whole body of truth.”<sup>941</sup>

Orthodoxy believes that the New Testament left “imprints” on its early readers. Therefore, since the Church Fathers lived closer to the time of the New Testament’s writing, they can produce a more faithful rendering of apostolic teaching.<sup>942</sup> Orthodoxy also claims that since the Church gave us the New Testament, it has the right to interpret it as well. In his day, Tertullian asserted that the writings of the apostles are the possession of the Church, which heretics are forbidden to use in defense of their spurious doctrines.<sup>943</sup>

Interestingly, the Orthodox claim that in order to escape the subjectivity of postmodern interpretation of Scripture (see chapter 15 below), one must rely on the Sacred Tradition. Commenting on the postmodern crisis, Kuraev writes, “Whoever would speak of Scripture, speaks more of himself than of the Gospel.... The choice of passages commented on and the commentary itself... depends on the experience and culture of the individual.”<sup>944</sup> In addition, “Interpretation is unavoidable, but an absolutely straightforward and reliable ‘reflection’ (of the meaning) is not possible.”<sup>945</sup> Kuraev especially critiques Protestants for their subjectivity: “What do the Protestants preach, but their own understanding of the Gospel?”<sup>946</sup>

Kuraev offers the following escape from the problem of subjectivity: “In order to appropriately interpret the Holy Text, one must have internal spiritual experience.... People who have this experience, to the measure humans can possess it, are called by the Church ‘saints.’”<sup>947</sup> Furthermore, “Orthodoxy has carried through the centuries the sense of Jesus of Nazareth’s preaching that was given by the first, mainly Near Eastern generation of Christians.”<sup>948</sup> Additionally, “It is not logical to expect religious revelation and religious teaching from a hedonistic, basically materialistic civilization.... We live in a hedonistic civilization today.”<sup>949</sup>

So then, even though Scripture is considered the premier channel of revelation, it can only be properly interpreted in the light of the doctrinal decisions of Church councils, the teaching of the Church Fathers, and other elements of Sacred Tradition. Orthodox fear that if Scripture interpretation is attempted outside the context of Tradition, then each individual will give his/her own interpretation and thus disrupt the unity of the Church. In addition, personal interpretation of Scripture may threaten not only the Church unity, but also the

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<sup>938</sup>Kypaев, p. 175

<sup>939</sup>Noted in Geisler, *Roman Catholics and Evangelicals*, p. 182.

<sup>940</sup>Florovsky G. *Collected works Vol. VI, Ways of Russian theology, Part 2* / Trans. R. L. Nichols. – Vaduz: Buchervertriebsanstalt, 1987. – P. 304.

<sup>941</sup>Zenkovsky V., *History of Russian philosophy*. Audio series.

<sup>942</sup>Fairbairn, *Partakers*, p. 9-10.

<sup>943</sup>See *The Prescription against Heretics*, 37.

<sup>944</sup>Kypaев, p. 12.

<sup>945</sup>*Ibid*, p. 14.

<sup>946</sup>*Ibid*, p. 48.

<sup>947</sup>*Ibid*, p. 15.

<sup>948</sup>*Ibid*, p. 13.

<sup>949</sup>*Ibid*, p. 62.

spiritual health of believers. Did not Peter warn believers that in Scripture “are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort... to their own destruction?” (2 Pet 3:16).<sup>950</sup>

If the Orthodox are correct, however, that God continues to reveal Himself to the Church, then the question arises as to how to verify true revelation. How can the Church decide if a certain revelation is truly from God? Since, according to the Orthodox understanding, God does not reveal Himself to individuals, but to the Church corporately, then, theoretically, the entire Church must give the ruling. Yet, for practical purposes, the Church hierarchy makes the actual decisions.<sup>951</sup> The Church hierarchy claims this right by virtue of the “apostolic succession,” which we will describe and evaluate in our discussion of Catholicism.

Finally, the Orthodox are not concerned that the Church will error in defining Christian faith and practice. They recall the promise of Jesus, “The gates of Hades will not overpower (the Church)” (Matt 16:18). This verse is understood in the sense that Satan will never succeed in leading the Church astray. In doctrinal questions, the Church will remain infallible.<sup>952</sup> They also cite Paul’s words, that the Church is the “pillar and support of the truth” (1 Tim 3:15). This guarantees that God will unquestionably guard the Church from error.<sup>953</sup>

## **2. Evaluation**

### **a. The Spirit’s Activity in the Church**

One cannot object to the claim that the Holy Spirit is active in the Church. He leads and teaches God’s people. It is commonly thought that the Orthodox understanding of Tradition differs from the Roman Catholic understanding in that the latter is more “legal,” while the former is more “pneumatic.” In other words, the Catholics determine doctrine by a specialized organ – the Magisterium. In Orthodoxy, though, the Holy Spirit determines true teaching and Christian practice. Yet, this distinction is not accurate. Catholics also believe that the Holy Spirit is the Teacher of the Church. They differ from the Orthodox in claiming that the Spirit leads the Magisterium, not the entire Church. Therefore, it is misguided to think that only the Orthodox view is “pneumatic.”

At the same time, the Protestant teaching on God’s revelation is no less “pneumatic.” Protestants differ in their conviction that the Spirit does not lead or teach through a Magisterium or through mystical intuition, but through the Bible. The Spirit continually turns the Church’s attention to Holy Scripture and gives insight into its interpretation and application in line with the grammatico-historical method. Therefore, a better description of the three understandings of the Spirit’s work in the Church is as follows: the Catholic view is “centralized,” the Orthodox view is “mystical,” and the Protestant view is “biblical.”

The problem in Orthodoxy, however, is that the epistemological system “mysticism,” as shown in chapter 1, is fraught with difficulties. Its claims cannot be verified by any objective criteria. How can we know that a certain teaching, embraced by the Church, is really from the Holy Spirit, unless we measure it by the objective standard of Scripture? To simply assume that the Holy Spirit leads the Church in a hidden, mystical way is not acceptable as a means of verifying the vital truths of God.

Additionally, there is no guarantee that the Church, even if led by the Spirit, will always follow His lead. The fact that even the finest people can error makes us cautious of the claim that people in the Church will always inerrantly hear God’s voice. One need only to look at the example of Israel, who received direct revelation from God, yet strayed from Him. Through Jeremiah, God reproved His Old Testament people, “How can you say, ‘We are wise, and the law of the LORD is with us?’ But behold, the lying pen of the scribes has

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<sup>950</sup>Школа начальной катехизации.

<sup>951</sup>Noted in Clendenin, *Eastern Orthodox Christianity*, p. 106-16; Fairbairn, *Partakers*, p. 5-20.

<sup>952</sup>Noted in Railes, p. 10.

<sup>953</sup>Fairbairn, *Partakers*, p. 6.



made {it} into a lie” (Jer 8:8).<sup>954</sup> It is equally possible that the Church, having received God’s revelation, might also, at least for a time, stray from Him and distort the revelation it received.

We must also consider that in the history of God’s revelation, we observe without exception that He revealed Himself not to His people as a whole, but to specially chosen people, such as Moses, David, Isaiah, Peter, Paul, etc.<sup>955</sup> Even at the Jerusalem Council, when James claimed, “It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us” (Acts 15:28), he was speaking as a representative not of the entire Church, but of the participants in the Council, i.e., “the apostles and elders” (Acts 15:6).

It is also notable that when Jesus promised the direction of the Holy Spirit in knowing the truth (Jn 14:26; 16:13), He was speaking primarily to His apostles. The Spirit would remind *only them* of “all that I said to you” (Jn 14:26), and to *only them* He would “disclose... what is to come.” (Jn 16:13). Assistance from the Spirit, of course, is available to all believers, but only in a secondary sense. The authorized representatives of Christ’s teaching are those that He personally appointed – the Twelve Apostles. In their capacity as apostles, they received special inspiration from the Spirit to write an infallible text. There are no grounds to claim that such an “infallible” guidance by the Spirit extends to the entire Church for all time.

Furthermore, the claim that the Church gave us the New Testament is false. The Spirit gave us the New Testament not through the Church *per se*, but through specially chosen ministers of the Church, namely the apostles.<sup>956</sup> God also used them to establish the organized Church, of which they serve as its foundation, with Jesus Christ as its cornerstone (Eph 2:20). The New Testament differs from the Church, however, in that the former is infallible, whereas the latter is still in process. Consequently, the former is the preferred source for obtaining God’s truth.<sup>957</sup>

Concerning Paul’s teaching in 2 Cor 3:3-6, that “the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life,” here Paul is contrasting life under the Law to life in the Gospel. Moreover, a personal relationship with Lord, as described in Jeremiah 31:34, in no way eliminates the need for direction from God’s Word. In both Old and New Testaments, God exhorts His people to seek Him through His Word (see Josh 1:8; Ps 1:1-3; Ps 119; Prov 4:20-22; Matt 4:4; Кол. 3:16; Acts 20:32; 1 Pet 2:2).

## **b. The Gates of Hades Will Not Prevail (Matt 16:18)**

Jesus promised that the “the gates of Hades will not overpower (the Church)” (Matt 16:18). Does this mean that the Church cannot error in doctrine? A more careful reading of this verse rules out that possibility. In Jewish literature of the time, the expression “gates of Hades” refers to the power of death.<sup>958</sup> Therefore, Jesus is promising here that death cannot overpower the Church. Jesus was assuring His disciples that the Church itself cannot die, i.e., cease to exist.<sup>959</sup> Therefore, the verse is not speaking of the infallibility of the

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<sup>954</sup>Railes, p. 11. If some object that the Old Testament order does not apply to the Church, then we may respond that Orthodox and Catholic rituals and order of worship derive to a great degree from the Old Testament (see Geisler, *Roman Catholics and Evangelicals*, p. 186).

<sup>955</sup>An exception to this is when God revealed Himself on Mount Sinai before the entire nation. Yet, it is interesting to note the people’s reaction: “‘Now then why should we die? For this great fire will consume us; if we hear the voice of the LORD our God any longer, then we will die. For who is there of all flesh who has heard the voice of the living God speaking from the midst of the fire, as we {have,} and lived? ‘Go near and hear all that the LORD our God says; then speak to us all that the LORD our God speaks to you, and we will hear and do {it.}’ The LORD heard the voice of your words when you spoke to me, and the LORD said to me, ‘I have heard the voice of the words of this people which they have spoken to you. They have done well in all that they have spoken’” (Deut 5:25-28). So then, both God and Israel preferred having a mediator pass on God’s revelation to His people.

<sup>956</sup>A detailed discussion of the formation of the New Testament canon is found in chapter 3 above.

<sup>957</sup>Fairbairn, *Partakers*, p. 9.

<sup>958</sup>Blomberg C. *Matthew* // *The New American commentary*. – Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1992. – P. 253; Hagner D. A. *Matthew 14–28* // *Word Biblical commentary*. – Dallas, TX: Word, 1998. – P. 471.

<sup>959</sup>Blomberg, p. 253; Hagner, p. 471; Morris L. *The Gospel according to Matthew* // *The Pillar New Testament commentary*. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans; Leicester, England: Intervarsity, 1992. – P. 425.

Church, but of its indestructibility. The Church will triumphantly persevere through every trial and, in the end, emerge victorious.

On the one hand, the above-mentioned interpretation agrees with the Orthodox claim that true doctrine will stand the test of time. In other words, since the Church is indestructible, errant doctrines or movements cannot remain in it indefinitely. Eventually, Jesus will present to Himself “the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing” (Eph 5:27). Does this mean, then, that the Orthodox Church, which traces its history to the post-apostolic times, is the true representation of this indestructible Church? Not necessarily.

Our interpretation of Matthew 16:18 fully corresponds to Protestant faith as well. The indestructible nature of the Church does not necessarily imply that the Church cannot diverge from true faith for a period of time. The experience of Israel testifies that this can indeed occur. When Paul describes the apostasy of Israel, in fact, he warns the Corinthian church, “Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come” (1 Cor 10:11).

Therefore, Jesus’ promise in Matthew 16:18 can be fulfilled in that the Church survived a period of apostasy during the Middle Ages and experienced revival during the Protestant Reformation. So then, we can regard the existence and success of the Protestant movement as a fulfillment of Jesus’ promise: “The gates of Hades will not overpower (the Church).”

In connection with what we have said thus far, we must clarify the question, “What exactly is the Church?” When Jesus promised that the Church was indestructible, which “Church” did He have in mind? Can the Orthodox substantiate that God’s promises relate only to them? Does their longevity prove that they enjoy the status of being the one, true Church?

When we turn to God’s Word for a definition of the Church, however, we discover that the Church consists only of truly born-again believers in Jesus Christ as Son of God and Savior. The key passage on this is 1 Corinthians 12:13, where Paul writes, “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body... we were all made to drink of one Spirit.” Consequently, when a person receives the Holy Spirit in the New Birth, he/she is, speaking figuratively, “baptized” by that same Spirit into the Body of Christ, that is, he/she is engrafted into the Church.<sup>960</sup>

The Church, then, consists of all true believers in Jesus worldwide throughout all time.<sup>961</sup> On that basis, we can conclude that inclusion in the Kingdom of God is not limited to members of any certain Christian confession, but includes all true believers regardless of confessional preference. The Bible instructs us, “The firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, ‘The Lord knows those who are His’” (2 Tim 2:19).

All descriptions of the Church in Scripture, both literal and figurative, relate to its spiritual condition and quality. There is no indication that the Church will have an uninterrupted historical continuation in one ecclesiastical organization. In Scripture, the Church is characterized not by organizational stability, but by spiritual excellence. Certainly, the Church will continue its existence, since it is indestructible. Yet, instances can occur where a certain organized Christian confession may cease to manifest the necessary spiritual qualities that characterize the Church. Then, God may raise up other confessions or movements that more faithfully reflect the spiritual essence of the Church.

Therefore, in order for the Orthodox to prove that it is the true Church, they must demonstrate not that their movement historically traces back to the beginning of Church history, but that it manifests the necessary spiritual qualities that characterize the true Church of Christ. Yet, even if they are able to so do, this would in no way exclude non-Orthodox believers in Jesus Christ, which hold to sound doctrine and produce appropriate spiritual fruit, from being considered true Christians as well. Furthermore, the claim that only Orthodoxy has

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<sup>960</sup>In volume 4 of this series, in the chapter on water baptism, we will demonstrate that the New Birth does not come through water baptism, but through personal faith.

<sup>961</sup>Mueller J. T. Christian dogmatics. – St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 1955. – P. 541.

apostolic foundation is unconvincing. Apostolic foundation consists not in a succession list dating back to the apostles, but preserving apostolic teaching, contained in the New Testament.<sup>962</sup>

### **c. The Church as the Pillar and Support of the Truth (1 Tim 3:15)**

Does the fact that the Church is the “pillar and support of the truth” guarantee that God will prevent the Church from error? First, we note that the verse does not claim that the Church is the source of truth, but only its “pillar and support.” Second, this verse was written by an apostle, Paul. In the verses preceding, he writes more about his authority over the Church: “I am writing these things to you, hoping to come to you before long; but in case I am delayed, {I write} so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God...” (1 Tim 3:14-15a). So then, if an apostle has authority to define the status of the Church in relation to God’s truth, then in doctrinal matters an apostle has more authority than the Church, and we are advised to heed, first of all, the apostle’s words before the Church’s.

Finally, it is vital to consider that the phrase “pillar and support” does not necessarily describe the condition of the Church at any given time, but rather its intended function. God’s intention is for the Church to preserve the truth and advance it. Yet, accomplishing this mission does not come automatically, but requires the participation of the Church. This is why Paul instructs Timothy “how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God.”

It is implied here that if Timothy (or other leaders in the Ephesian church) do not conduct themselves appropriately, then the intended function of the Church to preserve truth may not be fulfilled. We may draw a parallel with the intended function of the Old Testament temple. God appointed the temple a “house of prayer,” but God’s people of that day transformed it into “a robbers’ den” (Matt 21:13). Similarly, God has ordained the Church to be the “pillar and support of the truth,” but living up to that status requires the Church’s cooperation. It is certainly possible that the Church, by not conducting itself as needed, could, at least for a time, distort God’s truth.

### **d. The Sufficiency of Scripture and the “Supplemental” Function of Tradition**

Although sometimes it is claimed that in Orthodox Faith, Sacred Tradition functions only in the *interpretation* of Scripture, this is not actually so. Orthodox share with Roman Catholics the view that Tradition may *supplement* the truths revealed in Scripture. We recall the above-cited statements that the Bible “does not contain all the doctrine and teachings of Christ,” and that “God did not cease to reveal His will to people after the final apostle placed the final period in his book.” In addition, one may list a number of Orthodox doctrines that are weakly, if at all, supported by Scripture.<sup>963</sup> In defense of such positions, Orthodoxy appeals not so much to Scripture as to the works of the Fathers.

According to Evangelical Faith, the Bible is fully sufficient for instruction in the Church and revelation of the will of God. We do acknowledge, along with Orthodoxy, that God cannot be contained in a book. Yet, neither is He contained in the “mystical experience” of the Church. Therefore, this “intuitive” knowledge of God cannot claim, on this basis, superiority to Scriptural revelation.

God’s goal in revelation is not to reveal all that is possible to know about Him, but rather that which is necessary for doing His will. Paul speaks of a time when he will see God “face to face,” and “know fully just as I also have been fully known” (1 Cor 13:12), yet that day has not yet come. In another place, Paul claims that Scripture is “profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of

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<sup>962</sup>In volume 4 of this series, we will further discuss the definition of the Church.

<sup>963</sup>In particular: apophatic theology, theosis, God’s uncreated energies, the aerial toll house, veneration of icons and much more.

God *may be adequate, equipped for every good work*" (2 Tim 3:16-17).<sup>964</sup> This verse clearly confirms our conviction of Scripture's sufficiency.

In response to the objection that John was not able to say all that could be said about Jesus' life (Jn 21:25), we note that John did write enough to bring his readers to faith: "Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name" (Jn 20:30-31). Therefore, the biblical revelation, although not all encompassing, is nonetheless sufficient to direct an individual's spiritual life. Concerning 3 John 13-14, it is obvious that a personal encounter with an apostle is superior to written correspondence with him. Tradition, however, does not offer us a personal encounter with an apostle, but only what rumor says that some apostle or another might have taught.<sup>965</sup>

Moreover, when we look at the Fathers' writings, it is clearly evident that they in no way considered their works of equal value to Scripture.<sup>966</sup> Augustine makes a valuable contribution here:

As regards our writings, which are not a rule of faith or practice, but only a help to edification, we may suppose that they contain some things falling short of the truth in obscure and recondite matters, and that these mistakes may or may not be corrected in subsequent treatises.... Such writings are read with the right of judgment, and without any obligation to believe. In order to leave room for such profitable discussions of difficult questions, there is a distinct boundary line separating all productions subsequent to apostolic times from the authoritative canonical books of the Old and New Testaments (*Reply to Faustus the Manichian*, 11.5).

In addition, he wrote to Jerome:

I do not need to say that I do not suppose you to wish your books to be read like those of prophets or of apostles, concerning which it would be wrong to doubt that they are free from error (*Letter* 82.3).

So then, any supposed "further revelation" from God through the Church can in no way add to that which He has already revealed in the Old and New Testaments. The New Testament writers warn us about this very thing:

- Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints. (Jude 3).
- But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! (Gal 1:8).<sup>967</sup>
- I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book; (Rev 22:18).

We acknowledge that the Reformers (at least Luther and Calvin) respected Church tradition. Yet on the other hand, they rejected many Roman Catholic doctrines that were based on tradition alone and insisted that

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<sup>964</sup>Paul, of course, meant only the Old Testament. Yet, when he uses the term "Scripture," he includes all works that qualify for that designation, both present and future (from Paul's time perspective), including our New Testament.

<sup>965</sup>Geisler, *Roman Catholics and Evangelicals*, c. 189-190.

<sup>966</sup>See Justin Martyr, *1 Apology*, 39, 66; Tertullian, *The Prescription against Heretics*, 6; *1 Clement*, 5, 42, 47; Ignatius, *To the Romans*, 4; *To the Magnesians*, 7; Papias (see Eusebius, *Church history*, 3.39.4), Polycarp, *To the Philipppians*, 3, 6; *Epistle of Barnabas*, 5, 8; Irenaeus, *Against heresies*, 3.1.1; 3.14.2-3; 3.5.1-2.

<sup>967</sup>It is interesting to note that the phrase παρ' ὃ εὐηγγελισάμεθα ὑμῖν may be translated either "contrary to that, which we preached to you," or "in addition to that, which we preached to you."

Church tradition must submit to Scripture and be verified by it. Although the Reformers did not intend to eliminate Church tradition, they were nonetheless intent on “purifying” it. Bray appropriately comments that although Luther quoted the Fathers, he was “careful to distinguish the true from the false in the fathers, and is not afraid to reject Augustine when necessary.”<sup>968</sup>

#### e. The “Interpretive” Function of Tradition

Orthodox believers claim that the correct and proper interpretation of Scripture is found only in the writings of the Church Fathers. We also affirm the need for correct interpretation, but challenge the claim that the Fathers alone possessed it.

Supposedly, the Fathers enjoyed the inspiration (more precisely, the “enlightenment”) of the Spirit in their interpretive work.<sup>969</sup> If that be so, then they themselves were not aware of it, since they nowhere claim that privilege. We just provided examples where the Fathers refrained from comparing their works with those of the apostles. We may again cite Augustine in this regard: “I confess to your Charity that I have learned to yield this respect and honour only to the canonical books of Scripture: of these alone do I most firmly believe that the authors were completely free from error” (*Letter* 82.3). The claim that the Fathers alone possessed a special inspiration or enlightenment from the Lord is unsubstantiated.

If a need exists for an *authoritative* interpretation of Scripture, then that implies that such a commentary on Scripture communicates God’s truth more clearly than the inspired books themselves. The contradiction is clear. It does not aid the Orthodox position to claim that the Fathers’ teaching is based on oral apostolic tradition. That would be tantamount to saying that oral tradition from the apostles, passed on through many persons over time, more clearly communicates God’s truth than the written works of the apostles themselves!<sup>970</sup>

Scripture commentaries, of course, can prove very beneficial. Yet, we reject the *necessity* for an authoritative interpretation. The Bible itself is capable to clearly and effectively communicate God’s truth to the reader. As Athanasius stated, “The tokens of truth are more exact as drawn from Scripture, than from other sources.”<sup>971</sup>

We also take into consideration that the New Testament is, in essence, an interpretation of the meaning of Christ’s appearance in the world. The apostles, led and inspired by the Spirit, give us this insight. Warfield comments, “The entirety of the New Testament is but the explanatory word accompanying and giving its effect to the fact of Christ.”<sup>972</sup> However, if an interpretation of the apostles is *necessary*, then we will be operating on an interpretation of an interpretation of the significance of Christ, made by people who have no claim to Spirit-inspiration. Why, then, should we bypass the original inspired interpretation of Christ, given by His apostles?

We encounter yet another difficulty with the Orthodox position. If the right to interpret Scripture lies primarily, if not exclusively, with the Church Fathers, then who has the right to interpret the Fathers?<sup>973</sup> When we read the works of the Fathers, it is evident that their writings are much more complicated and theologically/philosophically sophisticated than the Bible. If the Orthodox respond that the present Church hierarchy has the right to interpret the Fathers, we ask on what basis this is so. The only recourse the Orthodox have is to claim that the “intuitive” knowledge of the truth that the Church possess enables their

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<sup>968</sup>Bray G. Biblical interpretation, past and present. – Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1996. – P. 214.

<sup>969</sup>Кypaев, p. 175.

<sup>970</sup>Geisler, Roman Catholics and Evangelical, p. 190.

<sup>971</sup>*Defense of the Nicene definition*, 32.

<sup>972</sup>Warfield B. B. The works of Benjamin B. Warfield. – Volume 1: Revelation and inspiration. – Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2008. – P. 28.

<sup>973</sup>Horton M. Response to Bradley Nassif // Gundry S., Stamoolis J. Three views on Eastern Orthodoxy and Evangelicalism. – Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004. – P. 128.

clergy to properly interpret the Fathers. Yet, we have already demonstrated the weakness and implausibility of this position.

What about Peter's warning that in Scripture "are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort" (2 Pet 3:16)? Notice that, in response to this possible threat, Peter does not recommend that his readers avoid personal interpretation of Scripture. In fact, they must exercise personal interpretation of these words of Peter in order to heed them! In addition, Luke praises the inhabitants of Berea because they personally tested the preaching of Paul against Scripture (Acts 17:11).

Moreover, the majority of New Testament epistles were addressed not to Church hierarchy, so that they would interpret them for the laity, but to the congregations themselves. Especially notable is the Paul's greeting to the Philippians: "Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons" (Phil 1:1). This epistle was intended, first and foremost, for the "saints in Christ Jesus," and only after that for the "overseers and deacons."

#### **f. Disruption of Church Unity**

Orthodoxy objects that if Scripture interpretation is not correlated with Sacred Tradition and is not regulated by the Church hierarchy, then each individual will interpret the Bible as they deem best, which will undermine the unity of the Church. We affirm that God has appointed leaders in the Church (Eph 4:11; 1 Cor 12:28; Acts 20:28) and, as a rule, believers should submit to their leadership (1 Pet 5:5; Heb 13:17). Yet, there are instances when submission to Church leadership is inappropriate.

A clear example is the case with Gaius, recorded in John's Third Epistle. The apostle John praises Gaius that in spite of Diotrephes, the congregation's leader, forbidding him to do so, he received the messengers sent by the apostle (v. 5-10). This indicates that loyalty to one of the Twelve Apostles has priority over loyalty to a congregational leader. In addition, in the Book of Revelation, Jesus praises church members who reject those who "call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them {to be} false" (Rev 2:2). We also recall a point earlier made, that Luke praises the inhabitant of Berea because they personally tested the preaching of Paul against Scripture (Acts 17:11).

In the Old Testament, we learn that, at that time, God ordained two types of leaders: regular and charismatic. The regular leadership consisted of the kings and the priests. Yet, there were times when the regular leadership did not follow the Lord and led the people away from Him. God responded by raising up "charismatic" leaders, that is, the prophets, who rebuked the figures in power and introduced reform. In such cases, it behooved God's regularly appointed leaders to submit to the voice of God through the prophets.

Similarly, it is God's usual order for believers to obey congregational leaders. At the same time, every believer has the right and even the responsibility to object to any teaching or interpretation of Scripture that, in his/her opinion, leads people away from the truth. Again, each Christian confession has the right to define doctrine and enforce them on members of that confession. At the same time, each member of any given confession has the right to suspend their participation in that group if, on biblical grounds, he/she is in sharp disagreement with its teaching. Yet, such a person can still consider himself/herself a genuine Christian.

Freedom does not alarm God. He created persons free, so that they would voluntarily come to Him and follow Him. He does not gain our allegiance by coercion. In a similar fashion, true Church unity does not come about by suppressing all opinions that differ from confessional positions and excommunicating all dissenters.

Suppression and excommunication, of course, are necessary to maintain order in the congregations and for control of heresy. On the other hand, since no one confession is likely correct in all its doctrines and practices, we have no guarantee that church discipline will result in genuine church unity. In spite of applying strict disciplinary measures, Orthodoxy historically has not achieved the desired end of unity. For centuries, debates have raged with Orthodox "Old Believers," and strife and intrigue between rival patriarchs abound.

The unity of the Church is a natural (more precisely, "supernatural") process – the result of the spiritual maturation of all members of the Body with the aid of the teaching gifts of the Church (from various

confessions) “until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ” (Eph 4:13). The present divisions among true Christians are a temporary phenomenon. To the degree that the Body matures, it will progressively manifest more and more of its intrinsic unity, based not on hierarchical decrees, but on voluntary cooperation.

Concerning the claim that appeal to the Fathers is the only escape from subjectivity in interpretation, see the discussion on postmodern thought in chapter 14 below.

### **g. Witness of the Church Fathers**

As was mentioned earlier, in defense of their position on Church tradition, Orthodox appeal to the writings of the Church Fathers. At the same time, is it not circular reasoning to appeal to Church tradition (in the form of the teaching of the Fathers) in defense of Church tradition? Moreover, we know that the Fathers themselves gave priority to Scripture over Tradition. Irenaeus wrote,

We have learned from none others the plan of our salvation, than from those through whom the Gospel has come down to us, which they did at one time proclaim in public, and, at a later period, by the will of God, handed down to us in the Scriptures, to be the ground and pillar of our faith (*Against Heresies*, 3.1.1).

Gregory of Nyssa also affirms,

We make the Holy Scriptures the rule and the measure of every tenet; we necessarily fix our eyes upon that, and approve that alone which may be made to harmonize with the intention of those writings (*On the soul and the resurrection*).

Augustine agrees,

This Mediator, having spoken what He judged sufficient first by the prophets, then by His own lips, and afterwards by the apostles, has besides produced the Scripture which is called canonical, which has paramount authority, and to which we yield assent in all matters of which we ought not to be ignorant, and yet cannot know of ourselves (*City of God*, 11.3).

We must also note that not all the Church Fathers held such a high view of Church tradition. Cyril of Jerusalem comments,

Have thou ever in thy mind this seal, which for the present has been lightly touched in my discourse, by way of summary, but shall be stated, should the Lord permit, to the best of my power with the proof from the Scriptures. For concerning the divine and holy mysteries of the Faith, not even a casual statement must be delivered without the Holy Scriptures; nor must we be drawn aside by mere plausibility and artifices of speech. Even to me, who tell thee these things, give not absolute credence, unless thou receive the proof of the things which I announce from the Divine Scriptures. For this salvation which we believe depends not on ingenious reasoning, but on demonstration of the Holy Scriptures (*Catechetical lectures*, 4.17).

We also question the reliability of Church tradition in light of internal contradictions that exist between various early Christian writers. A 12th-century critic, Peter Abelard, composed a work called *Sic et non* (which

means “Yes and No”), in which he compared the teachings of the Fathers and discovered 158 instances of divergences between them or with Scripture.<sup>974</sup>

The Orthodox respond that the teaching of one Father in isolation is not authoritative, but rather the agreement between them. Yet, this claim encounters an inconsistency. If the Fathers were truly inspired (or “enlightened”) to give the authoritative interpretation of the Bible, then one would expect more precision in their work, reflecting the mind of the Spirit, which supposedly stood behind their individual efforts.<sup>975</sup> Some Fathers, in fact, were given such exalted titles as the “God-bearing teacher,” (Athanasius), “the great eye of the Church” (Basil the Great), “the philosopher of philosophers” (Clement of Alexandria), and the one who “truly spoke of God” (Dionysius).<sup>976</sup> In addition, the fact that the Fathers lived in antiquity does not necessarily force the conclusion that their understanding of God’s truth was superior to others. In other words, “antiquity” does not necessarily imply “correctness.”<sup>977</sup>

#### **h. “Tradition” in the New Testament**

Since the word “tradition” appears in the New Testament (1 Cor 11:2, 23; 15:3; 2 Thes. 2:15; 1 Tim 6:20; 2 Tim 1:12), Orthodoxy concludes that: (1) Tradition preceded the New Testament, (2) the New Testament is one expression of Sacred Tradition, and (3) Tradition contains more than what was recorded in the New Testament.<sup>978</sup> Yet, we see no indication that by the term “tradition” Paul meant anything different than was written in his epistles or in other New Testament writings. Paul certainly did not write one thing, but say another.

It is also imperative to note that *Paul himself* passed on to the churches this oral tradition, which consisted of the apostolic teaching and testimony. It is without doubt that the oral teaching of an apostle would not differ from his written instruction. Subsequent Church tradition, though, is not passed on by an apostle, but through many intermediaries and thereby forfeits its authoritative status in comparison with the written apostolic works.

Furthermore, we can claim without hesitation that in the course of human history, the apostolic teaching, which Paul called “tradition,” was not preserved without corruption. We have already referred to many doctrines held by Catholics and Orthodox that possess no biblical (i.e., apostolic) support, and to which no passage of Scripture makes reference. It is clear that the apostolic tradition underwent change.

Hirsch makes the following interesting observation. He defines tradition as the history of the interpretation of a text. This means that every generation of interpreters accepts the already accepted understanding of a text, alters it some, and passes it on to the next generation. Therefore, unlike the biblical canon, tradition is unstable and, consequently, cannot serve as the norm for establishing Christian doctrine.<sup>979</sup> In the context of his refutation of the hermeneutical method of Gadamer, Hirsch writes, “Tradition cannot really function as a stable, normative concept, since it is in fact a changing, descriptive concept.”<sup>980</sup>

Finally, the New Testament does not always speak positively about tradition. In Colossians 2:8, it is said, “See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of

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<sup>974</sup>Chavalas M. W. The historian, the believer, and the OT: A study in the supposed conflict of faith and reason // Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society. 1993. № 36. P. 148-149; Reed J. E., Prevost R. A history of Christian education. – Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1993. – P. 132.

<sup>975</sup>Some early, respected Orthodox commentators used the term “inspired” for the works of the Church Fathers (Maximus the Confessor, *Commentary on the Lord’s Prayer*; Theodore the Studite, *Letters*, 1.19; Photios I of Constantinople, *Letter 79*)(see Pelikan, v. 2, p. 19).

<sup>976</sup>Pelikan, v. 2, p. 19-20.

<sup>977</sup>Clendenin, *Eastern Orthodox Christianity*, p. 111-114.

<sup>978</sup>Noted in Clendenin, *Eastern Orthodox Christianity*, p. 108; Fairbairn, *Partakers*, p. 9; Railes, p. 24.

<sup>979</sup>Hirsch E. D. *Validity in interpretation*. – New Haven: Yale, 1967. – C. 247-250

<sup>980</sup>*Ibid*, c. 250.



men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.”<sup>981</sup> We also take into consideration that a system similar to the present Church tradition existed at the time of Jesus, where the Jews acknowledged two lines of transmission for God’s revelation: written (*Tanakh*) and oral (*Mishna*). In His teaching, however, Jesus never appealed to Jewish tradition, but actually spoke out against it. Mark chapter 7 contains the following rebuke of the Pharisees: “...invalidating the word of God by your tradition which you have handed down” (see Mk 7:1-13).<sup>982</sup>

### **i. Use of the “Rule of Faith”**

As we mentioned earlier, in defining true Christian faith, the Early Church operated not only on New Testament writings (in the form they existed at that time), but also on the “rule of faith.” Very likely, Irenaeus details this rule in the following passage:

The Church, though dispersed throughout the whole world, even to the ends of the earth, has received from the apostles and their disciples this faith: [She believes] in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are in them; and in one Christ Jesus, the Son of God, who became incarnate for our salvation; and in the Holy Spirit, who proclaimed through the prophets the dispensations of God, and the advents, and the birth from a virgin, and the passion, and the resurrection from the dead, and the ascension into heaven in the flesh of the beloved Christ Jesus, our Lord, and His [future] manifestation from heaven in the glory of the Father “to gather all things in one,” and to raise up anew all flesh of the whole human race, in order that to Christ Jesus, our Lord, and God, and Saviour, and King, according to the will of the invisible Father, “every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess” to Him, and that He should execute just judgment towards all; that He may send “spiritual wickednesses,” and the angels who transgressed and became apostates, together with the ungodly, and unrighteous, and wicked, and profane among men, into everlasting fire; but may, in the exercise of His grace, confer immortality on the righteous, and holy, and those who have kept His commandments, and have persevered in His love, some from the beginning [of their Christian course], and others from [the date of] their repentance, and may surround them with everlasting glory (*Against heresies*, 1.10.1).

First, we notice here that the contents of this passage in no way differs from New Testament teaching. Irenaeus indirectly acknowledges this correspondence between the rule of faith and the New Testament when he writes, “How should it be if the apostles themselves had not left us writings? Would it not be necessary, [in that case,] to follow the course of the tradition which they handed down to those to whom they did commit the Churches?” (*Against heresies*, 3.4.1). In another place, it seems that Irenaeus equates Church tradition with the apostolic writings: “Since, therefore, the tradition from the apostles does thus exist in the Church, and is permanent among us, let us revert to the Scriptural proof furnished by those apostles who did also write the Gospel” (*Against heresies*, 3.5.1). The Didache warns, “Do thou in no wise forsake the commandments of the Lord; but thou shalt keep what thou hast received, neither adding *thereto* nor taking away *therefrom*” (4.13). Therefore, it is improper to employ the conception “rule of faith” to support any doctrine that is foreign to the New Testament.

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<sup>981</sup>Railes, c. 24; Clendenin, Eastern Orthodox Christianity, c. 108.

<sup>982</sup>Railes, c. 25; Clendenin, Eastern Orthodox Christianity, c. 114.

Second, Irenaeus and Tertullian appeal to the rule of faith in their battle against heresy. Therefore, the rule of faith is not a method for revealing new truth, but a way of preserving the truth already revealed to the apostles.<sup>983</sup> Lane agrees,

Irenaeus appealed to apostolic Scripture (New Testament) and to the apostolic teaching handed down (tradition) in the apostolic churches. The latter was not intended to *add* to the message of the New Testament. It was especially because the Gnostics did not accept the New Testament that Irenaeus had to appeal to tradition.<sup>984</sup>

In the following excerpt, Irenaeus confirms that the proper use of the rule of faith is for recognizing false teaching:

In like manner he also who retains unchangeable in his heart the rule of the truth which he received by means of baptism, will doubtless recognize the names, the expressions, and the parables taken from the Scriptures, but will by no means acknowledge the blasphemous use which these men make of them (*Against heresies*, 1.9.4).

Irenaeus also commends the literal interpretation of Scripture for refuting heresy:

In doing so, however, they disregard the order and the connection of the Scriptures.... these persons patch together old wives' fables, and then endeavour, by violently drawing away from their proper connection, words, expressions, and parables whenever found, to adapt the oracles of God to their baseless fictions (*Against heresies*, 1.8.1)

Then, again, collecting a set of expressions and names scattered here and there [in Scripture], they twist them, as we have already said, from a natural to a non-natural sense (*Against heresies*, 1.9.4).

Third, the Early Church valued the rule of faith **not** as an expression of Tradition, mystically obtained by the Church, but because it was established by the apostles and was held by the congregations established by the apostles. We recall the words of Irenaeus: "Should we not have recourse to the most ancient Churches with which the apostles held constant intercourse?" (*Against heresies*, 3.4.1). So then, the rule of faith did not arise from the Church, but from the ministry of the apostles, just as the New Testament did.

Fourth, in the course of time, as the memory of the apostolic testimony began to wane among the congregations, it became necessary to rely more on the written apostolic works than on oral tradition. Written sources are more stable and reliable. Bahnsen comments,

The drawback to having revelation in oral form (or tradition) is that it is much more subject to various kinds of corrupting influences that stem from man's imperfect abilities and sinful nature (e.g., lapses of memory and intentional distortion)... a written document is capable of universal distribution through repeated copying, and yet it can be preserved in various kinds of depositories from generation to generation. As such it can function both as a fixed standard by which to test all doctrines of men and as a pure guide to the way of life.<sup>985</sup>

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<sup>983</sup>Greer R. A. *The Christian Bible and its interpretation* // Meeks W. A. *Early Biblical interpretation*. – Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1986. – P. 197; Lane T. *A concise history of Christian thought*. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2006. – P. 14.

<sup>984</sup>Lane, p. 14

<sup>985</sup>Bahnsen G. *The Inerrancy of the autograph* // Geisler N. *Inerrancy*. – Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1980. – P. 155.

Finally, we take into consideration that Irenaeus termed the “ground and pillar of our faith” not oral tradition, but apostolic writings:

We have learned from none others the plan of our salvation, than from those through whom the Gospel has come down to us, which they did at one time proclaim in public, and, at a later period, by the will of God, handed down to us in the Scriptures, to be the ground and pillar of our faith (*Against Heresies*, 3.1.1).

## **B. The Roman Catholic Position**

### **1. Description**

Roman Catholicism heartily affirms that the Bible is God’s inspired Word. At the same time, besides Scripture, there exists another “line of transmission” for God’s revelation – Sacred Tradition. It is felt that the teachings of the Church Fathers and other recognized teachers (like Thomas Aquinas) along with the decisions of the great Church Councils are also authoritative and reliable sources of God’s truth.<sup>986</sup> According to the Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church:<sup>987</sup>

Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture, then, are bound closely together, and communicate one with the other. For both of them, flowing out from the same divine well-spring, come together in some fashion to form one thing, and move towards the same goal. Each of them makes present and fruitful in the Church the mystery of Christ, who promised to remain with his own “always, to the close of the age” (№ 80).

As a result the Church, to whom the transmission and interpretation of Revelation is entrusted, does not derive her certainty about all revealed truths from the holy Scriptures alone. Both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honoured with equal sentiments of devotion and reverence (№ 82).

Catholics hold that the Church has the exclusive right to give the authoritative interpretation of Scripture. To the Church, as noted above, “the transmission and interpretation of Revelation is entrusted.” Raymond writes, “The church has the power to determine infallibly the meaning of Scripture in matters of faith and morals,” and, “the liturgical and doctrinal life of the church constitute a ‘hermeneutical place’ where Scripture speaks most truly.”<sup>988</sup>

The primary feature of the Catholic view, however, is the following. The authorized organ for defining Christian faith and practice is the Magisterium of the Catholic Church, which consists of the entire college of bishops headed by the Pope.<sup>989</sup> In consort with the college of bishops, the Pope makes the final determinations about the official teachings of the Catholic Church. The Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church states:

The task of giving an authentic interpretation of the Word of God, whether in its written form or in the form of Tradition, has been entrusted to the living teaching office of the Church alone. Its authority in

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<sup>986</sup>Here we are representing the traditional Catholic view. Some modern Catholics are ready to affirm that Scripture is the only authoritative source of truth, but tradition is necessary for its proper interpretation (Geisler N. L., MacKenzie R. E. *Roman Catholics and Evangelicals: Agreements and differences*. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1995. – P. 179-180).

<sup>987</sup>Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church. [https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/\\_INDEX.HTM](https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_INDEX.HTM).

<sup>988</sup>Raymond E. Brown R. E. Schneider S. M. *Hermeneutics* // Brown R. E., Fitzmyer J. A., Murphy R. E. *The New Jerome Biblical commentary*. – London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1968. – P. 1163-1164.

<sup>989</sup><http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magisterium>

this matter is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ. This means that the task of interpretation has been entrusted to the bishops in communion with the successor of Peter, the Bishop of Rome (№ 85).

Freemantle summarizes the conventional attitude of the Catholic toward the Bible:

As the Catholic sees it... it is not for him to “judge” the divine message, but only to receive it. Since he receives it from a living, teaching organ, he does not have to puzzle over the meaning of the revelation because the ever-present living magisterium (teaching office) can tell him exactly what the doctrine intends.<sup>990</sup>

In this view, the authority of the Church rests on “apostolic succession.” Catholics believe that Christ gave the apostles authority to establish the Church and rule it. The apostles, then, gave this authority to their successors, who, in turn, passed it on to their successors to the present day. It is claimed that the present day Roman Catholic Church now possesses that authority.

The Eastern Orthodox also recognize apostolic succession, yet they differ from the Catholics in that the latter claim that Peter occupied a place of supremacy among the Twelve, and his successor is the bishop of Rome, i.e., the Pope. The Pope, therefore, holds pride of place among all other bishops and has authority over the entire Church. His privileged position in the Church affords him the right to define the true interpretation of Scripture.

Roman Catholics appeal to Scripture itself to substantiate their claim of apostolic succession. For example, in Mark 3:14, Jesus chose twelve disciples “so that they would be with Him and that He {could} send them out to preach.” Moreover, before His ascension, the Lord directed His apostles, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations” (Matt 28:19), i.e. they became His representatives in the world. Other passages of Scripture speak of the apostles as the foundation of the Church (Eph 2:20; Rev 21:14). In addition, the apostles ordained others, passing on, it is claimed, the apostolic authority that they received from Christ (Acts 14:23; 2 Tim 1:6).

Special attention is paid to Matthew 16:18-19, where Jesus said, “I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.” Peter’s name means “rock.” Therefore, the “rock,” on which the Church is built, is thought to be Peter, to whom Jesus gave authority over the entire Church. Jesus then added, “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven,” which indicates that Peter and his successors have authority to give people access to God’s kingdom and to administer the sacraments. Jesus concluded by saying, “Whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.” This supposedly gives Peter the authority to forgive sins.

The following Church Fathers testify to an apostolic succession:

Let (the heretics) produce the original records of their churches; let them unfold the roll of their bishops, running down in due succession from the beginning in such a manner that [that first bishop of theirs] bishop shall be able to show for his ordainer and predecessor some one of the apostles or of apostolic men, – a man, moreover, who continued steadfast with the apostles. For this is the manner in which the apostolic churches transmit their registers: as the church of Smyrna, which records that Polycarp was placed therein by John; as also the church of Rome, which makes Clement to have been ordained in like manner by Peter. In exactly the same way the other churches likewise exhibit (their several worthies), whom, as having been appointed to their episcopal places by apostles, they regard as transmitters of the apostolic seed (Tertullian, *The Prescription against Heretics*, 32.1).

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<sup>990</sup>Freemantle A. – The Papal Encyclicals in their historical context: The teachings of the Popes. – New York, N.Y.: New American Library/Mentor, 1956. – P. 11, taken from Ankerberg J., Weldon J. Protestants and Catholics: Do they now agree? – Eugene, OR: Harvest House Pub., 1995. – P. 116.

It is within the power of all, therefore, in every Church, who may wish to see the truth, to contemplate clearly the tradition of the apostles manifested throughout the whole world; and we are in a position to reckon up those who were by the apostles instituted bishops in the Churches, and [to demonstrate] the succession of these men to our own times; those who neither taught nor knew of anything like what these [heretics] rave about (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.3.1).

Our apostles also knew, through our Lord Jesus Christ, that there would be strife on account of the office of the episcopate. For this reason, therefore, inasmuch as they had obtained a perfect fore-knowledge of this, they appointed those [ministers] already mentioned, and afterwards gave instructions, that when these should fall asleep, other approved men should succeed them in their ministry (Clement of Rome, *I Clement*, 44).

We also note the existence of ancient succession lists, dating back to Peter. Irenaeus, a bishop from the late second century, lists these successors of Peter: Linus, Clement, Evaristus, Alexander, Sixtus, Telephorus, Hyginus, Pius, Anicetus, Soter, Eleutherius (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.3.3).<sup>991</sup> Moreover, Irenaeus stressed the importance of submitting to the Roman Church: “For it is a matter of necessity that every Church should agree with this Church, on account of its pre-eminent authority, that is, the faithful everywhere, inasmuch as the apostolical tradition has been preserved continuously by those [faithful men] who exist everywhere” (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.3.2).

## 2. Evaluation

In spite of their common features, a fundamental difference nonetheless exists between the Catholic and Orthodox views on Sacred Tradition. Unlike the Catholics, the Orthodox do not recognize “two lines” of revelation: Scripture and Tradition. For the Orthodox, only one line of revelation exists – Sacred Tradition, of which Scripture is a component part. Also unlike Catholicism, Tradition and Scripture are not equal in weight in Orthodoxy; rather all other components of Sacred Tradition must align with the Bible.

The other main distinction from Orthodoxy, as noted above, is the Catholic view of the Pope’s role in defining Christian faith and practice. According to the First Vatican Council, if the Pope makes an official declaration of faith, his decree is infallible.<sup>992</sup> His authority, as mentioned earlier, derives from the teaching of apostolic succession. Let us, therefore, examine the doctrine of apostolic succession in general, and then its application to the bishop of Rome.

The teaching of apostolic succession encounters several problems. First, no biblical evidence exists to confirm the claim that the apostles intended to establish such a system in order to pass on their authority over the Church. All that is stated in Acts 14:23 and 2 Timothy 1:6 is that the apostles ordained ministers either for local churches, or as members of their apostolic team. Moreover, in New Testament times, the office of a bishop did not differ from the office of elder or pastor. The following passages equate these three offices with one another: 1 Pet 5:1-2; Tit 1:5-7; 1 Tim 3:1ff; Phil 1:1; Acts 20:28. There are different names for the same office. Therefore, the apostles did not set “bishops” over the Church, since a three-tiered church hierarchy (laity, “priests,” and bishops) did not exist at that time.

Also vital to note is that in the final epistles written by the preeminent apostles Peter and Paul before their executions, we see no mention of a transfer of authority to successors, which one would expect to see in their

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<sup>991</sup>Also see Tertullian, *The Prescription against Heretics*, 32.1. Yet, Tertullian’s list differs from Irenaeus’ in that Peter’s direct successor was not Linus, but Clement. Other inconsistencies are noted in succession lists (see A. T. Ehrhardt, *The apostolic succession in the first two centuries of the Church*. – London: 1953).

<sup>992</sup>During this council, Pope Pius IX declared, “I am the Tradition” (Clendenin D. B. *Orthodoxy on Scripture and tradition* // Westminster Theological Journal. 1995. № 57. P. 385).

“farewell” letters. This has special significance in Paul’s case, since he wrote his last epistle to Timothy, whom one might expect Paul to appoint as his successor. On the contrary, Paul’s last exhortation to his protégé Timothy was not to rule the Church in his place, but to preach the Word (2 Tim 4:1). Therefore, Timothy would not occupy Paul’s authoritative position in the Church, but rather continue his ministry of preaching.

The testimony of Clement of Rome, Irenaeus and Tertullian, however, do indicate a succession of leadership. This likely was done to preserve order in the Church and to ensure that the apostolic witness, also called the “rule of faith,” was preserved in the Early Church. The apostolic doctrine was preserved as well, of course, in the apostles’ inspired writings, and one would expect that as soon as the apostolic epistles were recognized and accessible to Christian congregations, their written witness would become the standard for future determinations of Christian faith and practice. In fact, the “successors of the apostles” themselves, i.e., the Church Fathers, held this exalted view of the New Testament writings, as we shall see later.

Second, the Bible teaches that Church leaders do not hold total sway over the Church, but in a sense, submit to the congregation. The New Testament instructs local churches to test claimants to the apostolic office (Rev 2:2; Gal 1:8). We can conclude that local congregations today have the same right to test Church leaders. The Church Father, Cyprian, in fact, who strongly supported the authority of Church leaders, nonetheless acknowledged that local congregations may reject unworthy ministers. We read from Cyprian’s 67th letter, “On which account a people obedient to the Lord’s precepts, and fearing God, ought to separate themselves from a sinful prelate, and not to associate themselves with the sacrifices of a sacrilegious priest, especially since they themselves have the power either of choosing worthy priests, or of rejecting unworthy ones” (67.3).

Third, many of the teachings of so-called “successors” of the apostles often differ markedly from the New Testament, which contains the very teachings of the apostles themselves.<sup>993</sup> Here, we must recall Paul’s warnings in Galatians 1:6-8 not to receive any teaching that differs from the apostolic witness.

Often Catholics (and Orthodox) defend their doctrinal positions by appealing to the antiquity of their organizations – that they can trace their history to the early years of Christianity. However, Kirby Riles insightfully comments that a confession that departs from original biblical teaching cannot claim, no matter how old their organization may be, preeminence over “newer” movements that hold to the more ancient, true biblical witness, found in the New Testament.<sup>994</sup>

So then, in light of the above considerations, it is fair to conclude that the doctrine of apostolic succession is highly suspect and cannot serve as justification for the Catholic or Orthodox claim that the Church’s leaders have the exclusive right to interpret Scripture. We in no way deny, though, that the Church has an apostolic foundation. It consists, however, not in modern-day bishops claiming to have apostolic authority, but in the teachings of the apostles of Christ themselves found in the New Testament and interpreted in accordance with standard methodology of biblical hermeneutics (see chapter 7).

Next, we will examine the unique claim that the Pope enjoys supremacy in the Church. First, we note that the Early Church did not so esteem the bishop of Rome, but that this view developed over time. To this day, in fact, many segments of Christendom still do not recognize the Pope’s preeminence, namely Orthodox and Protestants. In addition, the bishop of Rome did not always claim this supremacy. Leo I first claimed sole ecclesiastical rule only in the sixth century.<sup>995</sup> In the subsequent century, the title “Universal Bishop” was conferred on Boniface III.<sup>996</sup> Before that time, the sixth canon of the Council of Nicea (325) placed the bishop of Rome on par with the other Christian bishops, each of which had jurisdiction over their respective “territories.” The Council of Chalcedon (451) confirmed this order.<sup>997</sup>

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<sup>993</sup>Concerning Catholic belief, we can mention the doctrines of Mary’s eternal virginity, her sinlessness and assumption, purgatory, the sacrifice of Christ during the mass, and many others.

<sup>994</sup>Railes K. What’s the difference: Comparing the beliefs of Catholics, Protestant and Eastern Orthodox. – P. 9.

<sup>995</sup>Clendenin, *Orthodoxy on Scripture and Tradition*, p. 385.

<sup>996</sup>Berkhof L. *The history of Christian doctrine*. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1975. – P. 232.

<sup>997</sup>Clendenin, *Orthodoxy on Scripture and Tradition*, p. 387.

For many years, the Roman Catholic Church appealed to two documents: the *Donation of Constantine* and the *Forged Decretals*, which supposedly supported the claim that the papacy was recognized much earlier in Church history. Yet, it is now recognized that these documents were composed in the ninth century, and therefore shed no light on the early history of papal authority.<sup>998</sup> Moreover, the plausibility of the Catholic claim depends greatly on whether Peter actually served as bishop of Rome. The New Testament nowhere records that Peter ever served as a bishop. In fact, when Paul wrote his epistle to Rome in 58 AD, no mention is made of Peter's presence or activity there.

Furthermore, does Matthew 16:18-19 really prove Petrine preeminence? Other interpretations of this passage need to be examined. Some say that in this passage, Jesus is speaking of Himself as the foundation of the Church. Others think that the foundation consists of all the apostles. Still others argue that the revelation that God gave Peter concerning Jesus as Messiah is that foundation. Nonetheless, it is more plausible that Jesus truly spoke of Peter as the rock on which the Church was to be built, but not in the sense of ruling authority over the entire Church, but the privilege and opportunity to be the first to preach the gospel.

In support of the last theory, we turn our attention to the phrase in Matthew 16:19: "keys of the Kingdom of Heaven." Jesus used a similar phrase in Luke 11:52: "Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge; you yourselves did not enter, and you hindered those who were entering." In this passage, the "key" means "knowledge." By their teaching, the lawyers hindered people from entering the Kingdom. In Matthew 16:19, the word "key" may well have the same meaning. Through his teaching and preaching, Peter would give people knowledge that would lead them to salvation.

The "keys of the Kingdom," then, would not be ecclesiastical authority, but the preaching of the gospel. Corresponding to this, the saying, "Whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven," would relate to the requirements for salvation that Peter would announce in his gospel preaching.

All the apostles, of course, had opportunity to preach the gospel. Yet, Jesus gave Peter the right to be the first. He was the first to preach to the Jews on Pentecost Day and the first to preach to the Gentiles, as recorded in Acts chapter 10. Peter himself speaks of this privilege in Acts 15:7: "Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel and believe." We also note that a third ethnic group, the Samaritans, having received the gospel, did not receive the Holy Spirit until Peter and John arrived and laid their hands on them (Acts 8).

Also of note is that after Peter preached to the Gentiles, his prominence in the Book of Acts diminishes. In chapter 12, he is imprisoned. In chapter 15, he participated in the Jerusalem Council, but not as its leader. In Galatians chapter 2, Paul rebukes Peter for hypocrisy. At the end of the Book of Acts, the leader among the Jewish believers in Jerusalem is not Peter, but James.

What happened to Peter? When he preached Christ to the Gentiles (Acts 10), he used up his last "key." The "keys" enabled him to open the door of faith, first to the Jews, then to the Gentiles. After that, the keys no longer had significance, and Peter ceased to occupy his privileged position among the apostles. On this basis, we conclude that the "keys of the Kingdom of Heaven" indicate the opportunity to be the first to preach the Good News.

### C. Conclusions

In the material here presented, we have described and evaluated the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox views of Church tradition. In the final analysis, we cannot support these views. They lack adequate substantiation and actually threaten the integrity of the Christian faith, since they give church hierarchy license to introduce into Christianity doctrines unsupported by Scripture and often standing in contradiction to it.

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<sup>998</sup>Berkhof, p. 232-233.

We acknowledge that the Early Church preserved and valued the oral tradition of the apostles, yet this was a temporary phenomenon until the apostolic teaching appeared in its complete written form in the New Testament. Moreover, the “rule of faith” was never used in the Early Church to introduce new doctrine, but only to preserve established Christian truth. It is much more prudent to rely on works actually written by the apostles themselves than on supposed apostolic tradition that has been handed down for many generations and in many ways differs from New Testament teaching.

It is also misguided to think that the Holy Spirit directs the Church through some kind of mystical experience. Such an approach can easily lead to error, since it lacks objective criteria for verifying truth claims and relies purely on the subjective experience of the church hierarchy, who, on behalf of the “entire Church,” makes authoritative determinations regarding Christian doctrine.

Believers in Christ, of course, highly respect the early Church leaders (the so-called “Church Fathers”) and value the contribution they made in the early years of the Faith. However, we must not romanticize our predecessors, or ascribe to them authority and status which they never claimed for themselves. It is certainly worthwhile to read their commentaries and theological works, but we do not regard them as authoritative, even when we observe agreement between them. As Geisler appropriately comments, “These authorities may be used only to help us *discover* the meaning of the text of Scripture, not *determine* its meaning.”<sup>999</sup> We regard the teachings of the Fathers in the same way we regard any other proposed interpretation of Scripture, heeding Paul’s instruction, “But examine everything {carefully;} hold fast to that which is good; abstain from every form of evil” (1 Thes 5:21-22).

Therefore, we hold to the sufficiency of Scripture, which is the Word of God. The Bible alone is adequate for defining Christian faith and practice, and has no need for a supplementary “Christian Mishna,” that is, Church tradition, for its interpretation. We determine the meaning of the biblical text not by appealing to the Fathers, but with the aid of the grammatico-historical method, which uncovers the authorial intent of the biblical writers.

In conclusion, we will introduce a thought for consideration. When we look back on Church history, we notice an interesting phenomenon. It seems that, although God gave His full revelation in Scripture, the Church only progressively comprehends it. The early Christian centuries witnessed the development of the doctrines of Christ and the Trinity. To this very day, the Christological and Trinitarian definitions of the Councils of Nicea, Constantinople and Chalcedon are standards in Church dogma.

Yet, as we will see in later volumes of this series, the Church Fathers deviated greatly (and almost immediately) from apostolic teaching in other doctrinal questions. They introduced justification by faith and works, new birth through baptism, infant baptism, a sacramental understanding of the Lord’s Supper, neglect of the supernatural, veneration of icons, Mary and the Saints, episcopal form of Church government, and other distortions.

Only in time did the Church begin to grasp other aspects of New Testament revelation. In the 16th century it recovered justification by faith alone, in the 16th-17th centuries – believer’s baptism, 17th-18th centuries – the sanctifying work of the Spirit, and in the 20th century – the baptism in the Spirit and the full spectrum of spiritual gifts. It is also interesting that these “breakthroughs” seem to occur with greater frequency, likely in anticipation of the Second Coming of our Lord. Therefore, the teachings of the Fathers are most valuable in the doctrinal areas where the Holy Spirit was most active in the Church at that time, i.e., concerning the Trinity and the doctrine of Christ.

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<sup>999</sup>Geisler, Roman Catholics and Evangelicals, p. 191.



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## Chapter 13: The Bible in the Hands of Rationalists

### A. Basic Principles of Higher Criticism

In the 17th century, a new approach to interpretation of Scripture known as the “historical-critical method,” or simply “higher criticism” gained popularity. Its influence steadily grew until “by 1945... virtually all professional biblical scholars had accepted its principles, though some still continue to draw conservative conclusions from them. The historical-critical method had triumphed and become the general consensus in academic circles.”<sup>1000</sup>

According to this theory, the Bible does not differ from any other literary work of its time. Therefore, one cannot assume that, due to its inspired nature, the truth of biblical narrative is guaranteed. Scholars must subject the Bible to the same critical process that is applied to all literature of ancient times.

The historical-critical method works off principles first advanced by Ernst Troeltsch in his work: *On the Historical and Dogmatic Methods in Theology*.<sup>1001</sup> The first principle, the principle of methodological doubt, states that a historian can never reproduce an historical account with absolute precision. One can always reexamine the data and interpret the event differently.

The second principle is the principle of analogy. Here we judge what could have occurred in the past based on what happens in the present. What does not occur now could not have occurred then. Von Rad sees here a connection between higher criticism and the “history of religion” approach, which theorizes that Christianity is the pinnacle of the progressive development of religion in the world.<sup>1002</sup> It is thought that Judeo-Christian faith arose from religions that preceded it and borrowed extensively from them. For example, John Spencer (1630-1693) taught that the Law of Moses was borrowed from Egypt.<sup>1003</sup>

According to the history of religion school, if one observes in Scripture a theological insight that is supposedly too advanced for its time, then that teaching must have been introduced at a later time. Working off the principle of analogy, earlier thinkers could not have come up with theological formulations that were beyond their time. Therefore, the more “advanced” Pauline epistles, like Ephesians, Colossians and the Pastorals, are thought to have been written after Paul, likely in the second century.<sup>1004</sup> On the other hand, more “primitive” theological concepts, like propitiation through sacrifice, must be a remnant of a primitive worldview and, consequently, are not applicable to modern times.<sup>1005</sup>

Troeltsch’s third principle, the “principle of correlation,” claims that each historical event has a cause that can be objectively substantiated. Therefore, since God’s invisible activity in history cannot be empirically perceived or verified, we can never claim that God has intervened in the affairs of people. Accordingly, Macky appropriately names higher criticism “functional atheism.”<sup>1006</sup>

Consequently, adherents of this approach deny the validity of biblical miracles and fulfillment of prophecy. For them, a miracle is simply a myth or an exaggeration. Prophecy is simply the recording of events that already happened as if they were still in the future. The prophetic books are dated accordingly, that is, after their “prophecies” have been fulfilled. It is thought, then, that Daniel was written in the second century BC, after the invasions of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, which he predicts, and Isaiah was written in two (or three)

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<sup>1000</sup>Bray G. Biblical interpretation, past and present. – Downers Grove: IL: Intervarsity Press, 1996. – P. 223.

<sup>1001</sup>See Marshall I. H. Biblical inspiration. – Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 1982. – P. 84.

<sup>1002</sup>Von Rad G. Typological interpretation of the Old Testament / Bright J. trans. // McKim D. A guide to contemporary Hermeneutics. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986. – P. 33-34.

<sup>1003</sup>Bray, p. 230.

<sup>1004</sup>Ibid, p. 444.

<sup>1005</sup>Ibid, p. 222.

<sup>1006</sup>Macky P. W. The coming revolution: The new literary approach to New Testament interpretation // McKim D. A guide to contemporary hermeneutics. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986. – P. 265.

installments, since an eighth century prophet could not have known about the future invasion of Babylon predicted in chapters 40-66.

Although it is not difficult to challenge Troeltsch's principles, unfortunately, they remain in force (with some modification) to the present day and comprise the basis for the historical-critical method.<sup>1007</sup> According to this system, God does nothing on His own, that is, in a supernatural fashion. He does all His activity by natural means, i.e., through the efforts of people.

## **B. History of Liberal Hermeneutics**

Let us examine the historical development of this hermeneutical school.<sup>1008</sup> It traces its roots to the Great Awakening, when reason gained prominence over revelation for determining truth. René Descartes provided impetus for this development by emphasizing the value of human reason. One of his disciples, Baruch Spinoza, took matters to the extreme and claimed that, based on rationalistic presuppositions, the possibility of miracles could be ruled out.

Deism also played a part in advancing higher criticism, since it denied God's intervention in the lives of people, in particular, through miracles or special revelation. Consequently, all that one can know about God is discovered by reason. Finally, the claim of contradictions in Scripture, emphasized especially by Nicolaus Zinzendorf (1700-1760), accentuated doubts as to its historical accuracy and special status. Linnemann summarizes the dominant role of reason in the historical-critical system: "Reason decides what in Scripture is true and real."<sup>1009</sup>

Due to such rationalistic presuppositions, some interpreters began to doubt Scripture's historical reliability. One of the first scholars to challenge the historicity of the Bible was La Payrere. After him, Johann Semler (1725-1791) conducted a historical examination of the Bible without the preunderstanding of its divine inspiration. In some ways, he is considered the father of the historical-critical method. Gabler separated biblical theology from systematic theology, claiming that the former should be conducted purely on historical grounds without dogmatic preconditions.<sup>1010</sup> He, along with Bauer, Strauss and Eichhorn, even advanced the idea of the mythological character of the Bible, undermining its historical value.

Possibly, the most famous event in the development of the historical-critical method was an observation by Jean Astruc (1684-1766) that different names were used for God in the Pentateuch: Yahweh and Elohim.<sup>1011</sup> He concluded that when Moses composed the Pentateuch, he used different sources, one of which employed the name Yahweh, while the other used Elohim. Subsequently, Eichhorn claimed that a person other than Moses wrote the Pentateuch.

Eventually, Julius Wellhausen proposed a theory known as the "JEDP" theory. The four letters represent the four sources that were supposedly used by the editor of the Pentateuch to compose these books. None of these sources are considered historically precise. This view of imprecision in biblical history was expanded to include the entire Bible. Therefore, the entire historical veracity of the Bible was placed in question.

However, the JEDP theory assumes not only the historical unreliability of Scripture, but also its theological development. For example, it is claimed that the view of God in source J differs from the view of God in source E. This apparently shows development in the Hebrew's understanding of God. It is believed that Israel was originally polytheistic, but then began to worship its patron God "Yahweh," and only in the seventh century, monotheism appeared among the Hebrew prophets of that time.<sup>1012</sup>

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<sup>1007</sup>Krentz Edgar. Historical critical method. – Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1975. – P. 56.

<sup>1008</sup>See Bray, p. 227ff; Krentz, p. 2-28; McGrath A. E. Historical theology. – Oxford: Blackwell, 1998. – P. 221-222.

<sup>1009</sup>Linnemann E. Historical criticism of the Bible / Trans. R. Yarbrough – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1990. – P. 107.

<sup>1010</sup>In this system, it is assumed that the personal faith of the interpreter can hinder the objective, "scientific" examination of a biblical text (Bray, p. 461).

<sup>1011</sup>Harris R. L. Inspiration and canonicity of the Bible. – Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1957, 1969. – P. 23.

<sup>1012</sup>Ibid, p. 27.

A similar phenomenon occurred in connection with the so-called “synoptic problem,” which resulted in doubts about New Testament historical reliability.<sup>1013</sup> One of the first to challenge the historicity of Jesus’ narrative was David Strauss in his book *Life of Jesus* (1835). After him, Ferdinand Christian Bauer (1792-1860) separated the “historical (real) Jesus” from the “Christ of faith,” i.e., the legendary New Testament representation of Him. Bray comments on the character of the “historical Jesus”: “By the end of the nineteenth century it was frequently assumed that Jesus had been a particularly successful rabbi, who had internalized the moral demands of the Mosaic law and thereby incurred the wrath of the Jewish establishment, which tried to get rid of him.”<sup>1014</sup> The supernatural aspect of the life of Jesus (that is, the “Christ of faith”) appeared as a result of the influence of Hellenism on Christianity, when Gentiles began to enter the Church. The “Christ of faith” is thought to be a fabrication invented by the Early Church to glorify its founder.

The historical-critical method had more influence on Protestantism than on Catholicism or Orthodoxy. This was because Protestants enjoyed more academic liberty and freedom from strict control by church hierarchy. Consequently, higher criticism was most readily accepted in Germany, and to a lesser degree in England. Germany was especially “vulnerable,” due not only to the lack of domination by church hierarchy, but also to a decentralized government. English empiricism, the dominant epistemology at that time, also aided the rise of higher criticism in that land. In 1943, Pope Pius XII allowed Catholic scholars to employ the historical-critical method, but only under the condition that the results of such research would introduce no change into Catholic dogma.<sup>1015</sup>

### C. Higher Critical Methodology

Those who practice the historical-critical method employ various approaches for the interpretation of the text. We will touch on the more frequently used methods. Some are utilized by conservative biblical interpreters as well, but in a more moderate form.

#### 1. Form Criticism

Form criticism focuses on the oral transmission of the material now contained in the biblical text before its inscripturation. The most well-known practitioners of this method are: for the Old Testament – Hermann Gunkel,<sup>1016</sup> for the New Testament – Martin Dibelius and Rudolf Bultmann.<sup>1017</sup>

In this method, it is assumed that in antiquity, information was passed on orally in a specific manner – by means of so-called “forms.” Concerning the composition of the Gospels, form critics work off the assumption that before the Gospels were written, there existed individual tales of events in the life and ministry of Jesus, which were originally passed on orally, and then preserved in writing. These tales are named “pericope.” These “pericopes” are analyzed according to their forms.

The “forms” found in the Bible include: parables, laws, miracle stories, myths, legends, lamentations, thanksgivings, exhortations, prophecies, and others. Some forms are considered more ancient than others are. For example, healing or deliverance miracles are an older type than nature miracles, and parables are older than their interpretations. Furthermore, some New Testament pericopes are categorized as “pronouncement stories,” where an event from the life of Jesus is recounted with the goal of teaching a lesson. For example, in

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<sup>1013</sup>Carson D. A. Redaction criticism: On the legitimacy and illegitimacy of a literary tool // Carson D. A., Woodbridge J. D. Scripture and truth. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1992. – P. 120-121.

<sup>1014</sup>Bray, p. 324.

<sup>1015</sup>Hill B. R. Exploring Catholic theology. – Mystic, CN: Twenty Third Publishers, 1995. – P. 220

<sup>1016</sup>Johnson R. Modern Old Testament interpretation. – Corley B., Lemke S. Lovejoy G. Biblical hermeneutics. – Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1996. – P. 105.

<sup>1017</sup>Cranford L. L. Modern New Testament interpretation. – Corley B., Lemke S. Lovejoy G. Biblical hermeneutics. – Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1996. – P. 125.

Mark 2:23-28, Jesus allows his disciples to gather grain on the Sabbath in order to teach that He is Lord of the Sabbath.

It is also assumed that forms have a standard structure. Therefore, if the arrangement of a form in a given pericope differs from the standard, it is felt that in the process of that history's transmission, someone altered its contents.<sup>1018</sup> For example, the form "miracle story" is typically arranged as follows: (1) a seemingly insolvable problem arises, (2) someone approaches Jesus for help, (3) Jesus performs a miracle, and finally (4) the miracle provokes a reaction by the spectators, is commented on by the narrator, or leads to a directive by Jesus.<sup>1019</sup> According to the rules of form criticism, if the structure or order of any miracle story differs from this alleged standard, this means that someone altered the history itself, and therefore the pericope is not historically reliable.

In order to discern what elements of a narrative actually correspond to real history (at least in the Gospels), four criteria are employed: dissimilarity, repetition, eschatological material, and cohesiveness.<sup>1020</sup> According to the criterion of "dissimilarity," only the teaching in the given narrative that differs from what was already known at that time can be accepted as true history. According to the criterion of "repetition," true history is that which is mentioned numerous times. The third criterion, "eschatological material," attributes end-times teaching to Jesus Himself. The fourth criterion, "cohesiveness," seeks confirmation of the biblical narrative's historicity from secular historical sources.

After determining what material was supposedly altered, form critics then seek to discover why it was changed. They assume that editors changed the material to adapt it to their intended audiences. On this basis, the form critic claims to be able to discern what problems were distressing either Israel or the Church when the Old or New Testament passage under investigation was written.

## 2. Source Criticism

Source critics seek to discover the literary sources used by writers of Scripture. One cannot dispute that biblical authors at times employed literary sources. Luke is an obvious example (Lk 1:1-4). The Old Testament abounds as well with references to outside sources.<sup>1021</sup>

A presumed, unwritten source for the apostles' preaching in Acts is called the kerygma. It is assumed that among the apostles that a common understanding of the basic facts of Jesus' life and ministry existed, and that they based their preaching on these facts. One may summarize the kerygma as follows: (1) God has visited His people in accordance with the Old Testament expectation, (2) the Messiah, Jesus, has come, (3) Jesus was crucified, died and was buried, as predicted, (3) He rose from the dead on the third day, and people saw Him, (4) Jesus ascended to the right hand of God, (5) God gives the Holy Spirit to believers, (6) God forgives those who repent and believe in Jesus.

Source critics also deal with uncovering sources for the Synoptic Gospels. A well-accepted notion is that Mark wrote the first Gospel, and that Matthew and Luke borrowed from Mark and another, now-lost document called "Q." Some also feel that a collection of Jesus' sayings existed besides the Gospels, which Paul quotes in Acts 20:35. In addition, Papias, a disciple of the apostle John, spoke of a Gospel written by Matthew in Aramaic, which may have served as yet another source for material about Jesus of Nazareth.

A more debated source-critical claim is the previously mentioned theory JEDP. According to this theory, the Pentateuch was composed from four documents, abbreviated JEDP. "J" is a document supposedly written in the tenth century BC, in which God was called "Yahweh." Document "E" is from the ninth century BC, and

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<sup>1018</sup>Carson, p. 120-121.

<sup>1019</sup>McKnight S. *Interpreting the Synoptic Gospels // Guides to New Testament exegesis.* – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988. – P. 74-76.

<sup>1020</sup>Longenecker R. N. *Biblical exegesis in the Apostolic period* – 2nd ed. - Grand Rapids, MI; Vancouver: Eerdmans; Regent College Pub, 1999. – P. 38-39. Variations in word usages and literary style are also considered.

<sup>1021</sup>See Num 21:24; Josh 10:13; 2 Sam 1:18; 1 Kin 11:41; 14:19; 14:29 and many others.

calls God “Elohim.” Document “D,” from the sixth century BC, gave rise to the present book of Deuteronomy. Finally, document “P” was written in the fifth century BC and deals with the requirements and provisions for the priesthood.

Source critics see confirmation of their theory by observing that certain material is “unnecessarily” repeated in the biblical text.<sup>1022</sup> For example, Jacob was named Israel twice (Gen 32:28; 35:10). The receiving of the Ten Commandments is twice mentioned (Ex 19; Deut 5). The father-in-law of Moses is both Reuel (Ex 2:18) and Jethro (Ex 18:1). In 1 Samuel 8-12, God rejects, and then allows the monarchy. In one account, Reuben rescues Joseph (Gen 37:21-22), but in another, Judah is the rescuer (Gen 37:26-27). Finally, who took Joseph into slavery: the Ishmaelites (Gen 37:27-28), or the Midianites (Gen 37:28, 36)?<sup>1023</sup>

Johnson responds to the issue of “repetition” by noting that no document exists that contains only one of these alleged repetitions – the existence of these documents is merely assumed. Thus, one cannot prove that repetition indicates that different conflicting sources were used. In addition, repetition is a common feature in narrative and is characteristic of the poetic style found throughout the Old Testament.<sup>1024</sup> Moreover, the examples cited above present no logical inconsistency and can be harmonized into a single account.

### 3. Redaction Criticism

Redaction criticism is yet another way to approach the analysis of a biblical text. All scholars recognize that biblical writers, in composing their historical narratives, edited the material they had available to them. Scholars debate, however, to what degree they edited it. For example, we assume that the authors of the Four Gospels had access to records of various events in the life of the Lord. They had to decide which items to include, and which to exclude. They also determined the order in which to present these events. This work of redaction is clear when we compare the Gospels with one another, or upon comparison of the books of Kings and Chronicles.

We may highlight various ways by which the Gospel writers edited the accounts of Jesus’ life. **First**, we encounter instances where one Gospel writer quotes another nearly verbatim. This occurs especially when material is taken from Mark or the document “Q” by Matthew or Luke. The following example comes from Jesus’ call to discipleship (the Greek is used to aid in comparison):

Εἴ τις θέλει ὀπίσω μου ἀκολουθεῖν, ἀπαρνησάσθω ἑαυτὸν καὶ ἀράτω τὸν σταυρὸν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀκολουθεῖτω μοι. ὃς γὰρ ἐὰν θέλῃ τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ σῶσαι ἀπολέσει αὐτήν· ὃς δ’ ἂν ἀπολέσει τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ ἕνεκεν ἐμοῦ καὶ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου σώσει αὐτήν (Mk 8:34-35).

Εἴ τις θέλει ὀπίσω μου ἔρχεσθαι, ἀρνησάσθω ἑαυτὸν καὶ ἀράτω τὸν σταυρὸν αὐτοῦ καθ’ ἡμέραν καὶ ἀκολουθεῖτω μοι. ὃς γὰρ ἂν θέλῃ τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ σῶσαι ἀπολέσει αὐτήν· ὃς δ’ ἂν ἀπολέσῃ τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ ἕνεκεν ἐμοῦ οὕτως σώσει αὐτήν (Lk 9:23-24).

Εἴ τις θέλει ὀπίσω μου ἐλθεῖν, ἀπαρνησάσθω ἑαυτὸν καὶ ἀράτω τὸν σταυρὸν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀκολουθεῖτω μοι. ὃς γὰρ ἐὰν θέλῃ τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ σῶσαι ἀπολέσει αὐτήν· ὃς δ’ ἂν ἀπολέσῃ τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ ἕνεκεν ἐμοῦ εὐρήσει αὐτήν (Matt 16:24-25).

If the assumption that Mark wrote his Gospel first is correct, then the above-cited example demonstrates that Matthew and Luke borrowed from Mark.

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<sup>1022</sup>Noted in Johnson, p. 101-103.

<sup>1023</sup>Watson F. Text, church and world: Biblical interpretation in theological perspective. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994. – P. 47, 51.

<sup>1024</sup>Johnson, p. 103.



The next example, taken from the account of Jesus' transfiguration, also shows Matthew's use of Mark:

Καὶ μετὰ ἡμέρας ἕξ παραλαμβάνει ὁ Ἰησοῦς τὸν Πέτρον καὶ τὸν Ἰάκωβον καὶ τὸν Ἰωάννην καὶ ἀναφέρει αὐτοὺς εἰς ὄρος ὑψηλὸν κατ' ἰδίαν μόνους. καὶ μετεμορφώθη ἔμπροσθεν αὐτῶν (Mk 9:2-3).

Καὶ μεθ' ἡμέρας ἕξ παραλαμβάνει ὁ Ἰησοῦς τὸν Πέτρον καὶ Ἰάκωβον καὶ Ἰωάννην τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀναφέρει αὐτοὺς εἰς ὄρος ὑψηλὸν κατ' ἰδίαν. καὶ μετεμορφώθη ἔμπροσθεν αὐτῶν (Matt 17:1-2).

In the following passage, Matthew and Luke are nearly identical:

Οὐδεὶς δύναται δυσὶ κυρίοις δουλεύειν· ἢ γὰρ τὸν ἓνα μισήσει καὶ τὸν ἕτερον ἀγαπήσει, ἢ ἐνὸς ἀνθέξεται καὶ τοῦ ἑτέρου καταφρονήσει. οὐ δύνασθε θεῷ δουλεύειν καὶ μαμωνᾷ (Matt 6:24).

Οὐδεὶς οἰκέτης δύναται δυσὶ κυρίοις δουλεύειν· ἢ γὰρ τὸν ἓνα μισήσει καὶ τὸν ἕτερον ἀγαπήσει, ἢ ἐνὸς ἀνθέξεται καὶ τοῦ ἑτέρου καταφρονήσει. οὐ δύνασθε θεῷ δουλεύειν καὶ μαμωνᾷ (Lk 16:13).

Such parallels between Luke and Matthew occur with some frequency, especially in quotations of Jesus' teaching. In these cases, many feel that Luke and Matthew utilized another source beside Mark, since the latter lacks these passages. This unknown document, named "Q," likely contained excerpts of the Lord's teaching.

**Second**, sometimes one Gospel writer will expand the account recorded by another. In the following instance, it appears that Matthew employed the Gospel of Mark as his source, yet expanded Mark's account to emphasize Jesus' fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy:<sup>1025</sup>

Now after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel" (Mk 1:14-15).

Now when Jesus heard that John had been taken into custody, He withdrew into Galilee; and leaving Nazareth, He came and settled in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali. {This was} to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet: "The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the gentiles - the people who were sitting in darkness saw a great light, and those who were sitting in the land and shadow of death, upon them a light dawned." From that time Jesus began to preach and say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt 4:12-17).

**Third**, sometimes the opposite is observed, where one Gospel writer omits material found in the other Gospels. For example, unlike Luke and Mark, Matthew omits the history of how the lame man was lowered through the roof.<sup>1026</sup> For some reason, Matthew considered that detail unimportant:

Being unable to get to Him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above Him; and when they had dug an opening, they let down the pallet on which the paralytic was lying (Mk 2:4).

But not finding any {way} to bring him in because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down through the tiles with his stretcher, into the middle {of the crowd,} in front of Jesus (Lk 5:19).

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<sup>1025</sup>McKnight, p. 85-87.

<sup>1026</sup>Ibid.

And they brought to Him a paralytic lying on a bed. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralytic, “Take courage, son; your sins are forgiven” (Matt 9:2).

Fourth, one Gospel writer may alter the order of events. Let us compare the passages where Jesus wept over Jerusalem and pronounced woe upon it (Matt 23:37 and Lk 13:34). Matthew writes that the Lord did this after He arrived at the city, but Luke states that it occurred on the way there. Most likely, one of them placed the event out of chronological order to emphasize a certain aspect of the event.<sup>1027</sup>

A more striking example is the order of temptations of Jesus. Matthew has one order, while Luke has another:<sup>1028</sup>

Luke 4:

- stones to bread
- leap from the temple
- the kingdoms of the world

Matthew 4:

- stones to bread
- the kingdoms of the world
- leap from the temple

**Fifth**, one Gospel writer may introduce an explanation of an event for the sake of his audience. Mark, for example, explains a Jewish custom for his readers, who are likely not acquainted with it:<sup>1029</sup> Interestingly, Matthew does not clarify this practice for his readers, since he wrote for Jews.

(For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they carefully wash their hands, {thus} observing the traditions of the elders; and {when they come} from the market place, they do not eat unless they cleanse themselves; and there are many other things which they have received in order to observe, such as the washing of cups and pitchers and copper pots) (Mk 7:3-4).

**Finally**, some believe that God permitted the Gospel writers to change the contents of the material itself under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. This theory, however, is challenged by more conservative thinkers.<sup>1030</sup> The following passage, for example, raises the question about deliberate altering of material:<sup>1031</sup>

If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him! (Matt 7:11).

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<sup>1027</sup>Ibid.

<sup>1028</sup>Archer notes that only Matthew uses conjunctions that indicate chronological order. This may mean that Luke’s version here is not chronological (Archer G. Encyclopedia of Bible difficulties. – Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1982. – C. 320-321). Stonehouse says that the adverb *καθεξής* (“in consecutive order”), which Luke used in Lk 1:3 to describe his account, does not necessarily refer to chronological order, but may indicate logical order (Turner D. L. Evangelicals, Redaction Criticism, and the Current Inerrancy Crisis // Grace Theological Journal. 1983. № 4. P. 267. Also see Arndt W., Danker F. W., Bauer W. A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature. – 3rd ed. – Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000. – P. 490).

<sup>1029</sup>McKnight, p. 85-87.

<sup>1030</sup>Ibid.

<sup>1031</sup>Ibid.

If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will {your} heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him? (Lk 11:13).

Both texts are found in a context where Jesus is teaching about prayer, and they are essentially identical except for the mention by Matthew of “good,” and by Luke of the “Spirit.” Some feel that Luke altered the words of Christ to emphasize the role of the Spirit, which he stresses throughout his Gospel. Still, we cannot rule out that we are dealing here with separate instances where Jesus taught on prayer. Since Jesus was a travelling preacher, He likely repeated His messages many times.<sup>1032</sup>

From a conservative point of view, differences between the narratives consist only in inclusion or exclusion of material, and ordering of events. A more liberal view would allow the author to alter the material itself for the sake of his theological agenda. Supporting the more liberal view, Silva writes, “In other words, our Lord himself [through inspiration] has guided the evangelists as they seek, *not only to report, but also to interpret and to apply* the life and ministry of Jesus to their Christian communities.”<sup>1033</sup>

All agree, however, that each Gospel writer wrote his version of the life of Jesus with a specific theological or apologetic agenda in mind – to present Jesus to his readers in a certain light. When we examine how one author lays more stress on some aspects of the narrative than on others, we can discern the goals he was pursuing in his writing. Matthew, for example, pictures Jesus as the King of Israel, i.e., the Messiah. Mark describes Him as God’s Servant – the one who is filled with God’s power and accomplishes His will. For Luke, Jesus is the Saviour of the world. John stresses more than the others the Deity of Jesus Christ.

Correspondingly, each Gospel writer composed his work to reach a certain people group. Matthew, by describing Jesus as Messiah, was reaching out to Jews. Mark possibly wrote for Romans, who are fascinated by power and action. Luke focused on Gentiles and other “outcast” groups, assuring them that salvation is for everyone. John appealed to those of a more philosophical frame of mind, introducing Jesus as God in the flesh.

#### **4. Historical Criticism**

Historical criticism involves comparing the historical events recorded in the biblical text with the accounts of these same events found in secular literature. Conservatives and liberals differ about which version is more reliable. The former favor the biblical text, while the latter – secular history. “Mimetic” narrative, which records not only events, but dialog as well, is especially considered historically suspect by liberals. Historical criticism, nonetheless, is valuable in enriching our understanding of events recorded in Scripture. We will discuss its shortcomings later.

#### **5. Textual Criticism**

Textual criticism is the attempt to reconstruct the original biblical texts. As we have learned, all of the original autographs have, over time, perished. All that remains are multiple copies of these autographs. Textual criticism enables scholars to rediscover what was originally penned by the biblical authors. Both conservative and liberal scholars embrace the findings of textual critics. We discussed this discipline in great detail in chapter 4.

#### **6. Literary Criticism**

The phrase “literary criticism” may connote two meanings. First, it can refer to studying the literary qualities of a text, such as figures of speech, genre, structure, style, etc. This approach is very helpful in

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<sup>1032</sup>Carson, p. 126.

<sup>1033</sup>Noted in McKnight, p. 93.

discovering authorial intent, since an author communicates his/her meaning not only in words, but also in the way he/she structures the text. In the section on “Rhetorical Features” in chapter 7, one can find more information on these special literary features.

In recent times, however, this expression has also come to indicate an approach to interpretation, where the biblical narrative is understood as a story that teaches an edifying lesson, but it may not contain real history at all. We examine this claim in the following chapter.

## **7. Canonical Criticism**

The final method we will examine is “canonical criticism.” Here we ask the question, “What value did the Early Church see in the books that it subsequently canonized?” The order of books in the canon is considered important as well. Watson even proposes that, in anticipation of the coming canon, the biblical writers wrote their materials with this future canonical context in mind.<sup>1034</sup> This approach focuses heavily on the condition of the Church when it received the canonical books. Thus, the method actually contributes more to historical theology than to hermeneutics.

However, as in the case of literary criticism, the historicity of the text is not necessarily taken seriously. The text is thought to have value merely because the Church regarded it as a valuable source of edification. Thus, we see here a reversal of roles for the Word of God in defining truth. Properly speaking, the Bible defines the truth that ought to direct the life of the Church. In canonical criticism, however, the Church itself decides what is valuable and, in so doing, seemingly creates its own truth. Additionally, by paying too much attention to the canonical context, the interpreter may neglect to consider the historical context of the passage under study.<sup>1035</sup> Finally, as we noted in chapter 3, the inclusion of a book into the New Testament canon was determined not by a Church decree, but by its apostolic authorship.

## **8. Summary**

We may summarize the various elements of the historical-critical method as follows. Everything begins with the historical event itself. Form criticism seeks to determine in which “literary form” the account was preserved in oral tradition. Next, source criticism seeks to uncover the written sources, which preserved this oral tradition, and that the biblical writers employed. Redaction criticism studies how the authors of Scripture chose and ordered the material that they included in their writings.

Historical criticism studies the history behind the biblical accounts. Textual criticism attempts to reconstruct the original biblical autographs by comparing the many copies of Scripture preserved from antiquity. Literary criticism views the biblical text from the point of view of literature, uncovering how the author communicated his message through his structuring of the text. Finally, canonical criticism seeks to determine why the Early Church chose the books that now make up our canon of Scripture.

## **D. Evaluation of Higher Criticism**

### **1. Defense of Biblical Historicity**

It is interesting to note that in the world of theology and hermeneutics today, not only conservatives, but many liberals as well recognize the defects of the historical-critical approach. From the 1970’s to the present, the influence of higher criticism has been waning.<sup>1036</sup> Even some liberals note that higher criticism is injurious

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<sup>1034</sup>Ibid, p. 43.

<sup>1035</sup>Ibid, p. 39.

<sup>1036</sup>Bray, p. 461.

to the life of the Church.<sup>1037</sup> The historical-critical method seeks to discover the “true history” behind the text, but such discoveries provide little aid for practical Christian living. The results of critical research give little insight into the meaning of the biblical text or its applicability for preaching or Christian practice. Silva aptly comments that if the allegorical method paid too much attention to the divine aspect of Scripture, the historical-critical approach focuses too much on the human factor.<sup>1038</sup>

Although both conservatives and liberals find some value in critical investigations, the main dividing line between them concerns the historical veracity of Scripture. Conservatives are unwilling to employ such methodology to the point of denying that the Bible contains true history, whereas liberals are ready to do so. As Weeks notes, the biased (and basically axiomatic) opinion that secular history always trumps biblical history dominates in the academic world today.<sup>1039</sup>

In order to confirm the historical reliability of the Old Testament, we may appeal to the teachings of Jesus and the apostles. In our chapter on the inspiration of Scripture, we convincingly demonstrated that Jesus and His apostles accepted the Old Testament as God’s Word, considering it to be without error in every respect, including in the historical narrative. As we noted before, Jesus and His apostles never hesitated to acknowledge the historical accuracy of events that many challenge today. We can highlight the following examples:<sup>1040</sup>

- Jonah and the great fish (Matt 12:40)
- the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Matt 11:23; Jude 7)
- Adam and Eve (Matt 19:4-6; Rom 5:12; 1 Tim 2:13-14)
- Noah’s flood (Lk 17:26; 2 Pet 3:6; Heb 11:7)
- Satan (Mk 3:23-25; Eph 4:27)
- Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Mk 12:6; Rom 9; Lk 3:34)
- the brazen serpent (Jn 3:14)
- the wife of Lot turning to salt (Lk 17:32)
- Job (Jam 5:11)
- the destruction of Jericho (Heb 11:30)
- parting the Red Sea (Heb 11:29; 1 Cor 10:1-2)
- creation of the world (Jn 1:3; Col 1:16)
- manna in the wilderness (1 Cor 10:3-5)
- three Hebrews cast into the oven (Heb 11:34)
- Daniel in the lion’s den (Heb 11:33)
- Elijah praying for rain (Jam 5:17).

We must also respond to the prevailing liberal theory that sources were used for the Pentateuch, i.e., the theory “JEDP,” which contradicts the clear biblical teaching of Mosaic authorship. The entire Old Testament, in fact, along with the teachings of Jesus and the apostles, testifies to the Mosaic authorship of the Torah. It is written that: (1) Moses received commandments for Israel and wrote down the revelation given him by the Lord (Ex 17:14; 24:4-7; 34:27-28; Num 33:2; Deut 31:9-12, 22), (2) the “book of the law” and the “books of Moses” existed throughout Israel’s history (Josh 1:7-8; 8:30-32; 22:5; 23:6; 1 Kin 2:3; 8:53; Neh 8:1; 13:1), and (3) Jesus and the apostles attributed the Pentateuch to Moses (Mk 7:10; 12:26; Matt 8:4; Lk 24:27, 44; Jn 1:17;

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<sup>1037</sup>Thiselton A. The new hermeneutic // McKim D. A guide to contemporary hermeneutics. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986. – P. 78-85; Goldingay J. Models for interpretation of Scripture. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995. – P. 20.

<sup>1038</sup>Silva M. Has the Church misread the Bible? – Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1987. – P. 40-44.

<sup>1039</sup>Weeks N. The sufficiency of Scripture. – Edinburg: Banner of Truth, 1988. – P. 59.

<sup>1040</sup>Geisler N. L., Nix W. E. A general introduction to the Bible. – Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1986. – P. 86-87.

5:45-47; Acts 3:22; Rom 10:5; 2 Cor 3:15). Notice that in Luke 24:44 and similar places, when Jesus spoke of the “law of Moses,” He was referring to the entire Pentateuch, not just a part.<sup>1041</sup>

Furthermore, Payne observes that the New Testament attributes to Moses authorship of all sections of the Pentateuch supposedly taken from the four JEDP documents.<sup>1042</sup> Additionally, researchers have never produced an ancient document that corresponds to any one of the four JEDP documents. Finally, liberals diverge among themselves about which parts of the Torah correspond to which of the four JEDP documents, which sheds doubt on the conviction that such divisions really exist.

In addition, Brey provides this general survey in favor of biblical historicity:

The general impression left by the OT critical scholarship of this period (20th c) is that Israel was a fully integrated part of middle-eastern culture, and that it could trace its historical roots back to Babylonia about 2000 BC, as Genesis claimed.<sup>1043</sup>

Finally, in defense of historical reliability of the Old Testament, we note that its authors frequently refer to the historical sources that they used.<sup>1044</sup> They cite: the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel and the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah (many references in the books of Kings); the book of Jashar, (Josh 10:13; 2 Sam 1:18); the book of the acts of Solomon (1 Kin 11:41); the chronicles of Samuel the seer (1 Chr 29:29); the chronicles of Nathan the prophet (1 Chr 29:29); the chronicles of Gad the seer (1 Chr 29:29); the annals of Jehu (2 Chr 20:34); the Book of the Kings of Israel (1 Chr 9:1; 2 Chr 20:34); The Book of the Kings (2 Chr 24:27); the vision of Isaiah (2 Chr 32:32); the records of Shemaiah the prophet (2 Chr 12:15); the records of Iddo the seer (2 Chr 12:15); the records of the Hozai (2 Chr 33:19); the Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel (2 Chr 16;11; 25:26; 27:7; 28:26; 32:32; 35:27; 36:8); the Book of the Chronicles (Neh 12:23); the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Media and Persia (Esth. 10:2). The abundance of such references convincingly refutes the claim that the Old Testament contains fabricated history. The Old Testament authors even invite their readers to verify their historical narrative from outside sources.

Concerning the New Testament, since it is considered “Scripture,” it possesses the same status of inerrancy, which characterizes the Old Testament. We detailed this argument in chapter 5.

We may also appeal to the argument of Sanders, who proposes three criteria for establishing the historicity of a literary work: the biographical criterion, the internal testimony, and the external testimony.<sup>1045</sup> We will examine each in turn.

The biographical criterion concerns the quantity and quality of the documents, from which our present New Testament was compiled. The greater their quantity, the older their age, and the greater their cohesiveness in content, the more likely that they correspond to the original documents. There exist over 5,000 ancient manuscripts of the New Testament, which are extremely close in content. This includes four complete copies of the Greek New Testament dating from the 4th and 5th centuries: Codex Sinaiticus, Codex Vaticanus, Codex Alexandrinus, and Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus.<sup>1046</sup> In addition, there exist fragments of New

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<sup>1041</sup>Goldingay feels that when Jesus cites the “books of Moses,” He refers not to Mosaic authorship, but to the traditional designation for these books at that time (see Goldingay, p. 178). Yet, Goldingay fails to note how Jesus refers to these citations: “Moses said” (Mk 7:10), “Moses commanded” (Matt 8:4), “you do not believe his (Moses’) writings” (Jn 5:47).

<sup>1042</sup>Payne J. B. Higher criticism and Biblical inerrancy // Geisler N. ed. Inerrancy. – Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1980. – P. 102. Payne also notes that in Jn 12:38-41, Jesus attributes both the early and later parts of Isaiah to the prophet himself (p. 104). Paul does the same (Rom 9:27; 10:20-21) (Noted in Marshall, p. 90).

<sup>1043</sup>Bray, p. 380-382.

<sup>1044</sup>Weeks, p. 59.

<sup>1045</sup>Sanders C. An introduction to research in English literary history. – New York: MacMillan, 1952. – P. 142-161.

<sup>1046</sup>Geisler N. L. Christian apologetics. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1976. – P. 531.

Testament books containing a few books or a few chapters that date back to the 2nd century – only 100-150 years after the originals were penned.<sup>1047</sup>

It is fascinating to compare the quantity and quality of New Testament manuscripts with those of other ancient texts, whose historicity is hardly challenged.<sup>1048</sup> In light of this data, it becomes extremely difficult to assign to the New Testament less historical veracity than these other writings.

- Caesar – written in the 1 c. BC – earliest copy: 900 AD – 10 copies in all
- Livy – written in the 1 c. BC – 20 copies in all
- Tacitus – written in 100 AD – earliest copy 1100 AD – 20 copies in all
- Pliny the Younger – written in the 1 c. AD – earliest copy: 850 AD – 7 copies in all
- Thucydides – written in the 5 c. AD – earliest copy: 900 AD – 8 copies in all
- Herodotus – written in the 5 c. BC – earliest copy: 900 AD – 8 copies in all
- Sofocles – written in the 5 c. BC – earliest copy: 1000 AD – 100 copies in all
- New Testament – written in the 1 c. AD – earliest copies: 2-4 c. AD – 5,000 copies in all

The second criterion for established historicity is the “internal testimony” – what the document says about its own reliability. Aristotle proposed a helpful maxim here, that one should take a document’s self-testimony seriously, unless proofs are advanced to successfully challenge it. In the New Testament narrative, we observe that its composers employed historical sources, many of whom were eyewitnesses to the events. Furthermore, the New Testament was written very close to the time that the events occurred.<sup>1049</sup> Finally, the presence in the New Testament (and the Old Testament as well) of genealogies, dates, names of famous individuals, etc. testifies of the historical validity of the narrative. In particular, Luke conducted an intensive study of the historical sources available to him (Lk 1:1-4).

The final criterion of historicity, the “external testimony,” seeks confirmation of a narrative’s reliability from other historical sources existing at that time. The Church Fathers, for example, acknowledged the historicity of the New Testament narrative. Especially significant is the testimony of Papias, who lived from the end of the 1st century to the beginning of the second century. He speaks of the genuineness of New Testament history.

Next, we can compare the New Testament narrative of the life of Jesus with secular accounts of Him. Secular sources confirm that Jesus of Nazareth actually lived and was crucified.<sup>1050</sup> Finally, numerous archeological excavations have supported the accuracy of New Testament accounts.<sup>1051</sup> We can also cite many examples, listed in chapter 5, where once questionable biblical history was later proven true.

We may advance still other proofs in favor of the New Testament’s historical accuracy. We would expect that someone would have preserved a record of Jesus’ life. He was undoubtedly a prominent figure of His day. We must also consider the special role the early disciples played in the history of the Church. They would be the most likely to have recorded their Lord’s history, not people from a later generation. In the New Testament, we encounter a saying of Jesus not recorded in the Gospels (Acts 20:35), which indicates that other people were preserving the words of our Lord as well.<sup>1052</sup>

If someone proposes that we must attribute more “theologically developed” parts of the New Testament or fulfillment of prophecy to a later author, then one implies that these later authors wrote pseudonymously,

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<sup>1047</sup>Geisler, Christian apologetics, p. 531; McDowell J. Evidence that demands a verdict. – Nashville, TN: Nelson, 1984, – P. 31ff (page numbers from Russian edition).

<sup>1048</sup>McDowell, p. 34 (page numbers from Russian edition).

<sup>1049</sup>Ibid, p. 31-59 (page numbers from Russian edition).

<sup>1050</sup>See volume 1, chapter 14.

<sup>1051</sup>McDowell, p. 31-59 (page numbers from Russian edition); Johnson, p. 105.

<sup>1052</sup>Geisler, Christian apologetics, p. 531.

that is, falsely under the name of another. Some claim that in biblical times such a practice was permissible as a conventional literary device.

Nonetheless, even if such a practice was acceptable in society, it does not follow that the Church adopted it as well.<sup>1053</sup> This is not merely a question of literary style, but one of honesty. To write under another person's name is an intentional deception and inappropriate for a follower of Jesus, much less a writer of Holy Scripture. Moreover, such a pseudonymic author is claiming for himself prophetic or apostolic authority, which he does not in fact possess. Therefore, this individual is not only a liar, but a thief as well. Weeks notes that the historical and biographical details in such books as Jonah, Daniel, 2 Timothy and 2 Peter confirm their traditional authorship. For example, how could a person living in the second century honestly state, "We were eyewitnesses of His majesty" (2 Pet 1:16), or "The time of my departure has come" (2 Tim 4:6)?

## **2. Response to Liberals' Objections**

How can we respond to objections made by liberals about the accuracy of biblical history? For example, liberals claim that a historian can never escape subjectivity in his/her writing – one is always under the influence of personal presuppositions and worldview. A historian typically is not an objective eyewitness of the event. In addition, he/she does not have all the information about the event to judge by. He/she chooses from the available material what he/she feels is necessary for the retelling of the event, yet his/her handling of this material may or may not be fully precise. In the final analysis, critics conclude that biblical history may differ significantly from what actually occurred.

In response, we assert that the process of gathering and organizing historical material does not necessarily lead to its distortion. The fact that different historians may accent one or another aspect of a historical account does not render that history inaccurate. There may be several faithful accounts of a single event, since they can describe it from different points of view. Additionally, according to the doctrine of inspiration, biblical authors wrote under the inspiration of the Spirit, who enabled them to avoid subjectivity. Finally, in the majority of instances, the New Testament narrative was written either by eyewitnesses of the events, or by their coworkers.

Sceptics of New Testament historicity also argue that the Bible must subject itself to the same critical analysis that all other ancient literature undergoes, as defined by Ernst Troeltsch. Consequently, adherents of this approach will never acknowledge the legitimacy of miracles or fulfilled prophecy in the biblical narrative.

In response to this contention, we note that Troeltsch's criteria themselves lack substantiation.<sup>1054</sup> On what basis must we accept his criteria of historicity? In fact, his system has fatal flaws. First, one cannot unilaterally exclude the unusual or unexpected. One must distinguish that which occurs regularly from that which occurs rarely. Today, no one walks on the moon. Yet, this in no way implies that it never occurred.<sup>1055</sup> Second, Troeltsch's system is fraught with unfounded presuppositions. How can Troeltsch prove that God does nothing in a supernatural manner? Who can dictate to God how He may or may not act?

We can also challenge the criteria that form critics use to recognize true historical material. As Longenecker notes, the criterion of dissimilarity fails to recognize the clear overlap between Jesus' teaching and Old Testament faith. In addition, the entire system of form criticism seems to be based on gross generalizations and unfounded assumptions.

What about the liberals' claim that the Early Church exaggerated Jesus' history? Are the miracle stories as well as Jesus' claim to deity simply myths created by the Church to glorify its Lord? We reject these claims on the following grounds.<sup>1056</sup> First, New Testament history, in general, consists of eyewitness testimony to the

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<sup>1053</sup>Weeks, p. 204-205.

<sup>1054</sup>Geisler, Christian apologetics, p. 531; Marshall, p. 85.

<sup>1055</sup>Pinnock C. Set forth your case: Studies in Christian apologetics. – Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1971.

<sup>1056</sup>Geisler N. L. Christian apologetics, p. 531.



actual events of Christ's life. Furthermore, the apostle John lived until the end of the first century and would have been able to verify or discredit accounts of Jesus' life that were in circulation at that time. It is unlikely that he would have permitted false information about Jesus to disseminate.

We must also keep in mind that the Gospels are based on very early sources. Thus, there was very little time for legends to appear and gain acceptance.<sup>1057</sup> The Gospels themselves were composed in the mid-first century, just a few decades after the earthly career of our Lord. Also significant is the fact that we lack any evidence that contemporaries of Jesus or the early apostles challenged the history recorded in the Gospels (except that they challenged the resurrection account). If the contemporaries of Jesus and the apostles did not challenge New Testament historicity, then how can critics do so 2000 years later?

Weeks makes an interesting observation, that when Old or New Testament authors write a parallel historical narrative, they never comment on or correct previous narratives.<sup>1058</sup> In other words, Matthew never corrects Mark's work, or John – Matthew's, etc. If the later writers knew that the earlier narratives were in error, one might expect a comment or a correction.

Finally, Longenecker correctly claims that a history of Jesus without supernatural elements would have had little impact on the people of His day. He writes, "The result of this so-called 'neutral' reading of the life of Jesus and the course of apostolic history was a product so innocuous and so minimal in content that it was difficult to see how the phenomenon of Christianity could have had any impact on the ancient world or have any significance for people today."<sup>1059</sup>

Furthermore, we must consider the question of honesty. In their day, the disciples of Jesus were teachers and examples of the highest moral standards. It is extremely unlikely that they deliberately taught lies about their Teacher. Along with this, post-apostolic believers, who, according to the liberal view, wrote the New Testament, were also followers of the great moral teacher, Jesus Christ, whose teachings would not permit the creation of a fabricated story about His life.<sup>1060</sup>

The most compelling proof of the accuracy of Jesus' history is the fact that His apostles were ready to suffer torture and undergo martyrdom in defense of their testimony of Christ. It is not possible that such a large group of people would so suffer in defense of what they knew to be false (i.e., of the life, miracles, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ).<sup>1061</sup>

We can add still other arguments against the liberal view. The genre "mythology" is characterized by certain features that make it recognizable to its readers. These features are missing in the New Testament, which reads like serious history. Also notable is that the Epistles and the Book of Revelation warn against alterations or deviations from the gospel. If the original Gospel narrative presents a distorted view of Jesus' life, then why were the apostles so intensely concerned about preserving it without distortion?<sup>1062</sup>

It is also highly unlikely that the early disciples, being Jews and strict monotheists, would have deified Jesus, considering Him to be God. At no time in Israeli history have the Jews ever attributed deity to a human – it is blasphemous. Finally, Paul's words in 1 Cor 7:12, 25 demonstrate that the New Testament writers distinguished their own teaching from the teachings of the Lord. Thus, we would not expect them to change the Lord's words to communicate their own views.<sup>1063</sup>

We may touch on one final objection by skeptics. Some contend that the contents of the New Testament were radically altered in the process of transmission. Yet, here one must simply recall the existence of multiple manuscripts, dating back to the early Christian centuries, which present the same view on the deity of the Messiah Jesus. No ancient New Testament manuscript offers a different view of Christ.

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<sup>1057</sup>Also noted in Bray, p. 439 and Carson, p. 124.

<sup>1058</sup>Weeks, p. 57-58.

<sup>1059</sup>Longenecker, p. 37.

<sup>1060</sup>Geisler, Christian apologetics, p. 531.

<sup>1061</sup>Ibid.

<sup>1062</sup>Ibid.

<sup>1063</sup>Апологетика: учебное пособие / ВЕЕ International. – Луцьк: Християнське життя, 1999. – Р. 120-125.

We also must stress that denying biblical historicity, especially concerning the New Testament, may have catastrophic consequences. God accomplished our salvation in history. Salvation comes based on the physical death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. If God has not acted in history, then not only is biblical history a myth, but our eternal salvation is in jeopardy as well. Without accurate accounts of biblical history and the redemptive acts of Christ, Christianity has nothing concrete to offer for salvation from sin and death.<sup>1064</sup>

### E. *Ipsissima vox* or *ipsissima verba*?

As we noted earlier, a frequently discussed topic in the interpretation of Scripture is how exactly the dialogue recorded in Scripture reproduces the original speech. The question arises, for example, “Do we have in the Gospels the exact words of Jesus or just an approximation of them?” In other words, do we have the *ipsissima verba* (exact words) of Jesus, or the *ipsissima vox* (true voice) of Jesus?

In answer to this inquiry, several theories are advanced. First, it is possible that we read in the Bible exactly what was said (*ipsissima verba*). In this case, we must assume a supernatural work of God’s Spirit to reveal this information. Second, we may be reading in Scripture not the exact words of Christ (or another speaker), but the sense of His words expressed at least partially in the words of the narrator (*ipsissima vox*). Third, some hold that the biblical writers invented these speeches in order to advance their own theology, putting their thoughts in the mouth of the biblical figures.

Liberal theologians hold to the second or third theories. Conservative theologians lean toward the first, but are often ready to embrace the second, provided we affirm that God’s Spirit moved on the biblical writers in such a way as to ensure that they did not distort the meaning of Christ’s actual words.<sup>1065</sup>

In resolving this issue, one must consider that Jesus most likely spoke in Aramaic, not Greek. Yet, in the New Testament, His words are recorded in Greek. Therefore, the Gospels cannot contain the *exact* words of Jesus, but rather, in the best case scenario, only an accurate translation of them.<sup>1066</sup> In addition, Appendix E has many examples to support the theory of *ipsissima vox*.

At the same time, Henry cautions that adopting the theory *ipsissima vox* in relation to the words of Jesus may inappropriately lead to its application to God’s speech in the Old Testament as well.<sup>1067</sup> Yet, 2 Pet 1:20-21 assures us that Old Testament prophets did not “interpret” their messages or speak from themselves, but were “carried along” by the Holy Spirit. In addition, unlike the work of the Gospel writers, the Old Testament prophets wrote the messages they received from God themselves – they are not making secondhand quotes. Therefore, the question of *ipsissima verba* and *ipsissima vox* applies only to narrative material, not prophetic.

Concerning the sermons recorded in the book of Acts, some commentators appeal to the methodology of a fifth century BC historian named Thucydides, who described his methodology in the citation below. Luke is thought to have employed this methodology. Thucydides wrote,

“With reference to the speeches in this history, some were delivered before the war began, others while it was going on; it was hard to record the exact words spoken, both in cases where I was myself present, and where I used the reports of others. But I have used language in accordance with what I thought the speakers in each case would have been most likely to say, adhering as closely as possible to the general sense of what was actually spoken.”<sup>1068</sup>

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<sup>1064</sup>The historicity of the New Testament is also discussed in the first volume of this series, in chapter 14.

<sup>1065</sup>Among those accepting the theory *ipsissima vox* we may list: Grant Osborne, Donald Carson, Darrell Bock, Paul Feinberg, and I. Howard Marshall. Donald Green is opposed.

<sup>1066</sup>Marshall, p. 61-62.

<sup>1067</sup>Henry C. F. H. God, revelation, and authority. – Waco, TX: Word Books, 1976-1983; Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1999. – V. 3. – P. 88-89.

<sup>1068</sup>Longenecker, p. 65.

Ridderbos and Moule notice several features about the sermons in Acts that indicate that their original sense was indeed preserved. First, Peter's sermons lack the theological sophistication that one would expect to see if Luke had composed them later in Church history. Second, one can note certain variations in how Christ is presented in these sermons, which weighs against them coming from a common source, i.e., Luke.<sup>1069</sup> These factors, then, go against the idea that the biblical writers invented these speeches in their narratives in order to propagate their own ideas.

Based on the above considerations, it appears difficult to convincingly defend the position that, in biblical narrative, we always have the exact words of the speaker (yet, that may certainly occur at times). At the same time, the doctrine of inspiration guarantees that the sense of the speaker is faithfully preserved. Thus, we can have confidence in the reliability of the biblical narrative.

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<sup>1069</sup>Ibid, p. 67.

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Chapter 14: The Bible in the Hands of Postmoderns

A. Postmodernism and Its Influence on Hermeneutics

In recent times, a plethora of new approaches to hermeneutics have arisen, all of which challenge the conservative grammatico-historical method. All these new approaches are rooted in the modern philosophical movement “postmodernism.” We will briefly define this relatively new philosophy and then examine the effect it is having on biblical interpretation.

1. Definition of Postmodernism

Many in the world today doubt whether a person can objectively interpret the biblical text and thereby know truth. This, now dominant philosophical worldview, is called “postmodernism.”¹⁰⁷⁰ Although postmoderns doubt that one can know truth, as a rule they do not object to people of faith – many of them count themselves in that number. Yet, they insist that faith in God is purely a subjective phenomenon. In other words, a person may hold to a personal faith, but may not claim that his/her faith corresponds to reality.

In general terms, Stanley Grenz describes postmodernism in the following manner.¹⁰⁷¹ Postmodernism “marks the end of a single, universal world view.” It is characterized by “respect for difference and a celebration of the local and particular.” It rejects “the emphasis on rational discovery through the scientific method.” Postmoderns seek not to conquer nature, but to cooperate with it. They relate to the whole person, including one’s emotions and intuitions. They give greater attention to community.

Two types of postmodernism exist: “hard” and “soft.” Hard postmodernism claims that truth does not exist at all, while the soft variety holds that truth may well exist, but we are incapable of knowing it.

2. Origin of Postmodernism

The term “postmodernism” first appeared in the 1930’s to describe a type of art characterized by variety. In the 1970’s, it appeared in the field of architecture, characterizing “incompatibilities of style, form and texture.”¹⁰⁷² Its most widespread use, though, is for a philosophical movement that has captured the imagination of the modern mind. Some ascribe the initial “intrusion” of postmodern thought into the mainstream to an article authored in 1979 by the French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*.¹⁰⁷³

The term “postmodernism” contains the prefix “post” or “after,” indicating the existence of preceding philosophical movements, namely “premodernism” and “modernism.” A survey of these earlier movements will aid us in understanding the phenomenon of postmodernism.

The period of premodernity stretches from antiquity to the Enlightenment. During this period, it was felt that people could indeed know truth and communicate truth through language. People also believed in a spiritual realm, and held that history is moving toward a specific goal. The primary epistemology (theory of knowledge) in this period was authoritarianism, i.e., knowledge based on the opinion of those in authority.

Feinberg summarizes the premodern era (in the Western world) as follows: “The Roman Catholic Church fundamentally told people what was correct to believe, and if one was a Christian, one followed without

¹⁰⁷⁰The postmodern movement is also discussed the volume one of this series, chapter 2.

¹⁰⁷¹Grenz S. J. A primer on postmodernism. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996. – P. 12-15.

¹⁰⁷²Ibid, p. 2, 21, 23.

¹⁰⁷³Ibid, p. 39.

question. Governments were absolutist, and common people had little choice but to do what leaders demanded.”¹⁰⁷⁴

However, as a result of the Enlightenment and the Protestant Reformation, people began to question the authority of the Church. Copernicus, for example, showed that the authority of the time (the Catholic Church) was incorrect in the realm of science, proving a heliocentric solar system. Martin Luther, in turn, showed that the Church could error in spiritual matters as well, proving that a person is justified before God through faith alone in Jesus Christ.

After premodernism was discredited, the way was clear for another dominate worldview to appear – modernism. In many respects, modernism mirrored its predecessor with one important exception – many of its adherents doubted the existence of a spiritual realm and its effect on earthly life. Erickson describes it thusly, “Modern persons were looking for all-inclusive explanations of events and of reality, but believed that this could be done without recourse to anything supernatural.”¹⁰⁷⁵ This led to the phenomenon “reductionism,” i.e., the conviction that science could uncover all knowledge.

Carson asserts that one of the basic elements of modernism was confidence in methodology, meaning that if one applied the proper method to any question, he/she could have total confidence in the results obtained or the conclusions reached.¹⁰⁷⁶ Grenz adds that this era held to “absolute faith in human rational capabilities.”¹⁰⁷⁷ In the era of modernity, the theory of evolution was advanced to explain the origin of the world. In the area of sociology, humanism ruled the day, placing man at the center instead of God. Empiricism and rationalism replaced authoritarianism as the leading epistemologies of the time.

These changes resulted in a paradigm shift, where reason gained dominance over revelation. Knowledge was now based not on Divine revelation, but on scientific discovery and logical deduction. As a consequence, deism began to challenge theism, and natural law – God’s commandments. People lost their awareness of being God’s creation, but considered themselves one of the innumerable microelements in an impersonal universe.¹⁰⁷⁸

Roy Clements gives this fine summary of how moderns perceive reality: “Modern thought is based on the presupposition that there is an absolute reality external to the human mind, and that the rational processes of the mind are sufficiently congruent with that reality to give us reliable knowledge of it.”¹⁰⁷⁹ Moderns think that reason can “grasp reality as a whole” and “devise a true and complete description of the way the world actually is.”¹⁰⁸⁰ Solomon describes this view as follows:

Since it conceived of human nature as essentially rational, the Enlightenment could claim that every free individual would reach similar conclusions about the most crucial matters of civic, moral and intellectual life.¹⁰⁸¹

Problems arose, however, with the modernistic worldview. First, rationalism and empiricism proved to be inadequate epistemological systems, unable to fully explain reality. Second, in the early years of modernity, the general feeling existed that humanity was heading toward utopia. Yet, as history records, this optimism

¹⁰⁷⁴Feinberg J. S. Can you believe it’s true? Christian apologetics in a modern and postmodern era. – Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013. – P. 39.

¹⁰⁷⁵Erickson M. Postmodernizing the faith. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998. – P. 16.

¹⁰⁷⁶Carson D. A. The gagging of God: Christianity confronts pluralism. – Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996. – P. 61.

¹⁰⁷⁷Grenz, p. 4.

¹⁰⁷⁸Ibid, p. 70-72.

¹⁰⁷⁹Clements R. Expository preaching in a postmodern world // Evangelical Review of Theology. 1999. № 23. – P. 174.

¹⁰⁸⁰Grenz, p. 41.

¹⁰⁸¹Solomon R. C. Continental philosophy since 1750 // Butler C., Evans R., Ryan A. A history of Western philosophy, Vol. 7. –Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988. – P. 10-11.

proved to be naïve.¹⁰⁸² Oden critiques modernity by describing it as “moral relativism, narcissistic hedonism, naturalistic reduction and autonomous individualism.”¹⁰⁸³ He also states, “The rhetoric of unrestrained, individual freedom is the prominent earmark of the spirit of modernity.”¹⁰⁸⁴

It is now thought that since the 1990’s, the world has moved on to a new system of thought – postmodernism. Several figures made major contributions to the development of this worldview, namely Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) and Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951).

Although Kant lived during the era of modernity, his philosophy laid the foundation for postmodernism to arise. Carson describes Kant’s influence thus: he “injected into modernity a seed that would grow and grow and ultimately destroy it.... Kant argued for a position that has become an axiom of postmodernism.”¹⁰⁸⁵ Kant’s watershed work in this regard was *Critique of Pure Reason*.

Having noted the failure of previous theories of knowledge, Kant created a new epistemological system by combining rationalism and empiricism. He taught that people receive the bulk of their knowledge through the five senses. Yet, the information obtained by this means must undergo processing by human reasoning. Certain units of knowledge are inherent to human reason, which enable one to evaluate and classify the data received from the outside world. These units of knowledge include “quality,” “relationship,” “time,” and “space.” Kant insisted that only by means of these factors can a person make sense of what he/she sees, hears, etc.

However, this system created more problems than it solved. If all a person knows is the picture of reality that his mind presents to him/her, then that individual has no direct contact with reality. His/her knowledge consists completely of that image of reality his/her mind displays. In other words, non-mediated knowledge of the world is impossible to obtain. Of Kant, it is said that “he helped to give birth to perspectivism and the culture of interpretation.”¹⁰⁸⁶ In his wake, Nietzsche taught, “All knowledge is a matter of perspective; that is, it is an issue of interpretation.”¹⁰⁸⁷

Thus, we see that Kant’s philosophy unavoidably leads to skepticism. Sproul adds that Kant’s teaching prohibits substantiating God’s existence on a rational basis.¹⁰⁸⁸ Yet, Kant considered faith in God helpful in practical affairs. So then, two types of reason developed: “pure” and “practical.” Religious faith enters the category of “practical reason.”

After Kant, subsequent philosophers developed his epistemological system further in ways that, as Carson puts it, would have “appalled” him.¹⁰⁸⁹ Kant taught that the categories of thought inherent to human reason were identical for all people. This means that if two people encounter the same phenomenon in life, they would both perceive it and interpret it the same way. This correspondence between minds makes possible what Kant termed the so-called “transcendental pretense,” which posits a general human consciousness as a basis for all knowledge. Thus, Kant’s goal was not to introduce skepticism, but to provide a more sure foundation for knowledge.¹⁰⁹⁰

Post-Kantian thinkers, however, challenged this assumption. They claimed that people categorize information differently, depending on their culture, upbringing, education and life experience. These factors determine how the mind processes the information obtained through the five senses. Consequently, human subjectivity prevents not only direct contact with reality, as Kant taught, but also meaningful interaction

¹⁰⁸²Hodges Z. C. Post-Evangelicalism confronts the postmodern age: A review of the challenge of postmodernism // Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society. 1998. № 9. P. 4-5.

¹⁰⁸³Oden T. C. After modernity... What? – Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992. – P. 46.

¹⁰⁸⁴Ibid, c. 47.

¹⁰⁸⁵Carson, p. 66-67.

¹⁰⁸⁶Lundin, Culture of interpretation, p. 53.

¹⁰⁸⁷Ibid, p. 38.

¹⁰⁸⁸Sproul R. C., Gerstner J., Lindsley A. Classical apologetics. – Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984. – P. 30.

¹⁰⁸⁹Carson, p. 67.

¹⁰⁹⁰Grenz, p. 76, 85.

between individuals. Since everyone views life from their unique perspective, it is difficult for them to find common ground with others. In addition, postmoderns assert that this isolation from both reality and genuine communication is insurmountable. In other words, a person cannot escape his/her subjectivity.¹⁰⁹¹

Therefore, every person perceives the outside world differently. Each has his/her own unique view of reality, determined by their prior life-experience. People may have the same encounter with the world, but they will unavoidably interpret it differently. Each individual lives in isolation, both from reality itself, which he/she perceives only indirectly, and from other individuals.

After Kant, Friedrich Nietzsche, whom Grenz calls the “father of postmodernism,” also rejected the Kantian postulate that everyone perceives reality the same way.¹⁰⁹² In Nietzsche’s view, every person creates his/her own “reality” by how he/she organizes the information received from the outside world. Nietzsche believed (in the words of Grenz), that “we live in a constructed world that comes from our own perspective.”¹⁰⁹³ Along with this, Nietzsche adhered to nihilism – the conviction that life has no meaning.¹⁰⁹⁴ In addition, no foundation exists for establishing universal standards or values. Nietzsche called this idea “the death of God.” Every person determines their own personal values and strives to actualize them – what Nietzsche called “will to power.”

For the most part, the French philosopher Michel Foucault embraced Nietzsche’s views, in particular, that there are no universal standards. Everything is relative. Along with this, Foucault felt that enforcing one’s views on another was an act of oppression. He believed that people use knowledge to dominate others, forcing them to adopt their beliefs.¹⁰⁹⁵ Postmodernity, in fact, accuses modernity of practicing totalitarianism.

Finally, Richard Rorty proposes the following pragmatic approach. Like Nietzsche, he rejects the existence of universal standards and values and, like Foucault, affirms that people use language for their own interests. In his opinion, a person is “a centerless and ever-changing web of beliefs and desires that produces action.”¹⁰⁹⁶ In the light of the subjective and egocentric nature of life, he recommends producing a “pragmatic utopia,” where people learn cooperation and tolerance.

3. Postmodernism and Hermeneutics

Next, we pose the question, “What effect does postmodernism have on hermeneutics, i.e., on the interpretation of a text?” According to the postmodern view, each person lives in his/her own “bubble” of subjectivity in isolation from others. Each individual perceives the surrounding world and interprets what is occurring in it from this subjective point of view. When a person encounters something in the world, he/she assigns to it a name, i.e., he/she describes it with words. Yet, since everyone looks at the world through different eyes, different people will use the same word in different ways. The result is that a single word will have one meaning for one person, and another meaning for another.

This phenomenon is called “conventionalism.” According to this concept, all words and expressions that people use have only a subjective meaning in accordance with that person’s unique perception of the outside world.¹⁰⁹⁷ Ehrman writes, “Texts in themselves simply do not mean anything. Meaning is something that results from reading the text,” and this is proven by the various ways a single text is understood.¹⁰⁹⁸

¹⁰⁹¹Geisler N. L. Baker encyclopedia of Christian apologetics. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999. – P. 192.

¹⁰⁹²Grenz, c. 88-98.

¹⁰⁹³Ibid, c. 91.

¹⁰⁹⁴https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Friedrich_Nietzsche#Death_of_God_and_nihilism

¹⁰⁹⁵Grenz, p. 6.

¹⁰⁹⁶Ibid, p. 156.

¹⁰⁹⁷See Geisler, Encyclopedia, p. 158, 192; Hodges, p. 5-9; Turnau T. A. III. Speaking in a broken tongue: Postmodernism, principled pluralism, and the rehabilitation of public moral discourse // Westminster Theological Journal Volume. 1994. № 56. P. 345, 348.

¹⁰⁹⁸Ehrman B. D. The text of Mark in the hands of the Orthodox // Burrows M.S., Rorem P. Biblical hermeneutics in historical perspective. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991. – P. 20-21.

Conventionalism results in the following. When someone reads a text, he/she ascribes to its words his/her particular meaning and not the meaning intended by the author. Because of the subjective nature of knowledge, the thoughts of the author never reach the reader. Thus, an insurmountable barrier exists between the author and reader, which prevents the communication of authorial intent.

This phenomenon is referred to as the “death of the author.” The author is “as good as dead,” since the reader cannot discover what he/she had in mind when the text was composed.¹⁰⁹⁹ Clements expresses well the postmodern position, “It is pointless to ask ‘what does this text mean?’ The only question we are empowered to ask is ‘what does this text mean to me or my community?’ We cannot read out of a text the author’s intention. We can only read into a text our own subjective response.”¹¹⁰⁰ Therefore, at the heart of postmodernism, in the words of Grenz, is “a denial of the reality of a unified world as the object of our perception.” Postmodernism involves the replacement of “knowledge with interpretation.”¹¹⁰¹

Next, we will investigate how this postmodern view influences the interpretation of the Bible. Evangelical Christians believe that the Bible is God’s inspired Word. Yet, some “Evangelicals” claim that even though the Bible is truly God’s Word, because of the subjective nature of knowledge, we are unable to objectively perceive what the Scriptures are saying. A barrier exists between the biblical authors and readers that prevents one from hearing God’s Word.

Postmodern thought has also reinforced the idea that there is not one theology, but many. It is felt that people of different races and genders read the Scriptures differently. We must equally respect, then, the unique understanding each group has of the Bible. Therefore, many recognize the legitimacy of such partisan views as Asiatic theology, African theology, feminist theology, etc. Postmoderns complain that white males have dominated the field of theology, and that their theology reflects only the white male perspective and excludes other views.¹¹⁰² Modernity in general is accused of repression of minority opinions and suppression of freethinking. This accusation goes beyond the sphere of religion, but also includes political life. Modernity is thought to support totalitarianism and force the opinions of the few on the many.

Another important term in the postmodern vocabulary is “metanarrative.” A metanarrative is when one person insists that his/her view is correct, and others are mistaken. Postmoderns demand the removal of all metanarratives. No one has the right to claim possession of the truth.¹¹⁰³

4. Benefits of Postmodernity

Postmodernism does boast some advantages over previous worldviews. Most evident is the admission that our presuppositions do affect our understanding of a text. It is true that our culture, life experience, upbringing, and education exert an influence on our perception of truth. In addition, human reason is affected by the so-called “noetic” effect of sin, i.e., a distorted view of reality caused by sinful human nature. Any or all of these factors can prevent us from looking at Scripture honestly and objectively. In the words of Carson, “Postmodernism gently applied rightly questions the arrogance of modernism.”¹¹⁰⁴

Postmodernism is also valuable in that it encourages us to expand our horizons by examining other views and comparing them to our own, which can enrich our understanding of an issue at question. Carson adds the thought that postmodernism may reduce “cultural prejudice, racial arrogance, and religious bigotry.”¹¹⁰⁵ Reproving his Mennonite confession for its history of isolationism, L. Mark advances a thought similar to Carson’s:

¹⁰⁹⁹See Geisler, Encyclopedia, p. 158, 192; Hodges, p. 5-9; Turnau, p. 345, 348.

¹¹⁰⁰Clements, p. 179.

¹¹⁰¹Grenz, p. 40.

¹¹⁰²Hodges, p. 5-6; Turnau, p. 349.

¹¹⁰³Turnau, p. 349.

¹¹⁰⁴Carson, p. 544.

¹¹⁰⁵Ibid, p. 17.

To be the Church in a pluralistic society means that we rise above the nationalism, the ethnicity, the language, the culture which separates and that we deliberately incorporate people of diverse ethnicities into our family and fellowship. Such an action will not destroy us; it will purify and enrich us as a part of God's great family.¹¹⁰⁶

Furthermore, Erickson sees another positive feature of postmodern philosophy. During the reign of modernism, as was noted earlier, many doubted the existence of the spiritual realm. Since postmodernism does not rely so heavily on objective science, postmoderns tend to be more open to the supernatural.¹¹⁰⁷ Unlike the strict rationalism and empiricism of modernity, postmodernism introduces an element of “mystery” into knowledge, which renders it more difficult to exclude the idea that God may indeed exist.¹¹⁰⁸

Grenz affirms the attention postmodern thinking pays to the whole person, considering not only people's intellect and reason, but their emotions as well. He also likes postmodernity's emphasis on community and personal spirituality.¹¹⁰⁹ Watson adds that since in postmodernity all points of view must be respected, no one has the right to criticize Christian Faith.¹¹¹⁰

5. Critique of Postmodernism

In spite of the positive contributions the postmodern worldview may make, it also has serious drawbacks that have serious consequences for sound hermeneutics. It undermines the entire grammatico-historical approach to interpretation aimed at uncovering authorial intent. In the final analysis, everything comes down to the personal opinion and subjective interpretation of the reader. The study of Scripture loses objectivity and stability. The authority of the Bible as the source of God's truth is jeopardized. Therefore, we offer the following critique of postmodernism.

First, this system is fraught with internal contradictions. It is interesting to note that in propagating their worldview, postmoderns employ human language in an ordinary manner. Yet, if there exists an insurmountable barrier between writer/speaker and reader/hearer, then how can postmoderns expect anyone to understand their appeal? Nonetheless, this obvious contradiction does not sway postmodern writers from publishing their materials.

Hodges makes the following sarcastic commentary: “To the postmodernist, all communication is theory-laden and can never point to ultimate reality of any kind. It is, however, interesting to note that *postmodernists continue to try to tell us this by using language.*”¹¹¹¹ Frame echoes this thought: “If postmodernists want to be consistent in denying objective truth, they should abandon the attempt to persuade other of the truth of their position.”¹¹¹² Geisler aptly notes that if postmoderns want to live consistent with their philosophy, then they must stop speaking and follow the example of the ancient philosopher Cratylus, who answered all appeals to him by just wagging his finger.¹¹¹³ Plantinga insightfully notes that the postmodern claim that all knowledge is culturally determined is actually determined by postmodern culture, and is therefore suspect. If the postmodern view itself is subjectively derived, then it is suspect of error.¹¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰⁶Mark L. E The role of the church in a pluralistic society. – Direction. – № 12. Apr. 1983. P. 13-14.

¹¹⁰⁷Erickson, Postmodernizing, p. 19.

¹¹⁰⁸Allen D. Christian values in a Post-Christian context // Burnham F. Postmodern theology. – San Francisco, CA: Harper, 1989. – P. 22.

¹¹⁰⁹Grenz, p. 167-172.

¹¹¹⁰Watson F. Text, church and world: Biblical interpretation in theological perspective. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994. – P. 84.

¹¹¹¹Hodges, p. 9.

¹¹¹²Frame J. M. The presupposition method // Gundry S. N. Five views on apologetics. – Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2000. – P. 227-228.

¹¹¹³Geisler N. L., Feinberg P. D. Introduction to philosophy: A Christian perspective. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1980. – P. 84; <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cratylus>.

¹¹¹⁴Noted in Feinberg J. S., p. 243.

Second, according to postmodern thought, metanarratives are strictly forbidden. Postmodernity, though, advances its own metanarratives – that society must defend the oppressed and give voice to minorities. Yet, if it is forbidden to force one's view on others, then how can postmoderns insist that we embrace their metanarratives (however worthy they may be)? In addition, the idea of "progress" cannot exist without a universal standard, i.e., a "metanarrative." "Progress" or "improvement" implies movement toward an objective, external standard.

Let us consider Schneiders' comments in this regard: "The biblical worldview has ceased to be the going ideology and has become instead a dialogue partner worthy of respect only if it offers something better than what is attainable by other means."¹¹¹⁵ Still, one must inquire, "If all truth is relative and no absolute standard exists, then what does Schneiders mean by 'something better,' and who has the right to define it?"

Even if postmoderns claim that they do not believe in progress, they contradict themselves. The concept "postmodernity" implies improvement or progress in comparison to modernity.¹¹¹⁶ As Feinberg notes, postmodernists are ready to recognize various worldviews *within* their own system, but are not ready to recognize the coexistence of postmodernity with modernity. The former, of course, is "better," and should replace the latter.¹¹¹⁷

Third, it is logically impossible to claim that truth is unknowable. If a person claims that truth does not exist or is beyond human comprehension, he/she is making a bold claim to know the truth – that truth is unknowable and always subjectively perceived.¹¹¹⁸

Fourth, postmodern philosophy does not correspond to actual life experience. Encounters with the outside world and with other people confirm that we are indeed in contact with reality. The lifestyle of postmoderns, in fact, confirms this. They go about their business in an ordinary fashion, as if they are real actors in the world. Additionally, the world in which we live operates according to the laws of logic, as Feinberg observes, "In our world there just are not logically contradictory states of affairs."¹¹¹⁹ The well-respected 20th-century philosopher Francis Schaeffer adds,

Each person is still in touch with the reality of the world... the more closely one lives out one's presuppositions as a non-Christian, the further removed one is from the real world, and the more closely one lives in contact with the real world, the more inconsistent one is with one's presuppositions.¹¹²⁰

Fifth, postmodernism encounters serious practical problems as well. Without a universal standard (i.e., metanarrative), society lacks a basis for resolving conflicts between people or people groups. If everyone is free to act as they please, then, when conflict arises, how can one determine who is right and who is wrong? It is obvious to all that certain ethical values are universal and absolute. Who, for example, would dispute that the Holocaust was wrong?¹¹²¹ In a context of moral relativism, life is reduced to a struggle for survival, as Lundin states,

Instead of appealing to authority outside ourselves, we can only seek to marshal our rhetorical abilities to wage the political battles necessary to protect our own preferences and to prohibit expressions of preference that threaten or annoy us.¹¹²²

¹¹¹⁵Schneiders S. M. Does the Bible have a postmodern message? // Burnham F. Postmodern theology. – San Francisco, CA: Harper, 1989. – P. 58.

¹¹¹⁶Erickson, Postmodernizing, p. 29.

¹¹¹⁷Feinberg J. S., p. 79.

¹¹¹⁸Geisler, Encyclopedia, p. 158-159, 193, 783; Turnau, p. 363-364.

¹¹¹⁹Feinberg J. S., p. 87.

¹¹²⁰Taken from Erickson, Postmodernizing, p. 77.

¹¹²¹McGrath A. Explaining your faith. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1995. – P. 129.

¹¹²²Lundin, Culture of interpretation, p. 25.

Moreover, as Lindberg comments, unless universal standards are acknowledged, genuine debate and discussion is impossible. As we all know, debates and discussions are designed to move society toward progress and improvement. Yet, if truth is truly relative and there are no absolutes to approach, such wrangling leads nowhere.¹¹²³

Several concluding arguments can also be advanced. We recall that modernity faltered because it failed to produce the expected utopian society. Has postmodernity fared any better? We are hardly living in Paradise. Carson bemoans “the intellectual, moral, and existential bankruptcy of the age.”¹¹²⁴

In addition, postmodernism hinders progress and impoverishes life because it refuses to form conclusions or make definite decisions. Instead of weighing factors for or against a claim and accepting the more probable option as true, postmodernism retreats to relativism.¹¹²⁵

It is interesting to compare this observation with the experience of Israel in the wilderness. God revealed Himself to His people for 40 years, yet the people of Israel were unable to sustain the conviction that God was great and able to care for them. Their doubting eventually led to their demise, as described in the Epistle to the Hebrews: “...as in the day of trial in the wilderness, where your fathers tried {Me} by testing {Me,} and saw My works for forty years” (Heb 3:8-9).

The New Testament also warns of this postmodern hesitancy to embrace truth. For several years, the Pharisees witnessed the miracle ministry of Jesus. However, instead of accepting Him as Messiah, they demanded of Him still more proof. Jesus responded with the words, “An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign; and a sign will not be given it, except the sign of Jonah” (Matt 16:4). The Pharisees already had enough proof to make the decision that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed Messiah.

Still another shortcoming in postmodern thought is that its adherents practice “intolerable tolerance.” On the one hand, postmodernism requires equal respect for all worldviews, i.e., “tolerance.” On the other hand, when a certain group claims exclusive possession of the truth, such as conservative Christians or Moslems, postmoderns cannot respond in a way consistent with their theory. They cannot embrace a worldview that excludes other worldviews. In practice, postmoderns often relate to such groups with hostility. In so doing, they cease being tolerant and violate a primary premise of their philosophical system.¹¹²⁶ Carson confirms, “If any religion claims that in some measure other religions are wrong, a line has been crossed and resentment is immediately stirred up.”¹¹²⁷

Furthermore, Kant’s theory seems to imply that when the mind processes information obtained from the senses, there may occur some distortion in the perception of reality. Yet, does this necessarily have to be so? Is it not possible, even likely, that the picture our mind supplies us accurately reflects the outside world?¹¹²⁸

In this vein, Carson wisely notes that postmodernism confuses the concepts of “true knowledge” with “absolute knowledge.” Postmoderns seem to imply that if we do not possess the exact representation of the outside world, i.e., possess “absolute knowledge,” then we have no knowledge at all. However, even if our knowledge of the outside world is partial and imperfect, it in no way follows that our knowledge does not correspond to reality to some degree. It seems more prudent not to abandon the search for truth (as skeptics do), but rather seek to perfect the knowledge we do have.¹¹²⁹

¹¹²³Lindbeck G. A. The church’s mission to a postmodern culture // Burnham F. Postmodern theology. – San Francisco, CA: Harper, 1989. – P. 49.

¹¹²⁴Carson, p. 494.

¹¹²⁵Geisler, Encyclopedia, p. 159; Edwards B. L. Jr. Deconstruction and rehabilitation: C. S. Lewis’ defense of Western textuality // Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society. 1986. № 29. P. 210.

¹¹²⁶Geisler, Encyclopedia, p. 158-159; Edwards, p. 205-214.

¹¹²⁷Carson, p. 32.

¹¹²⁸Turnau, p. 364.

¹¹²⁹Carson, p. 103-107.

In addition, Carson argues that postmoderns may be exaggerating the influence of culture, education and upbringing on one's perception of reality. He writes, "Clearly the interpretive community, the nurturing community, the community of faith, plays an important role in an individual's understanding, but it is not necessarily a determinative or decisive role."¹¹³⁰ In other words, a person is not a slave to his/her culture, but may embrace values and views that radically differ from those of his/her community. History is full of examples of reformers who rejected the "status-quo" of their age.¹¹³¹ In addition, many individuals convert from one worldview to another. How can this be explained, if one is enslaved to one's culture?¹¹³²

Copan offers the follow critique of Kantian epistemology. If no one (including Kant) has direct contact with reality, then how does Kant know that reality exists at all beyond human perception (the so-called "phenomenological world")? Additionally, how did he come to understand that the real world was unknowable?¹¹³³ The philosopher Fichte, in fact, challenged Kant's claim that beyond the realm of the phenomenological world the real world existed at all.¹¹³⁴

We also take into consideration that God created people according to His image. This implies that humans are endowed with all the necessary qualities, granted by God, to know Him and His truth. Additionally, postmoderns underestimate God's ability to reveal Himself. Almighty God is certainly able to break through human subjectivity to make Himself known.

From a biblical perspective, we can cite the following words of Jesus: "If you continue in My word, {then} you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free" (Jn 8:31-32). Jesus did not hesitate to claim that a person could know truth. At the same time, knowledge of the truth requires abiding in His Word and the renewal of the mind (Rom 12:2). In a similar manner, the apostle John affirmed that the Church knows the truth: "I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it" (1 Jn 2:21). Paul agrees – he charged his disciple Timothy, "Preach the word; be ready in season {and} out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort..." (2 Tim 4:2). Only those who know the truth with confidence can so preach.

Finally, Allen correctly notes that humans, by nature, seek to know the meaning and purpose of life. This goal is best attained in a worldview that holds to absolute truth.¹¹³⁵ The universal human striving to know life's meaning can actually serve as a confirmation of its real existence. People will not long tolerate a system that robs them of the meaning of life and the accompanying sense of significance and self-respect.

6. Conclusions

In summary, we recognize that such factors as education, culture, upbringing and the noetic effects of sin exert a real influence on how we perceive truth, and may indeed lead us to distort our perspective on reality. Paul Ricœur's "hermeneutic of suspicion" seems appropriate – that one must be ready to examine and critique any proposed interpretation.¹¹³⁶

Unlike postmodernism, though, we affirm that in Christ the barrier of subjectivity can be overcome. The primary difference between Evangelical faith and postmodernism is not the former's denial of the problem of subjectivity, but the Evangelical's conviction that subjectivity can be overcome and truth can be known.

¹¹³⁰Ibid, p. 126.

¹¹³¹Lundin, Culture of interpretation, p. 139.

¹¹³²Ibid, p. 140.

¹¹³³Copan P. Why the world is not religiously ambiguous: A critique of religious pluralism // Stewart R. B. Can only one religion be True? – Fortress Press: Minneapolis, MN: 2013. – P. 139-159.

¹¹³⁴Grenz, p. 87.

¹¹³⁵Allen, p. 22-23.

¹¹³⁶Newport J. P. Contemporary philosophical, literary, and sociological hermeneutics // Corley B., Lemke S. Lovejoy G. Biblical hermeneutics. – Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1996. – P. 143.

In this regard, Douglas Moo states, “Without denying the problem of subjectivity in interpretation, the notion that a ‘correct’ interpretation of a text exists and can be found is both reasonable and necessary.”¹¹³⁷ Goldingay adds that the fact that we may not hit 100% certainty in interpretation doesn’t mean the effort is not valuable.¹¹³⁸ Clements reminds us, “True, words can be misunderstood and the cultural gap between the Bible and the modern reader increases the risk of such misunderstanding. But these admissions do not mean that there is no objective meaning in the text.”¹¹³⁹

Therefore, our goal is to strive for the knowledge of the truth, recognizing that this is a process. We have this promise from Christ, “If you *continue* in My word, {then} you are truly disciples of Mine, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free” (Jn 8:31-32).

B. “Offspring” of Postmodernism

As a result of postmodernism’s rise in the field of philosophy, a plethora of new interpretive approaches were introduced into the discipline of hermeneutics that, at least in part, operate on postmodern presuppositions. We will seek to examine and evaluation several of them.

1. Ludwig Wittgenstein and Related Movements

The 20th-century philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein adhered to a theory called “logical positivism.” This is an empirical worldview that teaches that the main, if not the exclusive, means of obtaining knowledge is through the five senses. This view also stresses subjectivity in the use of language. In other words, word meanings depend purely on agreement between those who employ them to describe objects in the world.

Furthermore, this system works off the “principle of verification.”¹¹⁴⁰ The principle of verification states that a statement has meaning only under the following conditions. First, it may describe a fixed definition. For example, the statement “a triangle has three sides” is a fixed definition and is beyond refutation. Second, a statement can have meaning if it can be confirmed empirically, that is, by observation or experimentation. For example, the statement “the sky is blue today” can be confirmed by observation. On the other hand, assertions like “God loves you” are neither a fixed definition, nor an observable fact. Therefore, according to the principle of verification, such statements have no meaning, i.e., they do not relate to reality.¹¹⁴¹

However, the principle of verification contains a serious inconsistency. The principle accepts as true knowledge only fixed definitions or empirically verifiable phenomena. What about the principle of verification itself, though? It is neither a fixed definition, nor an empirically verifiable phenomenon. This means that this principle is self-defeating and, according to its own criteria, has no meaning or place in reality.

Wittgenstein, however, made an adaptation to logical positivism in that he taught that God-talk did have significance – not objective meaning, but subjective meaning for the individual believer. One is free to talk about God if such speech is beneficial for practical living. Yet, one must not insist that such statements describe reality as it truly is.¹¹⁴²

Aside from this, Wittgenstein devoted attention to the use of language. He claimed that the meaning of words depends totally on agreement between the parties that employed them. For example, the word “house” has no intrinsic quality that affixes it to the object we name as such. People simply agree that this word should refer to this object. If a group so decided, they could change the designation to anything else they

¹¹³⁷Moo D. The problem of *sensus plenior* // Carson D. A., Woodbridge J. D. Hermeneutics, authority and canon. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1986. – P. 186.

¹¹³⁸Goldingay, p. 50.

¹¹³⁹Clements, p. 23.

¹¹⁴⁰Geisler, Encyclopedia, p. 782.

¹¹⁴¹Reymond R. L. The justification of knowledge. – Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Pub., 1976.

¹¹⁴²Geisler, Encyclopedia, p. 782.

pleased. We earlier termed this theory “conventionalism,” and now will delve more deeply into its consequences for hermeneutics.

a. Conventionalism

Wittgenstein claimed that the phenomenon of conventionalism extends beyond simply the use of words and expressions, but may involve agreement between parties about entire worldviews. For example, a certain group of people may have similar convictions about God’s existence and nature. Therefore, they will be able to fellowship together in harmony concerning their shared convictions. Yet, according to Wittgenstein, their “God-talk” is based on their subjective opinion on the subject and their common agreement that God is to be so understood. Wittgenstein terms this phenomenon a “language game.” In other words, when adherents to a certain faith confession speak of God, they are merely playing a word game among themselves, using words to describe their common understanding of the Supreme. Yet, they cannot claim that their words refer to something real, outside of their community of faith.¹¹⁴³

At the same time, Wittgenstein made the qualification that some “language games” may indeed relate to reality, such as logic and mathematics.¹¹⁴⁴

So then, according to this theory, metaphysical terminology has no concrete referents in reality (as far as we can determine). God-talk has significance (subjective), but no objective referents. Some go so far as to deny referents for all words, not only those describing metaphysical phenomena. They feel that when we define a certain word, we can do so only with the aid of other words (as is done in a dictionary). If we seek to understand the words the dictionary gave us for our first term, we simply encounter more words defining them. Therefore, it is thought that words do not refer to anything in reality at all (i.e., have no concrete referents), but simply point to other words. The “truth value” of a text, then, depends not on whether the words in the text refer to real items, but on the absence of internal logical inconsistencies between them.

Norman Geisler provides a convincing response in critique of conventionalism.¹¹⁴⁵ First, if proponents of conventionalism wish to assert that “language games” do not relate to real items in the world, but consist simply of agreement between parties “playing” the game, they must then acknowledge that conventionalism itself is a language game, which does not relate to reality either. The system is purely theoretical and possess no objective grounds that enable its adherents to enforce its acceptance by others.

Second, as Wittgenstein himself conceded, some language games do indeed relate to the real world, as in the case of mathematics. Mathematical equations do not depend on culture, education or upbringing. If the mathematics “language game” can relate to reality, can others not relate as well? Proponents of conventionalism must establish concrete criteria to determine whether a certain language game relates to reality or not, and not simply assume that one does, and another does not.

Third, we must consider that the *source* of knowledge differs from the *basis* for knowledge. In other words, the fact that we learn something in our community (as participants in its language game) does not necessarily mean that our community created that information. It is very possible that this knowledge, of which our community was for us the source, is based on fact and reality.

Furthermore, Goldingay remind us that the essence of communication is that one party wants to say something to another party.¹¹⁴⁶ The speaker or writer is attempting to communicate information and not just play with words. Real communication involves transmitting real information.

Finally, concerning the assertion that no words have concrete referents, here we see a confusion of the *sense* of a term and its *referent* (see chapter 6). What is defined by other words in the *sense* of the term, which

¹¹⁴³Turnau, p. 345, 348.

¹¹⁴⁴Feinberg J. S., p. 59-60.

¹¹⁴⁵Geisler, Encyclopedia, p. 158-159.

¹¹⁴⁶Goldingay, p. 47. Also see Gillespie T. W. Biblical authority and interpretation // McKim D. A guide to contemporary hermeneutics. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986. – P. 207.

we discover by looking in a dictionary. The word's sense, though, is only one aspect of its meaning. Its meaning also includes its referent. Conventionalism ignores this basic linguistic feature.

b. Literary Criticism

One of the most widespread methods of biblical interpretation today, especially for the interpretation of the narrative genre, is literary criticism. In this approach, the reader views Scripture as literature, i.e., as a story. The historicity or non-historicity of the text is not important to determine. We are not interested in whether or not the events described in the Bible took place or not. What is important is getting something out of the story.

Supposedly, the goal of the biblical writer was not to provide a precise historical account, but rather to create a fictional world, into which the reader may enter. Adherents of this approach do not insist that the Bible contains no history, but that its historicity is not vital for accomplishing the author's goal, which is to inspire, exhort or edify his reader.¹¹⁴⁷

Mackay describes this method in more detail: "In a literary work the author intends that something happen to the reader; he does not intend merely to pass on information. In particular, literary works touch our imaginations, providing us with new, vicarious experiences that make us somewhat different people."¹¹⁴⁸ He further comments, "When people are transformed, it happens first in their imaginations."¹¹⁴⁹

The system is similar to Wittgenstein's in that both systems reject that terms in the text have real referents. The text creates a fictional world, which is embraced by the community that created it, i.e., the participants in the community's language game.

One reason why literary criticism enjoys such popularity is that the interpreter is free from the sometimes arduous task of proving the historical reliability of Scripture. Debates have long raged about the Bible's historical accuracy, especially in cases of the so-called "phenomena" (see chapter 5). If the main goal of Bible study is simply participation in the story portrayed in the text, then one may skirt the question of historicity.

Yet, this "advantage" is actually the most ominous feature of this approach. Christianity is a historical religion. Its basic tenets are not philosophical speculations or creations of human reason, but the retelling of God's acts in history. If one rejects or minimizes the historicity of Scripture (and, consequently, Christianity in general), then the foundation of the Christian Faith itself is destroyed. The Bible promises salvation not to those who believe in a story about Jesus, or a legendary Jesus, but in the actual Jesus, who died on the cross and rose from the dead, as described in the historically reliable New Testament.

In addition, we must also keep in mind that literary criticism basically concerns only the narrative genre. The Bible, though, contains many genres, the interpretations of which this approach cannot provide. Finally, Goldingay comments that a literary *analysis* of Scripture, that is, examining it in the light of its literary and rhetoric features (as described in chapter 7), does not require one to reject its historicity.¹¹⁵⁰ Scripture must be viewed both as literature and as history. Goldingay writes that Scripture is "more than history, but not less than history."¹¹⁵¹

2. Martin Heidegger and Related Movements

¹¹⁴⁷Noted in Silva M. Has the church misread the bible? – Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987. – P. 10.

¹¹⁴⁸Mackay P. W. The coming revolution: The new literary approach to New Testament interpretation // McKim D. A guide to contemporary hermeneutics. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986. – P. 269-270.

¹¹⁴⁹Ibid, p. 273.

¹¹⁵⁰Goldingay, p. 31.

¹¹⁵¹Ibid, p. 32.

Along with Wittgenstein, Martin Heidegger (1889-1996) had massive input into the development of postmodern hermeneutics.¹¹⁵² The essence of his philosophy is that language defines a person's reality. It is thought that all the values and the worldview of a culture is stored in the language of that culture (which reminds us of Wittgenstein's language games). Language transmits these values from generation to generation. When someone is born into a certain culture and masters its language, the language determines how that person must think, in whom/what that person must believe, how that person must act, etc. In other words, language creates a person's view of reality.

So then, although language began its pilgrimage as the courier of the values and worldview of a culture, in the end, it usurped the place of culture and became its determining factor. In conventionalism, language is the means by which a community plays its "language game." Now, language is no longer an instrument of culture, but culture has fallen under its power.

Watson describes this phenomenon as follows: "Language is not a transparent medium but shapes and forms the reality of which it speaks; for linguistic agents, there can be no encounter with a reality that is not already shaped and formed by language."¹¹⁵³ The French linguist Ferdinand de Saussure taught that a speaker is "caught in the web of relationships spun by that language and by the social order that nourishes and sustains it."¹¹⁵⁴ Derrida asserted that nothing exists "behind or beneath" language,¹¹⁵⁵ and that a world does not exist until it is written.¹¹⁵⁶ In the opinion of Dilthey, a person inherits his/her worldview by tradition.¹¹⁵⁷ Lundin gives the following description:

Every word that we use carries a history of associations and usages with it. When we appropriate language for our own use, we inherit the moral history of the words we employ, even if we are attempting to do nothing more than use those words to get what we want. Words do not simply influence our thinking; they undergird it, they shape it, and they direct it.¹¹⁵⁸

Richard Rorty uses the following approach.¹¹⁵⁹ The world exists, but the "world does not speak," that is, the world does not make itself known. The true nature of reality is unknown. We impose on reality our own interpretation, and, for us, that interpretation *is* reality. An interpretation of reality that is more successful will come to dominate others. This interpretation is mistakenly called "truth" until another, more successful worldview displaces it. According to Rorty, people do not use language for self-expression, but language directs a person's thinking. It is claimed that "language speaks, and the speaker is merely its mouthpiece. I do not speak a language, but the language speaks me."¹¹⁶⁰

In our evaluation of Heidegger's philosophy, we need to mention first of all its most serious consequence in regard to the Bible. His theory departs from the Evangelical position that the Bible is God's inspired Word. According to Heidegger, it is not the Spirit that speaks through Scripture, but language itself. In this system, language takes the place of God. Language not only speaks through Scripture, but is the "Creator," since it defines for people the nature of reality. Watson notes that, according to this theory, language even creates God, that is, language defines for us who God is and what He is like.¹¹⁶¹ His attributes, then, possess only a

¹¹⁵² Discussed in Thiselton A. The new hermeneutic // McKim D. A guide to contemporary hermeneutics, pp. 78-107. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986. – P. 85-92.

¹¹⁵³ Noted in Watson, p. 9-10.

¹¹⁵⁴ Lundin, culture of interpretation, p. 188.

¹¹⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 192.

¹¹⁵⁶ Noted in Walhout C. The responsibility of hermeneutics // Texts and actions. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985. – P. 35.

¹¹⁵⁷ Noted in Grenz, p. 100.

¹¹⁵⁸ Lundin, Culture of interpretation, p. 138.

¹¹⁵⁹ Rorty R. Contingency, irony and solidarity. – Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

¹¹⁶⁰ Noted in Watson, p. 104.

¹¹⁶¹ Ibid, p. 139.

textual character. God is not almighty, but is only described to be so. He is “textually” almighty, “textually” omnipresent, etc.¹¹⁶² Beyond the bounds of language, God does not even exist. Language is “all in all.”

Earlier we advanced the argument, that people do indeed change their worldview or introduce reform, which proves that they are not enslaved to their culture. Rorty offers a more naturalistic explanation: that true novelties from reformers “were the results of cosmic rays scrambling the fine structure of some crucial neurons in their respective brains. Or, more plausibly, they were the result of some odd episodes in infancy – some obsessional kinks left in these brains by idiosyncratic traumata.”¹¹⁶³ Yet, the purely speculative nature of his comment defeats its plausibility.

Furthermore, from our life experience we know that literary texts do not always support accepted values, but may challenge them.¹¹⁶⁴ In addition, as Feinberg notes, when someone learns a new language, he/she does not have to change his/her worldview in order to utilize it. That new language does not redefine the learner’s values or worldview, but simply serves as a means of self-expression.¹¹⁶⁵

Moreover, if one claims that a text can define a person’s perception of reality, then it follows that the text has the ability to preserve and transmit ideas to its readers, in this case, the values and worldview of a given culture. If a text has this ability, then why can it not preserve and transmit the author’s intention, as affirmed in the grammatico-historical method?

Additionally, if one claims that the text determines our perception of *reality*, then one must concede that a reality, outside of the text, really exists, and is independent of our perception. Otherwise, what does the word “reality” refer to in the phrase “perception of reality” other than reality as it really is?¹¹⁶⁶

We may also appeal to the work of James Barr, who convincingly refutes the idea that the Hebrew worldview is tied to its language to such a degree that God’s truth is best expressed in the Hebrew tongue.¹¹⁶⁷ Since all languages consist in basically the same grammatical structures, any one of them can adequately communicate a way of thinking. Again, we see that language does not define reality, but is simply a mode of expression. Thiselton also affirms that language does not form culture, but serves it.¹¹⁶⁸ We conclude with Gillespie, “The structures of language are mere linguistic accidents which do not determine thought, worldview, or preunderstanding.”¹¹⁶⁹

Finally, it is curious to note Rorty’s suggestion that the only escape from the dead-end of discovering meaning is to posit that “the world is a divine creation, the work of someone who had something in mind, who Himself spoke the same language in which He described His own project. Only if we have some such picture in mind, some picture of the universe as either itself a person or as created by a person, can we make sense of the idea that the world has an ‘intrinsic nature.’”¹¹⁷⁰ So then, only faith in God can provide us with a world with meaning.

a. Deconstructionism

The deconstructionist approach operates on the thinking of Heidegger – that language defines reality. It focuses attention on internal contradictions and inconsistencies in a written text. Since each generation slightly alters its worldview and passes these changes along to the next generation, the appearance of logical inconsistencies in a text is unavoidable, since they were supposedly introduced at different times and at

¹¹⁶²Ibid, p. 85.

¹¹⁶³Rorty, p. 17

¹¹⁶⁴Erickson M. Postmodernizing the faith, p. 137.

¹¹⁶⁵Feinberg J. S., p. 90.

¹¹⁶⁶Ibid, p. 152.

¹¹⁶⁷Barr J. Semantics of biblical language. – Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961. – P. 8-20.

¹¹⁶⁸Thiselton A. C. The two horizons. – Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1980. – P. 137.

¹¹⁶⁹Gillespie, p. 240-241.

¹¹⁷⁰Rorty, p. 21.

different stages of development of that culture and its language. These inconsistencies apparently demonstrate the instability of the written tradition.

As far as the biblical data goes, it is thought that the tension between the free will and predestination views indicates introduction into the text of different traditions at different times. It is felt that this idea explains other tensions in the biblical text as well, like inconsistencies in teaching about women's submission on the one hand, and liberation on the other.¹¹⁷¹

Since these literary traditions are constantly in flux, deconstructionists claim that we can never fully comprehend the meaning of any text. It is useless to seek a stable meaning, much less the authorial intent of a literary work. Language is not for self-expression, but for transmission of cultural values.

In addition, when an author releases his/her work, he/she can no longer monitor it to ensure that the original meaning is preserved. Every written work, then, becomes independent from its author and "has a life of its own."¹¹⁷² When a reader examines any written text, he/she does not encounter the author, but the language as courier of the values and worldview of the culture.

All that remains for the reader to do is to compare the text to one's own personal life experience, make corresponding changes to its interpretation, and pass it on to the next generation.¹¹⁷³ The quantity of such "new readings" is countless.¹¹⁷⁴ Carl Henry describes this system in the following words: "Every interpreter is free to handle the text selectively, that is, to deconstruct it, and to refashion favored segments into fresh readings that reflect one's own preferences without evident anchorage in the text."¹¹⁷⁵

In refuting deconstructionism, one may appeal to the arguments earlier advanced against the philosophy of Martin Heidegger. If Heidegger's theory of language is found faulty, then deconstructionism loses its foundation.

Furthermore, Cotterell challenges the assertion that the text becomes independent of its author and "has a life of its own." He writes, "The text does not achieve semantic autonomy over its author merely by virtue of its having been written down and published."¹¹⁷⁶ The fact that after publication the author can no longer monitor the work to ensure the preservation of its meaning in no way implies that the text will necessarily forfeit its original meaning.¹¹⁷⁷

Erickson adds that the mention in Scripture of the authors and recipients of the epistles stresses the historical character of the writing, and that the authorial intent is preserved.¹¹⁷⁸ According to Edwards, "Though a text's 'public meaning' or significance may change from age to age or from culture to culture, a text's original ontological meaning remains stable and is recoverable by historical and philological study."¹¹⁷⁹

We can recall here the point made by Goldingay that the whole idea of "communication" is that someone wants to say something to someone else.¹¹⁸⁰ People do not compose a text just to "throw their words to the wind." Every written work (including the one you are reading now) has a specific communicative aim, including the books of the Bible.

The claim that the number of "new readings" of a text is countless is groundless. Language is limited by lexical and grammatical rules. Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth," cannot mean, "no one created the heavens and the earth," or "Baal created them."¹¹⁸¹

¹¹⁷¹Goldingay, p. 30.

¹¹⁷²Watson, p. 3-4.

¹¹⁷³Walhout, p. 38-39.

¹¹⁷⁴Geisler, Encyclopedia, p. 193.

¹¹⁷⁵Noted in Hodges, p. 5-6.

¹¹⁷⁶Cotterell P., Turner M. Linguistics and Biblical interpretation. – Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1989. – P. 65.

¹¹⁷⁷Ibid, p. 66.

¹¹⁷⁸Erickson M. Language: Human vehicle for Divine truth // Corley B., Lemke S. Lovejoy G. Biblical hermeneutics. – Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1996. – P. 171.

¹¹⁷⁹Edwards, p. 214.

¹¹⁸⁰Goldingay, p. 47.

¹¹⁸¹Ibid, p. 51.

From a more practical point of view, Carson insightfully notes that if the heresies that threatened the existence of early Christianity were advanced in today's postmodern milieu, they would simply be considered a "new reading" of the biblical text and would find a place in Christian theology.¹¹⁸²

b. The "New Hermeneutic"

Another hermeneutical system, related to Heidegger's theories, is the so-called "new hermeneutic," founded by Ernst Fuchs and Gerhard Eberling and working off the philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer.¹¹⁸³

The goal of this approach is to create between text and reader a "fusion of horizons." The "horizon" of the reader is the questions, needs and views that directly concern him/her or his/her community. The reader brings these concerns to the text. Instead of trying to rid oneself of subjectivity in order to objectively encounter the text, the reader should embrace his/her subjectively and come to the text with his/her needs and questions, i.e., his/her "horizon." The "horizon" of the text, on the other hand, is the interests and views advanced by it.

The first step in this method is to create a certain "distance" between text and reader by analyzing the former according to the historical-critical method. In this way, the reader becomes acquainted with the horizon of the text, that is, the interests that the text is advancing. Then, aware of both his/her personal horizon and the horizon of the text, the reader adopts a passive position in regards to the text and allows it to "speak" to him/her. As a result, an "encounter" occurs between text and reader, affording the latter with new insight. This encounter is called a "fusion of horizons." The insight gained by this encounter is considered the "meaning" of the text. Therefore, depending on who the reader is, the text may have many meanings.¹¹⁸⁴

So then, the reader does not interpret the text, but rather the text interprets the reader. The goal of interpretation is not so much to study the text, as to "listen" to it. In this encounter, the text occupies an active posture and "speaks" to the reader. This reminds us of Heidegger's philosophy, that language takes the initiative to form the worldview and direct the thinking of the reader. The role of the reader is to allow the text to speak to him/her. The text presents a challenge to the reader's horizon and forces him/her to rethink its legitimacy. In this way, the horizon of the text exerts an influence on the readers' horizon.

At the same time, the reader's horizon has an influence on the horizon of the text as well. The reader passes along the insight gained through his/her encounter with the text to the next generation of readers, and that insight becomes part of the accepted interpretation of the text and thus affects the horizon of future readers.¹¹⁸⁵ Thus, a "living tradition" is formed for the text's interpretation, into which each generation of interpreters makes its contribution.¹¹⁸⁶

This approach is most useful in the interpretation of parables.¹¹⁸⁷ In His parables, Jesus begins by creating a "horizon" similar to that of His hearers. He speaks of grapevines, wedding feasts, catches of fish, sowing seed, etc. The hearer is well acquainted with this horizon, since it reflects his/her own interests and needs.

Jesus designs His parables, though, in such a way as to introduce a new element, which the reader/hearer does not anticipate. For example, in Luke 18:9-17, the tax collector (the enemy of the people) is justified instead of the Pharisee (the religious hero of the people). Jesus speaks the language of His hearers, yet He

¹¹⁸²Carson D. A. Recent developments in the doctrine of Scripture // Carson D. A., Woodbridge J. D. Hermeneutics, authority and canon. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1986. – P. 43.

¹¹⁸³See Thiselton, Two horizons, p. 299-317; Gillespie, p. 214.

¹¹⁸⁴Cranford L. L. Modern New Testament interpretation // Corley B., Lemke S., Lovejoy G. Biblical hermeneutics. – Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1996. – P. 130.

¹¹⁸⁵See Lundin R. Our hermeneutical heritage // Texts and actions. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985. – P. 25.

¹¹⁸⁶Thiselton, Two horizons, p. 32.

¹¹⁸⁷See Thiselton, New hermeneutic, p. 92ff.

includes a challenge in the context of the parable. Nathan's parable to David (2 Sam 12:1-10), for example, made the latter aware of his guilt.¹¹⁸⁸

This "fusion of horizons" is well suited to parables for another reason. Adherents of this system believe that every parable has more than one meaning depending on the hearer. When someone tells a parable, each hearer identifies himself/herself with one of the characters in the story. In the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector, some may identify more with the former, and others with the latter. Yet, each receives a personal word from the Lord. In this way, the text "speaks" to the reader. The narrative genre provides the same experience for the reader, since there are many characters for the readers to identify with, depending on their situation and needs.¹¹⁸⁹

This method has both positive and negative aspects. We see value in its emphasis on application of the text to the life situation of the reader. Proper interpretation of Scripture includes not only study of the text to discover the author's intent, but also a life-changing encounter with God through the text. As Goldingay says, "The text cannot be understood from a neutral position. The task of interpretation requires that we recognize that our interest is at stake."¹¹⁹⁰

On the other hand, as Thiselton notes, it seems that this approach pays too little attention to the analytical stage, i.e., determination of authorial intent.¹¹⁹¹ Additionally, this system recommends using the historical-critical method, the weaknesses of which we have already pointed out in the previous chapter. In addition, Thiselton feels it unwise to adopt a passive posture toward the text. The Bible encourages us to use our reasoning facilities to determine both authorial intent and application of the text to life. To submit to the "voice of the text" without critical examination can be risky.¹¹⁹² Finally, this approach is more useful for parables and narrative than in analyzing other genres.¹¹⁹³ Therefore, its utility is limited.

c. Existential Hermeneutics

We will take a quick glance at still another interpretive approach operating on Heidegger's presuppositions called "existential hermeneutics," instituted by Rudolph Bultmann.¹¹⁹⁴ In his system, Bultmann strongly emphasizes a person's subjectivity as the true path to knowing God. He aligns with Heidegger in the opinion that all a person can know with confidence is that which concerns his/her personal experience: his/her impressions, feeling, experience and needs. There is no place for an objective perception of reality.

Bultmann goes to the extreme of saying that if someone seeks objective grounding for his/her faith, he/she violates the Reformation principle of salvation by faith alone. In Bultmann's view, faith is a purely subjective phenomenon and is not subject to any critique or evaluation.

The sole defining factor in one's spiritual life is personal faith in God and personal experience with Him. One should not be distracted by the bustle of everyday living. One should develop, instead, one's potential as an individual in relationship with God. From this premise arises the designation "existential hermeneutics." The term "existential" means "based on personal experience."

Bultmann's theology exerts a strong influence on hermeneutics. What we read in the Bible is not an objective description of historical events, but the New Testament authors' personal experience and impressions of Jesus, expressed in the form of "myths." Therefore, in order to correctly interpret the Word,

¹¹⁸⁸Thiselton A. C. *Reader-Response hermeneutics, action models, and the parables of Jesus // Texts and actions*. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985. – P. 85. Thiselton notes that in the original historical context, such an outcome would have shocked Jesus' audience, while in our day, since we characterize the Pharisee as a villain, we do not get the same effect (Thiselton, *Two horizons*, p. 14-15).

¹¹⁸⁹Goldingay, p. 40.

¹¹⁹⁰*Ibid*, p. 253.

¹¹⁹¹Thiselton, *New hermeneutic*, p. 99-100.

¹¹⁹²*Ibid*, p. 101.

¹¹⁹³Thiselton, *Two horizons*, p. 353.

¹¹⁹⁴*Ibid*, p. 6-7, 217ff.

one must “demythologize” it, i.e., uncover what feelings prompted the biblical writers to create these mythological presentations of Jesus.

For example, when the Bible describes a miracle, this is either an attempt by the author to express His amazement at God in the form of a myth, or his attempt to explain some unusual phenomenon. Demons in the Bible are not real creatures, but mythological presentations of limitations and hindrances that one experiences in life.

This existential approach applies to not only narrative passages, but didactic ones as well. For example, in the parable of the prodigal son, the feelings of alienation and rejection, which the prodigal son experienced, are emphasized. In the parable of the talents, focus is on the fears that the last servant experienced, and how they prevented him from moving forward. When the Bible teaches that Jesus is “Lord,” this is not intended to ascribe to Him deity, but rather to express the willingness of the writer (and reader) to follow Him.

Even prophecy is interpreted in this light. When an author touches on an eschatological topic, he is not predicting the future, but summoning the reader to follow God now. This explains why Paul and John write that we are now in the last days, and that future things are being fulfilled in the present (see 2 Cor 6:2; 2 Thes 2:7; 1 Jn 5:24; 12:31; 1 Jn 2:18). Furthermore, the creation account in Genesis 1 is understood not cosmologically, but existentially – people are seeking their place in this world.¹¹⁹⁵

Even a quick glance at Bultmann’s teaching reveals its inadequacy. He rejects the historicity of the Bible and with it, the cardinal doctrines of Christian Faith. In addition, Bultmann offers no substantiation for his claim that the Bible is mythological. His system is anthropocentric, placing human experience at the center instead of God’s revelation. He denies God any possibility of supernatural intervention in human affairs.

Goldingay advances still other arguments in refutation of Bultmann.¹¹⁹⁶ First, if Christianity is a mythological religion, then what advantage can it offer over other religious or philosophical systems? Why not appeal to the Bhagavad Gita for inspiration? Second, if the Scriptures are truly historically reliable (as was shown in chapter 13), then Bultmann is, in fact, not “demythologizing” the Bible, but “mythologizing” it, that is, turning history into myth. Third, the goal of Scripture is not to relate the existential experience of people, but to declare God’s mighty deeds. Finally, using Scripture to inspire people to active faith does not require denying its historicity. In fact, the opposite is true. If the Bible records true history, then it will much more effectively motivate people to devote themselves to the Lord

C. Other Contemporary Movements

In this final section, we will touch on two other new movements in hermeneutics that are not connected to postmodernism, namely structuralism and liberation theology.

1. Structuralism

Structuralism arose in France in the 1960’s.¹¹⁹⁷ This system asserts that every author implants in his/her texts so-called “deep structures.” It is assumed that at the core of human consciousness lie certain fundamental ideas and concepts, which represent the most basic needs and interests of people. Every written work contains these fundamental concepts. The task of the interpreter, then, is to uncover these “deep structures” of the text and show how the given author has expressed them.

Special attention is paid to showing how any given author alters the usual expression of these structures. For example, one of the “deep structures” is the relationship: “sender,” “object,” and “recipient.” Yet, in the book of Esther, something unexpected occurs. We learn of the recipients (the Jews) and object sent

¹¹⁹⁵Goldingay, p. 206.

¹¹⁹⁶Ibid, p. 211-215.

¹¹⁹⁷See Goldingay, p. 24-26; Newport, p. 136-137.

(deliverance), but never hear of the sender (God), since His name is never mentioned in the entire book. In the book of Esther, we also encounter a confusion of roles for “enemy” and “ally,” since the Persian king sometimes threatens, and sometimes aids God’s people. We observe a similar phenomenon in Genesis 32, where God, represented as the Angel of the Lord, both supports Jacob, and opposes him.

“Deep structures” are also expressed in various codes of behavior, as with food, clothing, place, movement, sequence and hierarchy. For example, the book of Esther contrasts feasting with fasting, fine clothing with simple attire, distinguished persons with common people, and interior with exterior. These contrasts supposedly underscore the deep structure of “nature and location of power.”

In evaluation of this system, we must first note that its influence in the field of hermeneutics was very brief and, at the present time, it boasts few adherents. On the one hand, it is perfectly logical to assume that people have basic needs and interests. On the other hand, it is exaggerated thinking to claim that these needs and interests completely control and command the attention of every individual all the time, including in every written work. In the world of literature (including Holy Scripture), we observe a such a variety of genres and themes that it is difficult to imagine that they all reduce to certain “deep structures,” which supposedly define the content of every written work.

In addition, who can claim to have perfect knowledge of these “deep structures”: how many there are, and what they are. This theory also undermines the doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture, namely its role as the vehicle of God’s revelation. According to this system, the Bible is not God’s revelation, but merely a human attempt to express deep structures in a literary device.

The only foreseeable benefit in this system is its ability to draw our attention to certain patterns in God’s Word. We already discussed this feature in chapter 7, in the section on “Rhetorical Features of the Text.”

2. Liberation Theology

Liberation theology asserts that the main problem with humanity is injustice between individuals.¹¹⁹⁸ People abuse one another, which leads to all other problems encountered in life. Inherent to contemporary society are evil social structures, which lead to oppression. We observe discrimination against minorities, women, and other evils. If we could remove these unjust social patterns and correct improper social behavior, we could create a utopian society.

Adherents of this approach offer the following theological justification for their position. First, it is clear that many people in our world are suffering. Yet, God wants us to be well cared for. Why, then, does the Church not do more to relieve suffering in the world? Liberation theologians indict the traditional approaches to biblical interpretation as the cause. The Church conventionally turns to the Bible to determine how one is to act, and then observes conditions in life to determine how to apply these truths. Proponents of liberation theology, however, propose doing the opposite. We must first look what needs exist in the world, then turn to the Bible for inspiration and methods for meeting those needs.

In liberation theology, we discover truth not through study, but in practice. One must immerse oneself in practical Christian ministry, in particular, in supporting the poor and oppressed, in order to know God’s truth. This is why in the Bible, God does not reveal Himself in abstract concepts, but in action.¹¹⁹⁹

Furthermore, genuine Christian Faith is demonstrated in works (Jam 2:18), and truth is not something to understand, but something to do (2 Jn 4). Jesus taught that those who are ready to obey would know the truth (Jn 7:17), and that the truth of any teaching becomes evident in the quality of life of those who teach it: “You will know them by their fruits” (Matt 7:16). It is claimed that, in their interpretations, biblical scholars always

¹¹⁹⁸See Erickson M. J. Christian theology. – 2nd ed. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1998. – P. 608-610.

¹¹⁹⁹See Bonino J. M. Hermeneutics, truth and praxis // McKim D. A guide to contemporary hermeneutics. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986. – P. 344-357.

protect their own interests instead of preserving God's truth. Wilkinson states that history is told by the winners.¹²⁰⁰

According to liberation theology, how should the Church bring about the needed changes in society? It can start by preaching biblical principles of justice and good works. Beyond that, strikes and mass meetings may prove effective. If necessary, a violent revolution can be instigated.

As one might expect, this teaching is most popular in poorer, developing countries and among minorities of more prosperous lands. Many of its leading spokespersons come from Latin America, where there are many underdeveloped nations.

It is curious to note the parallel between liberation theology and the thinking of Karl Marx. Marx believed that if we could create ideal conditions in society, where all people had equal opportunity, then a new type of person would evolve who would be genuinely concerned for others. Both communists and liberation theologians claim that the human problem lies in unjust social structures. Both also recommend, if necessary, revolution to enact needed changes. Although one group is religious, and the other non-religious, these groups have much in common. In fact, many followers of liberation theology are also Marxists. Liberation theology is in reality a combination of Marxism and Christianity.

How should the evangelical Christian respond to liberation theology? First, liberation theology claims that we learn God's plan not by careful examination of Scripture, but by observation of life. In other words, to do God's will, one must consider not Scripture, but the physical needs of people, and attempt to meet them.

However, this assumes that people know what their true needs are better than God does. Adherents of this teaching use God's name to justify their actions, but reject His plan, as outlined in His Word. God is well aware of human need, and has a perfect plan for its resolution. He knows better than we do exactly what we need most. Yet, proponents of this theory do not take the counsel of His Word seriously. They accuse traditional Christianity of using the Bible to promote their own interests, but they do the same themselves – selectively employing Scripture to advance their own cause.

Second, the Bible teaches that our welfare on this planet is not our primary concern. Paul wrote to the Colossians, "Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God" (Col 3:1–3). Although God promises blessing in the life, our hope is in a glorious future, when Christ appears. The Old Testament saints considered themselves "strangers and exiles on the earth" (Heb 11:13). Peter called followers of Jesus "aliens and strangers" (1 Pet 2:11). Earlier, Peter referred to the earthly life of a believer as "the time of your stay *on earth*" (1 Pet 1:17), comparing our earthly life with a journey. The believer's home is God's eternal kingdom, and we are simply passing through this earthly life.

Third, the Bible forbids the use of violence for personal benefit. Jesus said to His disciples, "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat also. Whoever forces you to go one mile, go with him two" (Matt 5:38-41).

Peter speaks specifically on how to respond to personal abuse: "Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable. For this {finds} favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly" (1 Pet 2:18-19). Peter later affirms that Jesus Himself suffered unjustly on the cross (v. 21-23). This passage directly contradicts the basic tenets of liberation theology. The Bible teaches that it is pleasing to God to endure injustice without complaint.

It is true that the Bible speaks often of poverty and injustice. Yet, one must consider that nearly all these passages are in the Old Testament. The question arises, therefore, "Is God addressing in these passages

¹²⁰⁰Wilkinson L. Hermeneutics and the postmodern reaction against "truth" // Dyck E. The act of Bible reading. – Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1996. – P. 131.

poverty and injustice in relation to Israel as a human society, or as the people of God?" In the Old Testament, Israel was both. Therefore, it is unclear, whether these passages are instructing the believer how to act in society or among the people of God.

Adherents of liberation theology apply these verses to secular society and conclude that the Church is called to struggle against injustice in the world. Yet, the question is better addressed in light of New Testament teaching, since at that time, secular society and God's people were separate entities. Do we see in the New Testament the same instruction to battle against these evils in society?

Curiously, in the New Testament, nearly every passage that addresses poverty and injustice speaks of these entities among God's people, that is, in the Church (Acts 11:29; Gal 2:10; 2 Cor 8-9; Jam 2; 1 Jn 3:17). We recognize, of course, that the New Testament in no way forbids social action. It applauds it, in fact, in the parable of the Good Samaritan. Even in the Old Testament, God called a Gentile city, Nineveh, to repentance through the preaching of Jonah.

The guiding principle of God's Word in this regard is found in Galatians 6:10: "So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith." In 1 Cor 5:12-13, Paul also writes, "For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within {the church?} But those who are outside, God judges." It is clear, then, that, although God does not forbid social action, His priority is the Church, which is His new society, which will someday replace the present one and continue forever.

Furthermore, in refutation of liberation theology, we can appeal to the experience of Israel. Through the Law of Moses, God gave Israel a perfect social order. Additionally, Moses was the ideal leader. Yet, even in these ideal conditions, Israel failed to create a utopian society. God's people constantly violated His covenant, worshipped idols, etc. Israel's example strikingly dramatizes the true human need. It is not evil social structures, but sin in the human heart.

Finally, we contrast the claims of this theological system with Jesus' behavior during His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. The Jews of the time believed the Messiah to be a political deliverer. Many expected Jesus to enter the Holy City, begin a revolution against Rome, and deliver God's people from their enemies. Yet, Jesus had a different agenda. He did not head for the Roman garrison to start a revolution, but to the temple to cleanse it. In so doing, He made plain that peoples' real problem was not the government order, but their spiritual condition. Jesus did not come as a revolutionary, but as a Savior from sin.

D. Summary

Having examined the above-mentioned modern approaches to the interpretation of Scripture, we find nothing that excels the grammatico-historical approach, which delineates for us the authorial intent and true meaning of the text. These other methods attempt, howbeit unsuccessfully, to undermine various aspects of the grammatico-historical approach. Deconstructionism, conventionalism, and liberation theology reject or minimize the importance of authorial intent. Structuralism distorts it. In conventionalism, literary criticism, and existential hermeneutics, words in the biblical text have no real referents. The "new hermeneutic" distorts how the text is applied.

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## VI. From Scripture to Theology

### Chapter 15: Making Doctrine from the Bible

The final step in the exegetical process is the formation of doctrine. The goal of Bible study is not just interpreting passages of Scripture in isolation, but also in combining similar passages to derive the biblical teaching on any subject of interest. Theological research is done to find answers to specific questions or resolve issues related to Christian faith and practice.

Besides combining Scriptural passages to define Christian truth regarding specific issues, we must also go further in our research. Followers of the Lord Jesus Christ need more than individual doctrines derived from Scripture, but a systematization of these teachings into an entire Christian worldview, which can provide direction for Christ-like living in general.

The chapter will approach this task in two phases. First, we will detail the steps to forming specific doctrines from Scripture. Second, we will overview several approaches to theology, highlighting systematic theology – the discipline that is able to provide us with an overall Christian worldview. Before that, however, we will touch on the question, “Why do we need theology at all?”

#### A. Why Is Theology Necessary?

In answer to the question, “Why do we need theology?” some feel that simply reading the Bible and applying its message is adequate. They think that any sort of sophisticated approach to doctrinal formation merely distracts people from the Bible and replaces biblical truth with human reasoning. Is, then, theology actually useful?

In the 17th-18th centuries, a group of German Christians, the “Pietists,” took a negative attitude toward theology. They observed that before the Protestant Reformation, Catholic dogma had preeminence over the Bible. After the Reformation, they felt that dogma again usurped the Bible, this time in the form of Protestant dogma. Therefore, they concluded that theology is a rival to Scripture.

In responding to the Pietist's critique of theology, we contend that Scripture and theology are not competitive, but cooperative. On the one hand, Scripture needs theology for its proper interpretation, while theology depends on Scripture for its content.

The following arguments support our contention. First, Scripture needs theology for its proper interpretation. In our study of the grammatico-historical approach to interpretation (see chapter 7), one step in that process was investigating the theological context of a passage. This involves comparing the contents of the passage under investigation with the whole Bible teaching on the subject. This step is needed for giving clarity, and sometime correction, to the conclusions we reach in our interpretation of a passage. We must remember that the Bible advances only one teaching and contains only one truth. Therefore, the interpretation of any passage of Scripture must agree with the Bible's general teaching on the subject. This comparison, though, requires an understanding of the general biblical teaching, which theology provides. So then, without theology, Scriptural passages may be misinterpreted.

Another factor weighing in favor of theological research is that theology aids us in developing our overall understanding of God and His plan. The fact is that every person is a theologian, that is, he/she has certain formed ideas of who God is and what He is like. Yet, no one has a perfect understanding of Him. We all hold to some wrong ideas about the Lord. Therefore, the study of theology will aid any individual, already a theologian in practice, to become a better theologian.

Third, God created people according to His image. One aspect of God's creative work is giving humans reason. Humans are reasoning creatures, who are able to think, reflect, analyze, etc. In this vein, Saucy writes, "Since the human mind is not content with chaotic bits of knowledge, the impulse is present in all believers to integrate the revelation of God into their consciousness."<sup>1201</sup> Theological research, then, enables people to search out difficult questions and form a Christian worldview.

Moreover, theology is necessary for Christian teaching. Jesus commanded His followers to "teach all nations." In order to teach, one must gather information in an organized format. Thus, we note another value to theology – organization of material into a format suitable for teaching.

Theology is necessary to put a check on tradition. True biblical teaching, discovered through the theological process, can bring a corrective to long-term practices, both in the Church and in the personal lives of believers, that do not line up with Scripture. Good theology will promote the ongoing renewal of the Church, begun at the Reformation. Reformers of all periods of Church history have rediscovered biblical truths and re-emphasized their importance for successful Christian living. Additionally, theological inquiry has been a consistent practice in the Church from its earliest days. Christian thinkers have constantly sought ways to express biblical truth in specific doctrinal formations.

We will conclude our defense of the need for theology with an appeal to the distinguished theologian Louis Berkhof, who provides the following assurance: "There seems to be a lurking fear that the more we systematize the truth, the farther we wander from the presentation of it found in the Word of God. But there is no danger of this, if the system is not based on the fundamental principles of some erring philosophy, but on the abiding principles of Scripture itself."<sup>1202</sup>

However, if God approves of theology, then why did He not give us a biblical text in systematized form? Keneth Kantzer replies that God gave biblical truth in the form of an unfolding narrative because we are able to assimilate truth only gradually. In addition, such an approach aids in applying truth to life.<sup>1203</sup>

## **B. Theological Research and Formation of Doctrine**

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<sup>1201</sup>Saucy R. L. Doing theology for the church // Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society. 1973. № 16. P. 2.

<sup>1202</sup>Berkhof L. Introduction to systematic theology. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1979. – P. 15.

<sup>1203</sup>Kantzer K. A systematic Biblical dogmatics: What is it and how is it to be done? – Grand Rapids, MI.: Zondervan, 1991.

Unfortunately, in the practice of theology, a method is often employed that is totally contrary to proper theological technique. In many instances, believers accept their confessional doctrines as true and simply seek from the Bible verses that substantiate their positions. Proper theological inquiry begins not with one's confessional beliefs, but with the biblical material that concerns the topic under question and forms one's conclusions from it.

What results may ensue from theological research? The researcher may discover that his conclusion align with already accepted convictions on the given topic. Possibly, he/she may discover new insights into the question that will challenge the status-quo and introduce reform. Finally, if the theological process is done incorrectly or with impure motives, the researcher may reach false conclusions and thereby introduce heresy into the Church. Therefore, it is important to observe good methodology and approach the text in a sincere quest for truth.

## **1. Appeal to Scripture**

Although there are many fine theological resources used in studying questions of Christian faith and practice, none of them excels the Bible. We appeal to it as God's inspired Word, which provides us with God's authoritative voice concerning any issue requiring our attention.

Proper theological method includes a thorough investigation of the biblical materials necessary to form a proper conclusion. This may require much time and effort, but this step is necessary, since Christian doctrine is based on the entire biblical witness. This collection of biblical materials is consistent with the well-accepted principle "the analogy of faith." According to this maxim, the best interpreter of Scripture is Scripture itself. In other words, we compare one passage with others to give clarity to the first.

How does one gather the needed biblical material? We begin with passages on the topic that we already know. A Bible with cross-references will provide us with related passages as well. Next, one may employ a concordance to find passages containing a key word or words in the topic under investigation. Synonyms to these key words may also be sought out, as well as metaphors communicating the same thought. It will be useful to acquaint oneself with what is known about the general theological theme behind the topic of study. For example, a study of the "circumcision of the heart" is a subset of the doctrine of sanctification.

Finally, additional material can be gained from the biblical narrative. Often, biblical figures had personal experience with the issue under study, and their life story can illuminate our understanding, either by their good or bad example. At the same time, one must keep in mind that the biblical narrative does not always provide an evaluation of the behavior of people in the narrative. Often, the reader is left to evaluate their behavior based on his/her knowledge of Scripture in general.

Having gathered the biblical material, one must process these findings. A list of the passages gleaned should be arranged in chronological order, highlighting those passages considered key for formation of the doctrine. Annotation should follow each entry, commenting on the contribution each passage makes to the question. More commentary, even an entire exegetical evaluation (see chapter 7), should accompany the highlighted key passages. It is always helpful to compare our personal notes on these passages with the interpretations found in competent biblical commentaries. These biblical commentaries, however, should not be surveyed until we have made our own personal comments first.

Now we are in position to define the biblical view of our doctrinal question. We do this initially by determining the view of each biblical author or section of Scripture individually. We might determine the Pentateuchal teaching, then that of the historical books, poetical books, and prophetic books, and then on to the New Testament authors. In this way, we are able to follow the development of this teaching over time and glean from the individual perspectives of each writer or section of Scripture.

In chapter 7, we already discussed the phenomenon of "progressive revelation." We seek to discern that progression for our topic, if one exists. One must acknowledge that the New Testament usually presents a more developed understanding of a doctrinal issue than the Old Testament. Yet the latter makes an important

contribution as well. Development occurs within the New Testament also, since the Gospels reflect an “intertestamental” understanding of theology, since the old order was still in force, and the new order was just being introduced. Marshall defends this view as follows. First, the Gospels depict the dawn of God’s kingdom, before the death and resurrection of Christ. Second, Jesus addressed his teaching, in general, in simple terms to people not very well advanced in theological knowledge. Third, Jesus gave His teaching in the context of the Old Testament, which was still in force in His day.<sup>1204</sup> In chapter 3, in the section, “Is There a Canon within the Canon?” we also investigated the possibility of development within the New Testament epistles themselves.

## 2. Forming Conclusions from Scripture

The next step in the theological process is forming theological conclusions. Unlike the task of gathering biblical material, which is more “scientific” in nature, forming theological conclusions is more of an “art.” Taking into consideration all that was uncovered during his/her collection of materials, the researcher must derive the essence of the biblical teaching contained in these passages. He/she must “extract” the doctrine from the biblical material.

In his treatise *Symphonic theology*, Vern Poythress attempts to conceptualize this process of “extraction.”<sup>1205</sup> In his view, one may compare the individual passages of Scripture with musical instruments in an orchestra, each one of which performs its part of the musical composition. The conductor, however, must hear the combination of all the instruments and perceive the piece as a whole. In a similar way, the theologian must “hear” each passage of Scripture included in the study and combine those voices into a harmonious whole, that is, arrive at doctrinal formation.

David Kelsey gives a different spin on turning Bible into doctrine. He feels that the human imagination plays a key role in the process.<sup>1206</sup> In other words, with the aid of imagination (one might add, “sanctified by the Spirit”), the researcher can extract from Scripture a concrete teaching. One might modify Kelsey’s view, then, by stating that with the aid of the Holy Spirit, sanctifying the human mind, the researcher’s “imagination” can discover the essence of the given teaching.

It may be helpful to compare the theological process with the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle concerning so-called “universals” and “particulars.” These eminent philosophers taught that one can derive from “particulars,” i.e., concrete objects in the world, the “universals” that correspond to them, that is, the general class they correspond to. For example, individual books (particulars) all relate to the idea, or universal, called “book.” Plato and Aristotle differed in that the former believed that universals were located in their own sphere, the “world of ideas,” whereas Aristotle taught that they resided in the particulars themselves.

In theological terms, one might compare particulars with the passages of Scripture assembled for study. Just as reflection on the particulars leads to the conception of a universal, reflection on the biblical material may lead to conceptualizing the doctrine that they all testify to.

We can draw another parallel between universals and doctrine. Although universals represent all the particulars *in toto*, no one particular encompasses the entire universal. Similarly, although the theological conclusion included input from all the relevant passages, it is unlikely that any one biblical passage expresses the doctrine fully. Therefore, it is misguided to use one passage to express an entire doctrine.

So then, with the help of the Holy Spirit, whether by means of “symphonic theology,” “sanctified imagination,” or “formation of universals,” we attempt to hear the “theological song” that the Scripture plays and see the “theological picture” that the Bible paints. We seek to express this abstract “theological song” or “theological picture” in concrete terms for their preservation and propagation.

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<sup>1204</sup>Marshall I. H., Vanhoozer K. J., Porter S. E. *Beyond the Bible: Moving from Scripture to theology*. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004. – P. 63.

<sup>1205</sup>Poythress V. *Symphonic theology*. – Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R. Publishing, 2001.

<sup>1206</sup>Kelsey D H. *The uses of Scripture in recent theology*. – Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1975. – P. 158-163.



Unfortunately, as mentioned above, we will not likely find the precise words to express this doctrine fully in one isolated Scripture passage. Each passage makes up only one part of the “theological symphony.” Therefore, we are obliged to seek out a formulation that precisely and faithfully represents the doctrine extracted from Scripture. Thus, the next step in the theological process is to write a doctrinal definition that reflects the theological conclusion we have made.

This has been the task of theologians throughout the history of the Church. The following are examples of doctrinal formations made in the course of time: the Apostles’ Creed, the Athanasian Creed, the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed, the Chalcedonian Definition and many others.

Having arrived at a theological conclusion, or “doctrine,” one may evaluate its quality by the following criteria: comprehensiveness, consistency, coherence and clarity. Comprehensiveness concerns the inclusion of all relevant material for examination. Consistency means the resolution of apparent contradictions between passages studied. Coherence refers to delineating the interconnectedness between the passages under consideration. Each passage should find a place in an overall construal of the doctrine. Finally, the doctrine should be stated with clarity.

Finally, it will be important to make mention of the conception “the hermeneutical spiral.”<sup>1207</sup> In the theological process we described above, we make the assumption that the researcher comes to the text in an unbiased attitude, without any prejudice or preconceptions dulling his/her perception. In our discussion of postmodernism, however, we conceded that overcoming subjectivity and apprehending truth is a process not arrived at immediately. Consequently, we all approach the text with some personal preunderstanding and view it through the prism of our subjectivity.

However, in the theological process, the researcher interacts with the biblical text, which exerts its influence on him/her, renewing the mind and delivering from false preconceptions. Therefore, as a result of one’s “encounter” with the text, one receives not only a better understanding of the passages under examination, but also a more renewed and liberated mind. Consequently, the next time we examine that passage, we may see it in a different light and better understand it. This interaction between reader and text, which results in ever-increasing understanding, is called the “hermeneutical spiral.”<sup>1208</sup>

Helm describes this phenomenon in relation to the doctrine of God’s providence in the following way:

There must, to begin with, be some general view about divine providence drawn deductively from some of the data. But because our grasp of the data is only partial, even valid deductions may not convey a rounded doctrine. So there is need to treat the first derivations of the doctrine with appropriate caution, and to return to the data, in the belief that the original idea may be suitably modified and refined in the process. An initial deduction must be followed by fresh inductions, and these in turn followed by revised deductions, until there is a reasonable belief that all the relevant data have been covered.<sup>1209</sup>

### 3. Appeal to Other Resources

After composing our doctrinal formulation expressing our theological conclusion, we next compare our findings with other theologians and commentators. Their views may serve to clarify or correct our conclusions.

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<sup>1207</sup>Padilla C. R. *The interpreted Word: Reflections on contextual hermeneutics* // McKim D. *A guide to contemporary hermeneutics*. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986. – P. 305-306; Packer J. I. *Infallible Scriptures and the role of hermeneutics* // Carson D. A., Woodbridge J. D. *Scripture and truth*. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1992. – P. 349.

<sup>1208</sup>The phrase “hermeneutical spiral” sometime carries a different sense – when the meaning of a word is clarified by the entire sentence, and more precisely defining the unclear word reciprocally enhances the understanding of the sentence. See the discussion in chapter 7 in the section on “Analysis of Key Words.”

<sup>1209</sup>Helm P. *The providence of God*. – Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1993. – P. 28.

As the Body of Christ, we strive together to know God's truth. One way to work together corporately is to compare our work with the works of others.

Note, however, that we do our comparative analysis only after our personal research is completed. We do not want to prejudice our view by considering the views of others before we search the Scriptures ourselves. Theologies and commentaries, however good they may be, are never the primary sources for our research. That place is reserved for the Word of God alone.

The best place to start is to examine the views on the given topic held by earlier Christian writers up to the present time, taking note of the development of the doctrine in the history of the Church. Along with searching out topical treatments of our theme, we may also appeal to early systematic works. Some of the more famous early systematic theology works are listed here:

- Origen (3rd c.) – *De Principiis*
- John of Damascus (8th c.) – *An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*
- Peter Lombard (12th c.) – *Sentences*
- Thomas Aquinas (13th c.) – *Summa Theologia*
- John Calvin (16th c.) – *Institutes of the Christian Religion*
- Philip Melancthon (16th c.) – *Loci praecipui theologici*

Our historical investigation extends to include, of course, modern thinkers as well.

We may make a few recommendations about using other resources. First, it is best to use the original works of other authors, and not rely on quotations or references to them in other books. Second, we recommend using the most recent edition of any work, since it reflects the mature thinking of the author. Third, one must examine resources reflecting different points of view. This may enrich our own view of the topic. Finally, check the bibliography to find other resources devoted to the topic.

Theological works come in two main types: systematic and thematic. Systematic theology textbooks present material concerning various important doctrinal issues in a systematic format. Thematic books are devoted to only one topic. Doctoral dissertations are valuable in that the research usually reflects the most current thinking on the issue. The Internet is, of course, a very convenient and often valuable source of information as well.

When reading theological resources, one must observe certain rules. One must acquaint oneself with the basic theological position of the author, as well as his/her view on the topic in question. If the book is wholly devoted to our topic of interest, we read it in its entirety, beginning with the introduction, conclusion and table of contents. In this way, we become acquainted with what position the author is defending, and how he goes about presenting his/her case.

Next, we read the beginning and end of each chapter, thereby capturing the main ideas of each chapter. We may continue by reading the beginning of each paragraph. If the paragraph has valuable information for us, we proceed to read it entirely. If the work is not completely devoted to our topic, the index will indicate which portions contain the needed material.

When we take material from other resources, besides providing a proper citation to the original, we must honor the context from which we took the author's material. We also note how strongly the author stresses this point and how firmly he/she is committed to this position. It is very important to observe whether the author is actually making a point, or just reporting what someone else has said. If we fail to do this, we may ascribe to the author we are citing an opinion that actually belongs to another. Finally, when we cite other authors, we base our confidence in their conclusions not on their position or reputation, but on the plausibility of their arguments. Including his/her arguments in our citation will reflect this concern.

#### **4. The Question of "Future Trajectories" in Theology**

Some modern thinkers advance the idea that Scripture not only contains concrete doctrines, but also hints at future trajectories for Christian faith and practice.<sup>1210</sup> This means that the Bible points out certain tendencies that are not yet fully developed, but will be at a future time. Those living at a later time can look back and recognize in Scripture these future trajectories and formulate doctrines from them.

The classic example is the issue of slavery. Nowhere in Scripture, even in the New Testament, is slavery forbidden. On the other hand, the Bible teaches respect for all people, equality in the Church, and freedom in Christ. In this light, one may confidently assert that, even though the Bible does not forbid it, it projects a trajectory toward slavery's future abolishment.

This method is used to justify and support such "extra-biblical" doctrines as democratic government, egalitarianism, and others. A more extreme example is justification for homosexuality.

Kevin Vanhoozer cautions about this approach for several reasons.<sup>1211</sup> First, how do we know that we stand at the end of this trajectory and can, therefore, define where it is going and how it ends? Maybe the final destination is yet to be reached. Second, we may mistakenly demote a forbidden biblical practice to the level of a cultural issue of antiquity, concluding that it no longer applies to us. The fact that a certain practice is permitted in modern culture in no way implies that the biblical mandate is outdated.

A more reasonable option is to not add "new trajectories" to what Scripture teaches, but simply draw out the implications of truths already taught there.<sup>1212</sup> Paul's instructions about slavery can serve as an example. In 1 Corinthians 7:21, he writes, "Were you called while a slave? Do not worry about it; but if you are able also to become free, rather do that." Here we see that abolition of slavery is more than just a trajectory, but for Paul, liberation of slaves is already a preferred option. We do not see as clear of an indication for issues like democracy, egalitarianism or homosexuality. The appeal to "trajectories" can easily be abused.

## 5. Conclusions

In summary, we recommend the following order for engaging the theological process:

1. Gather the relevant biblical material about the topic in question.
2. Perform a throughout exegetical analysis of the key passages.
3. Make an annotated list with commentary on the pertinent passages.
4. Organize the material in chronological order, determining the view of each biblical author or section of Scripture and discerning the "progressive revelation" of the theme.
5. Reflect on the material, asking the Holy Spirit to give insight.
6. Form a theological conclusion and a corresponding doctrinal statement, reflecting the results of research.
7. Discover the development of this doctrine in the course of Church history up to the present time, and compare personal conclusions with these other views, clarifying and correcting them as needed.

## C. Approaches to Theology

Theology is one's attempt to speak about God, i.e., describe His nature and His plan. The term derives from the Greek *θεός* (*theos*), i.e. "God", and *λογία* (*logia*), i.e. "word" or "study." In other words, theology is the study of God.

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<sup>1210</sup>See Marshall, p. 35ff.

<sup>1211</sup>Ibid, p. 90ff.

<sup>1212</sup>Ibid, p. 89-90.

Up to now, we have used the term “theology” as practiced in systematic theology. There exist, however, other approaches to this discipline, which we will briefly examine, namely: philosophical theology, biblical theology and historical theology. All these approaches can contribute to understanding Christian truth.

## **1. Philosophical Theology**

Before commenting on philosophical theology, we would do well to understand some basic elements of philosophy itself. Philosophy is the attempt to explain the composition, origin and meaning of reality. This typically involves answering four basic questions. The first concerns knowledge (epistemology). How do we know what we know? On what do we base our knowledge? The second question inquires about the existence of an invisible realm (metaphysics). The third concerns proper behavior (ethics). The final question deals with defining and appreciating beauty (aesthetics).

These four aspects of philosophical inquiry make up “classic” or “synthetic philosophy.” Although these questions remain relevant today, modern philosophers are more engaged with “analytical philosophy.” Analytical philosophy tackles the question of the relation of language to reality. It seeks to understand whether our words actually refer to things in the objective, outside world.

What, then, is “philosophical theology?” This approach seeks to discover what we can know about God based on reason and observation. One engaged in this study does not appeal to special “holy” books to learn about God, but reflects on what characteristics one can ascribe to God based on rational thought and life experience.

What value does this approach afford? Epistemology is extremely valuable in defining the basis for all knowledge. Since doctrine is also knowledge, the theologian must grapple with the epistemological question to justify whether he/she can substantiate his/her doctrine as true knowledge. Metaphysics is also useful, especially if it leads to forming convincing arguments in support of God’s existence, since atheists will not accept arguments based on Scripture. Philosophical ethics is less useful in Christian theology, since such standards are based not on God’s revelation, but on so-called “natural law,” which may not always coincide with God’s Word. Aesthetics also has limited utility.

Analytical philosophy is both helpful and harmful for Christian theology. On the one hand, this discipline requires of us precision and consistency in our thought and speech, which is needed for correct formation and expression of doctrine. On the other hand, those engaged in analytical philosophy often doubt that human words can actually describe reality. This presents a major threat to Christian theology, which asserts that God’s Word, found in Holy Scripture, is a true reflection of reality.

## **2. Biblical Theology**

A second approach to theology is biblical theology. It attempts to accomplish several tasks. First, biblical theologians seek to discover the “theological perspective” of each biblical author. The teaching of each author is studied in isolation from the others. The goal is to learn what each biblical author contributes to the overall picture of Christian theology. Yet, some feel that one cannot harmonize the different “theologies” in Scripture into a single teaching. We must investigate this further.

Conservative theologians insist on the unity of Scripture. All the biblical authors spoke of the same truth, but from different points of view, emphasizing different aspects of the entire biblical picture. Therefore, it is possible to unite and harmonize the teachings of individual writers and arrive at a consensus between them concerning any doctrinal question at hand. On the other hand, liberals assert that the differences between these writers is so great that they cannot be reconciled. All that we can do is describe their various “theologies” in distinction from each other.

We are faced, then, with the challenge of defending the unity of Scripture. We admit that apparent theological discrepancies between biblical authors do exist. Moses, for example, wrote, “For (the Law) is not

an idle word for you; indeed it is your life.” Yet, Paul said, “This commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me” (Rom 7:10). Does the Law lead to life or death? Moreover, Paul wrote about justification, “For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law” (Rom 3:28). Nonetheless, James seems to take another view: “You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone” (Jam 2:24).

The following arguments, though, substantiate the Bible’s unity. First, the first-century Church enjoyed unity. It follows, then, that the Church leaders of that time, who also wrote the New Testament, enjoyed unity among themselves as well and held to one gospel. Second, the existence of the biblical canon demonstrates unity. One of the criteria for a book’s inclusion into the canon is doctrinal agreement with other canonical books. Third, even a quick glance at the Bible reveals much common ground between the biblical authors.

Fourth, a more careful examination of seeming discrepancies reveals how they can be reconciled. For example, Moses and Paul did not have varying views on the Law. Moses taught that if someone *observed* the Law, he/she would live. Paul, however, points out that no one keeps the Law, and therefore it leads to punishment and death. Furthermore, Paul and James emphasize different aspects of saving faith. Paul stresses the act of faith that secures salvation for the believer, while James highlights the nature of true saving faith – it leads to good works in the life of the believer.

Finally, if we believe that all biblical writers were inspired by the Holy Spirit, then unity in their teaching is guaranteed. The divine author of Scripture would not contradict Himself. In defense of the conservative position, Packer writes that the differences between “theologies” in the Bible are frequently “absurdly exaggerated through concentrating exclusively on matters of linguistic form and neglecting to study the directional thrust and persuasive purpose (for specific pastoral situations) of the things they wrote.”<sup>1213</sup>

The second goal of biblical theology is to trace the development of theological themes through the course of God’s revelation in Scripture. In earlier chapters, we have already commented on the phenomenon of “progressive revelation,” where biblical themes and doctrines unfold, develop, and gain more clarity and completeness in the course of the biblical canon.

In the question of progressive revelation, though, we encounter still another conflict between conservative and liberal views. Conservatives defend the traditional chronological order for the composition of Old Testament books. Liberals, however, posit that the psalms were written first, then the Pentateuchal documents J and E. The other Pentateuchal sources, D and P, followed later.<sup>1214</sup> Liberals also divide Isaiah into two books written by two different authors at differing times, and propose that Daniel was composed in the second century BC.

Liberals also challenge the traditional New Testament chronological order. For example, they reject the Pauline authorship of the Pastoral Epistles, and feel that, over time, Paul changes his theological views. Therefore, they speak of an “early Paul” and a “late Paul.” Moreover, liberals claim that the Gospels were written in the second century. Convincing conservative responses to the liberal view can be found in Donald Guthrie’s *New Testament Introduction*.

The third task of biblical theology is to propose categories for classification of biblical material. These categories must be derived from Scripture itself, and not be superimposed on it, as allegedly occurs in systematic theology. Biblical theologians, then, suggest such categories as “God’s people,” “God’s kingdom,” etc. This classification by categories inherent to Scripture allows the reader to discern which biblical themes receive more emphasis.

The value of biblical theology lies in aiding the commentator in interpreting individual passages of Scripture, since it allows one to view the passage under study in the context of the author’s general thought. Biblical theology also enables one to interpret a passage in light of the progressive revelation of that theme throughout Scripture. This discipline also pays close attention to the historical context of a passage.

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<sup>1213</sup>Packer J. I. Upholding the unity of Scripture today // Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society. 1982. № 25.4. P. 411-412.

<sup>1214</sup>We discuss and refute the four-source theory for the Pentateuch in chapter 13.

We note, however, some issues that this approach is not designed to handle. First, biblical theology elucidates for us the teachings of individual authors, but does not seek to harmonize them into a wholistic theology. In addition, it pays greater attention to the historical meaning of the text than to its application for life today.

### 3. Historical Theology

Historical theology investigates how various Christian thinkers understood Christian doctrine. We can highlight two types of investigation in this discipline. The “vertical approach” traces the development of a single doctrinal question through the entire scope of Church history. The “horizontal approach” studies each period of Church history separately to delineate the overall teaching of the Church at that time.

This approach is useful to show what views have already been voiced in Church history, and how they fared in the life of the Church. Some teachings, which may appear new to us today, may simply be reincarnations of old heresies of the past. In addition, this discipline reveals how history affects theology. The condition of the Church and the historical context it finds itself in is often reflected in the doctrines it develops. This serves as a warning to us not to allow our historical situation to distort our understanding of Scripture. Finally, we not only discover what theological conclusions previous Christian thinkers arrived at, but also how they approached the task of doing theology *per se*.

The main shortcoming of historical theology is obvious. We are not able to base doctrine on the teachings of Church leaders, however notable they may be. Christian doctrine is always based on the Bible. Yet, the views of those who preceded us can prove enlightening.

### 4. Systematic Theology

Systematic theology seeks to define the whole-Bible teaching for any question of interest. We ask questions of the text, and seek answers in it. Systematics is similar to biblical theology in that both disciplines look to the Bible as the source of truth. They differ in that the former seeks a unified biblical doctrine, whereas the latter isolates the teachings of the Bible’s various authors.

An additional goal of systematic theology is to combine various individual doctrinal questions into a unified Christian worldview. It is inadequate to simply define individual doctrines. One must create a structure that provides an overall perspective on life from a Christian point of view and allows one to interpret reality in the light of God’s truth. We can define “worldview” as a system of thought that connects every object, concept, experience and relationship that one encounters in life in an overarching and interconnected conceptual framework. More simply, Byron defines it as “a network of interrelating perceptions that guide every facet of one’s life.”<sup>1215</sup>

Williams expresses well this second goal of systematic theology: “Theology should help bring it all together by integrating one truth with another. Theology is not only a matter of clarification of individual doctrines but also the demonstration of how these fit into a total picture.” Like philosophy, it seeks “to see reality and to see it whole.”<sup>1216</sup> Weber states, “Since it is the task of dogmatics as a science to order its many statements into one context and to orient it toward a totality, it does need some kind of interconnecting structure.”<sup>1217</sup> In the words of Lewis and Demarest: “*Systematic theology* not only derives coherent doctrines from the entirety of written revelation but also systematically relates them to each other in developing a comprehensive world view and way of life.”<sup>1218</sup>

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<sup>1215</sup>Byron D. Klaus B. D. The mission of the Church // Horton S. Systematic Theology – Revised Ed. –Springfield, MO: – Logion Press, 2007.

<sup>1216</sup>Williams J. R. Renewal theology: Systematic theology from a Charismatic perspective. – Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996. – P. 19.

<sup>1217</sup>Weber O. Foundations of dogmatics / Trans. D. Guder. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1981. – V. 1. – P. 53.

<sup>1218</sup>Lewis G.R., Demarest B.A. Integrative theology. – Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996. – V. 1 – P. 23.

Even though our goal is to present a wholistic biblical theology, there will always be instances where some passages do not fit well into our overall construal and seem to defy explanation. For example, how can one reconcile the biblical witness of God's sovereignty and human freedom? How can God be one God, yet exist in three Persons?

The Bible warns us that, although God has given us much light in His Word, nonetheless, there remain certain mysteries that only He understands. Moses wrote, "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law" (Deut 29:29). In the New Testament, we also encounter instances where God forbade someone from revealing certain mysteries. Paul was "caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak" (2 Cor 12:4). John was commanded, "When the seven peals of thunder had spoken, I was about to write; and I heard a voice from heaven saying, 'Seal up the things which the seven peals of thunder have spoken and do not write them'" (Rev 10:4).

Isaiah offers this wise counsel:

When they say to you, "Consult the mediums and the spiritists who whisper and mutter," should not a people consult their God? {Should they} {consult} the dead on behalf of the living? To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn (Isa 8:19-20).

Here Isaiah means that if the "law and testimony" do not resolve an issue, then God has not given light on the subject. Therefore, when Scripture does not provide a clear answer on a doctrinal question or a resolution to apparent biblical inconsistencies, we must not allow this to undermine our faith or lead us to distort the Word for the sake of consistency in our theological system. We trust God, walking in the light that we have and awaiting the day when all will be revealed.

The apostle Peter is a wonderful example of such stability in faith. When people began to depart from the Lord because they could not understand His teaching, Jesus asked His disciples, "You do not want to go away also, do you?" Peter replied, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life" (Jn 6:67-68). Even though Peter did not understand everything that Jesus said, he remained faithful to Him.

## **D. The Organization of Doctrine and Formation of the Christian Worldview**

As stated above, systematic theology strives to combine the biblical material into an overarching Christian worldview. Yet, some object to systematizing the Bible at all. It is feared that paying too much attention to a certain topic will lead to the neglect of other important topics. In addition, some caution that a tightly arranged theological system will result in improper interpretation of individual passages of Scripture. In their attempt to contain the whole Bible in specific categories, the theologian may distort the meaning of some passages that do not fit neatly into his/her categories.

On the other hand, in defense of categorization, we appeal to the Lord Jesus, who spoke of more central and less central topics in God's Word (see Matt 23:23). He also identified the two greatest commandments (Mk 12:28-31). This may permit us to seek out and define the central theme or themes in Scripture. In addition, systematization has many practical benefits. It leads to organized thinking – we discover what is most essential to dwell on and study. It leads to an organized life as well – we learn what is most essential to strive for and achieve in life.

However, how exactly are we to organize the biblical material? Several approaches are recommended.

### **1. Anthropocentric or Theocentric Approach?**

When we inquire which system of classification is preferred for organizing the biblical material, we immediately encounter the question of its basic orientation. Should it center on humanity (anthropocentric) or God (theocentric)? In the anthropocentric approach, we create categories for classification that reflect human needs, questions and experiences. For example, categories for classification may reflect such human needs as love, forgiveness, security, fellowship, etc.

Many theological systems exist employing this methodology. Liberation theology is one example, as represented in the teaching of Gustavo Gutiérrez.<sup>1219</sup> His point of departure is human need, in particular, the need for deliverance from poverty and oppression. From that point, one appeals to Scripture to discover how to accomplish this aim.

Paul Tillich advances a similar system called the “method of correlation.” According to his method, one draws from the world of philosophy the types of questions that interest people and then seeks answers to those questions in the Bible.<sup>1220</sup>

Existential theology also works off human experience, namely people’s religious experience. A noted exponent of this theory was Friedrich Schleiermacher, who taught that Christian doctrine should find resonance with the human soul. More important than the teaching of Scripture is what religious feelings prompted the biblical writer to write his book.<sup>1221</sup> Schleiermacher terms this the “psychological” understanding of the text, and Hodges describes it thusly: “The aim of psychological understanding is to go behind this outward appearance to the ‘inner form,’ the living principle or idea in the author’s mind, of which the written text is the expression.”<sup>1222</sup>

In evaluating anthropocentric theology, we note the following. On the one hand, such an approach can certainly stir people’s interest, since it addresses issues important to people’s everyday lives. It can also aid in resolving the issues it addresses.

On the other hand, this approach has serious setbacks. First, humanity is at the center instead of God. If theology is the study of God, then it seems appropriate that He would occupy center stage. Second, we can challenge the assertion that such an approach is truly beneficial to people. If we only investigate topics that interest us, we may neglect other topics necessary for our spiritual health. Since God knows our needs better than we do, it is more prudent to let God speak to us through His Word.

Thomas provides the following criticism of Tillich – it is offensive to think of “theology as having merely the value of providing us with the answers to our questions instead of being the light that enlightens our feet.”<sup>1223</sup> Hamilton adds that, in this system, the gospel “cannot say anything for itself.”<sup>1224</sup> Therefore, it is preferable to organize biblical materials centering not on human needs and interests, but on God and His plan for us.

## 2. Ontological or Functional Approach?

If we select the theocentric method, the next step is to determine how to approach the study of God: by the ontological or the functional method? The ontological method studies God’s specific attributes. The functional method focuses on God’s acts. The latter method gives pride of place to biblical narrative, where the acts of God are described.

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<sup>1219</sup>For a more throughout treatment of liberation theology, see chapter 14.

<sup>1220</sup>Thomas J. H. Paul Tillich // Nineham D. E. Robertson E. H. Makers of contemporary theology. – Richmond VA: John Knox, 1965. – P. 8.

<sup>1221</sup>Sykes S. Friedrich Schleiermacher / Nineham D. E. Robertson E. H. Makers of contemporary theology. – Richmond VA: John Knox, 1965. – P. 36-37.

<sup>1222</sup>Hodges H. A. The philosophy of Wilhelm Dilthey. – London: Routledge, 1952. – P. 12.

<sup>1223</sup>Thomas, p. 9.

<sup>1224</sup>Hamilton K. The system and the gospel. – London: S.C.M. Press, 1965. – P. 121. Taken from Cairns D. God up there? A study in Divine transcendence. – Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1967. – P. 57.



Those who prefer the ontological approach do not ignore God's deeds. Yet, they examine God's works in the light of His nature. In other words, in the light of what we know of God's nature, we can expect corresponding behavior. Therefore, we interpret God's acts in the biblical narrative line with what He has revealed about His character and attributes in didactic biblical passages. On the other hand, adherents of the functional approach define God's character based on what He does.

Comparing these methods, we give preference to the ontological approach. Didactic passages of Scripture provide more concrete and specific information concerning God's nature than narrative does.

### **3. Synthetic or Analytical Approach**

The synthetic approach boasts a long history in the theological process. It begins with a theocentric/ontological orientation, expounds on the doctrine of God, then proceeds to elaborate on other topics, relating them to the doctrine of God in a logical progression. So then, after the doctrine of God we study: (1) how He reveals Himself (bibliology), (2) what He created (angelology and anthropology), (3) how humans fell from God (harmatology), (4) who is God's Savior (Christology), (5) how God saves people (soteriology), (6) the role of the Spirit (pneumatology), (7) the creation of God's people (ecclesiology), and (8) the culmination of God's plan (eschatology).

In the analytical approach, biblical material is organized in a way that elaborates on God's ultimate plan for humanity. Yet, scholars disagree about what exactly God's plan consists of. Suggestions include: salvation, fellowship with God, God's kingdom, God's glory, the person of Christ, the creation of the Church, etc.

We see value in both the synthetic and analytical approaches. Therefore, in the subsequent volumes, we will employ the following system of organization, which is theocentric, ontological and analytic/synthetic. In other words, we will study: what God's nature is like (volume 3), and what His plan is for humanity (volume 4 and 5). The device to be employed for conceptualizing God's plan will be Paul's famous words in 1 Cor 13:13: "But now faith, hope, love, abide these three."

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# Appendices

## Appendix A: Disputed Canonical and Non-Canonical Books

### A. Old Testament

#### 1. Books Accepted as Canonical

##### Song of Solomon (Song of Songs)

Discussion arose about the contents of this book. Many felt that it resembled a romantic novel more than inspired Scripture.<sup>1225</sup> Even today, its contents disconcert some readers, leading to allegorical treatment of the book. It is usually taken as a symbol of the love between Christ and the Church, or of Yahweh's love for Israel.<sup>1226</sup>

The Mishnah records the debates that took place over this work (see *m. Yadayim*, 3.5). The Mishnah itself originated in the third century AD, but the rabbis mentioned in *Yadayim*, 3.5 lived in the first century AD (Akiva, Eleazar ben Azariah) or the second century AD (Jose ben Halafta, Simeon ben Azzai).

Jose ben Halafta reported that there was disagreement about the status of Song of Solomon. Simeon ben Azzai, however, claimed that 72 elders, headed by Eleazar ben Azariah, believed that the book does "impart uncleanness to hands," which refers to its canonical status. Rabbi Akiva insisted on its canonicity: "All the scriptures are holy, but the Song of Songs is holiest of all" (*ibid*). He also claimed, "No Israelite man ever disputed concerning Song of Songs that it imparts uncleanness to hands" (*ibid*). On the other hand, the fact that Akiva reacted so strongly to the attack on its canonicity may indicate that a heated debate over Song of Solomon was indeed raging.<sup>1227</sup>

Discussions about Song of Solomon appear in other passages as well. In the Tosefta (another variant of the Mishna) we read, "He who, at a banquet, renders the Song of Songs in a sing-song way, turning it into a common ditty, has no share in the world to come" (*t. Sanhedrin*, 10.12). The Babylonian Talmud echoes this thought: "Our Rabbis taught: He who recites a verse of the Song of Songs and treats it as a [secular] air, and one who recites a verse at the banqueting table unseasonably, brings evil upon the world" (*b. Sanhedrin*, 101a).<sup>1228</sup>

Some feel these excerpts demonstrate a low view of the book among God's people. Miller, however, correctly responds that the thrust of these passages is that people should show respect for Holy Scripture, the Song of Solomon included.<sup>1229</sup> These passages, then, serve to confirm the book's inspired status.

We may offer other support for the Song's inclusion in the canon.<sup>1230</sup> By tradition, the book is attributed to Solomon, to whom God gave supernatural wisdom. Moreover, Aquila of Sinope (1st-2nd c. AD), the author of a respected Greek translation of the Old Testament, included the book in his collection. It is also listed in the

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<sup>1225</sup>Geisler N. L., Nix W. E. A general introduction to the Bible. – Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1986. – P. 258-259; Ryle H. E. The canon of the Old Testament. – 2nd ed. – London: MacMillan & Co., 1895. – P. 209.

<sup>1226</sup>Newman R. C. The Council of Jamnia and the Old Testament canon // Westminster Theological Journal. 1975. 38(3). P. 338-341.

<sup>1227</sup>Suggested in Robinson G. L., Harrison, R. K. Canon of the OT // G. W. Bromiley. The international standard Bible encyclopedia. – Revised ed. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979–1988. – V. 1. – P. 598-599; Newman, p. 338-341.

<sup>1228</sup>Taken from Giszczak M. The canonical status of Song of Songs in *m. Yadayim* 3.5 // Journal for the Study of the Old Testament. 2016. 41(2). P. 212.

<sup>1229</sup>Miller G. D. Canonicity and gender roles: Tobit and Judith as test cases // Biblica. 2016. 97(2). P. 202.

<sup>1230</sup>Giszczak, p. 208; Ryle, p. 209; Beckwith R. The Old Testament canon of the New Testament Church. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985. – P. 322;

“Hebrew” canons cited by Melito and Origen. The Mishna also views Song of Solomon as Scripture (*m. Taanit*, 4.8; *m. Abodah Zarah*, 2.5). In addition, one may assume that it entered the canon of Josephus as well.

Furthermore, the fact that many rabbis treated the book allegorically also hints at its canonical status. Allegorization is used to defend a book's sacred status against objections to its contents taken literally. Finally, even taken in a literal sense, the book is not necessarily questionable, since romantic love is part of God's creation plan.

In conclusion, although in the New Testament writings Jesus and the apostles never cited the book, evidence suffices that it was part of Hebrew canon at the time of Jesus and so should be regarded as Holy Scripture.

### Ecclesiastes

The book of Ecclesiastes faced numerous obstacles to its canonicity.<sup>1231</sup> Ecclesiastes seems to champion a more skeptical view of life (1:2-3). In general, it looks at life from a secular point of view. Seemingly, it denies the teaching of a future resurrection of the dead (3:19-21). Some rabbis saw internal contradictions in it as well:

- I said of laughter, "It is madness," and of pleasure, "What does it accomplish?" (2:2)
- So I commended pleasure, for there is nothing good for a man under the sun except to eat and to drink and to be merry (8:15)
- So I congratulated the dead who are already dead more than the living who are still living (4:2)
- For whoever is joined with all the living, there is hope; surely a live dog is better than a dead lion. (9:4)

What else did the rabbis say about Ecclesiastes? Simeon ben Menasia claimed, “Koheleth (i.e., Ecclesiastes) does not render the hands unclean because it contains only the wisdom of Solomon” (*b. Megillah*, 7a).<sup>1232</sup> In a minor tractate of the Talmud, the *Avot of Rabbi Natan*, we read that Ecclesiastes must be excluded from the canon because it “merely contained aphorisms and were not part of the [holy] writings.”<sup>1233</sup> We observe hesitations in the Mishna as well. Jose ben Halafta felt that the book “does not impart uncleanness to hands” (*m. Yadayim*, 3.5). Also expressing doubts was the rabbinic school of Shammai (*ibid*).

On the other hand, other rabbis defended Ecclesiastes. Simeon ben Azzai claimed that 72 elders, headed by Eleazar ben Azariah, believed that the book does “impart uncleanness to hands” (*ibid*). The rabbinic school of Hillel also supported it (*ibid*). The following passages in the Mishna regard Ecclesiastes as Scripture: *m. Sukkah*, 2.6; *m. Hagigah*, 1.6; *m. Qiddushin*, 1.10. In addition, Aquila included it in his Greek Old Testament,<sup>1234</sup> and, most likely, Josephus included it in his canon as well. We also note that the life history of the author corresponds to that of Solomon (see 1:12, 16; 2:9).

In spite of the objections voiced against Ecclesiastes, the Jews of the first century did acknowledge Ecclesiastes to be the Word of God, which means that the Scriptures Jesus and the apostles endorsed contained it. Even in the rabbinic passages expressing doubt about its canonicity, along with the objections we often see attempts by the rabbis to resolve these apparent conflicts. The main argument employed by the rabbis in its defense was that, at the end of it all, the author comes to a correct conclusion:

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<sup>1231</sup>Noted in Ryle, p. 206-207; Geisler, Nix, p. 269-270. Also, see *b. Shabbath*, 30b.

<sup>1232</sup>Lewis J. P. Jamnia revisited // McDonald L. M., Sanders J. A. The canon debate. – Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002. – P. 146-163; Newman, p. 344.

<sup>1233</sup>[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Avot\\_of\\_Rabbi\\_Natan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Avot_of_Rabbi_Natan); Miller, p. 202.

<sup>1234</sup>Beckwith, p. 366-367.

The conclusion, when all has been heard, {is:} fear God and keep His commandments, because this {applies to} every person. For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil (12:13-14).

## Esther

Surprising at it may seem, the main objection the rabbis had to Esther was that it introduced a new feast day into the religious calendar, one not sanctioned by the Torah, namely Purim. Another commonly encountered objection is the absence of God's name throughout the book. Also interesting – an enumeration of Old Testament heroes, done by the author of the Book of Sirach (2nd c.), omits Esther and Mordecia (see chapters 44-50).<sup>1235</sup>

Also notable is that several early Christian writers fail to include Esther in their Old Testament canon, namely Melito, Gregory Nazianzen, and Athanasius. Athanasius included it in the non-canonical classification "ecclesiastical books." On the other hand, other early Christian canons include it.

Among Jewish commentators, Shimon ben Lakish (3rd c.) spoke out in defense of Esther.<sup>1236</sup> Likewise, Josephus makes the following comment: "But as to the time from the death of Moses till the reign of Artaxerxes, king of Persia, who reigned after Xerxes, the prophets, who were after Moses, wrote down what was done in their times in thirteen books" (*Against Apion*, 1.40). This would include the time of Esther.<sup>1237</sup> Finally, Beckwith informs us that in rabbinic (tannaitic) literature (1st-2nd c. AD), we encounter references to Esther as Scripture.<sup>1238</sup>

Even though the evidence examined above for Esther's inclusion in the Hebrew canon at the time of Jesus is inconclusive, the arguments for its exclusion also do not force its rejection. Yet, our discussion earlier indicated that at the time of Jesus, the Old Testament canon was already complete. This allows us to assume that it included Esther among the inspired books. A "closed" canon would not allow alterations between the time of Jesus and the publishing of the Hebrew canon in *Baba Bathra*, 14b, which included Esther.

As far as the absence of God's name, Geisler and Nix convincingly respond, "In any event, the absence of God's name is more than compensated for by the presence of His power and grace in the deliverance of His people, a fact which gives canonical worth to the book."<sup>1239</sup>

## 2. Books Not Accepted as Canonical

### 1 Esdras (Esdras A, 2 Ezra, 3 Ezra)

This work has several designations. In the West, it is best known as *1 Esdras*. The Septuagint calls it *Esdras A*. The Vulgate – *3 Ezra*. The Orthodox Church assigns the name *2 Ezra*.<sup>1240</sup> It was written between the second century BC and the first century AD, originally in Hebrew.<sup>1241</sup>

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<sup>1235</sup>Robinson, Harrison, v. 1, p. 598-599; Beckwith, p. 289-293, 312; Newman, p. 338-341.

<sup>1236</sup>Robinson, Harrison, v. 1, p. 598-599.

<sup>1237</sup>Beckwith, p. 322; Geisler, Nix, p. 260.

<sup>1238</sup>Note in Geisler, Nix, p. 260.

<sup>1239</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>1240</sup>Andrews H. T. An introduction to the apocryphal books of the Old and New Testament. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1964. – P. 23-24.

<sup>1241</sup>deSilva D. A. Introducing the Apocrypha. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2002. – P. 284-286.

The contents of *1 Esdras* are as follows. In general, it repeats material from 2 Chronicles 35:1-36:21, the canonical Book of Ezra (except for 4:6), and the Book of Nehemiah 7:73-8:13a (but Nehemiah is called “Attharates”). The material is arranged, though, in a way that introduces chronological inconsistencies.<sup>1242</sup>

The main feature of the book is the addition of new material in 3.1-5.6, where the story is told of a competition between three bodyguards of King Darius. They were to answer the question, “What is the strongest thing in the world?” The first answered “wine,” and the second – “the king,” but the third, Zorobabel, responded “women and truth.” The king liked Zorobabel’s answer so much that he granted him permission to return to Jerusalem and rebuild it.

It is interesting to note that in the historical work *Jewish Antiquities* (11:3), none other than the famous Jewish historian Josephus related this story. Augustine refers to it as well (*City of God*, 18.36), as does Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria (*Stromata*, 1.21), and Origen. Jerome, however, rejected its historicity (*Preface to Ezra and Nehemiah*), as did Luther and the Council of Trent.<sup>1243</sup>

Catholics and Protestants assign *1 Esdras* to apocryphal literature, while Eastern Orthodox term it “non-canonical.” Since it does not comprise a part of the Hebrew canon, it lacks Jesus’ endorsement and, consequently, is to be excluded from the Old Testament canon.

#### **4 Ezra (2 Ezra, 3 Ezra)**

The book *4 Ezra* also has several designations. It is so named in the Latin Vulgate, but is also known as *3 Ezra* in the Orthodox faith, and by some others as *2 Ezra*. It is an apocalyptic book. It is not found in the Septuagint or the Dead Sea Scrolls, and is not numbered among the Apocrypha, but with pseudepigraphic books. It was composed in the last half of the first century AD, most likely in the Hebrew language. It has been preserved only in translations of a lost Greek version. Scholars feel that chapters 1-2 and 15-16 are later interpolations by Christian authors (they exist only in the Latin translation). Therefore, the “genuine” *4 Ezra* consists of chapters 3-14.<sup>1244</sup>

In main theme of the book can be summarized as follows.<sup>1245</sup> “Ezra” grieves over the destruction of Jerusalem by Babylon and voices his complaint before God (yet, many feel that the author actually lived in the first century AD, and grieves for Jerusalem’s destruction by Rome). Ezra begins to doubt both God’s faithfulness to His covenant with Israel and His justice, since He used an ungodly race, the Babylonians, to chastise Israel. Ezra also complains that people have an “evil impulse,” i.e., a tendency toward evil, and for that reason cannot keep God’s law.

The angel Uriel visits Ezra and counsels him to trust God. In the end – Uriel reassures – all will be right, and God with His true people will triumph. The day of Jerusalem’s glory is coming. Messiah will reign for 400 years before the eternal age commences. Uriel also advises that people ought to strive, with God’s help, to overcome sin, yet few will be saved in the end. Still, he offers this hope: “If ye, then, will rule over your own understanding and will discipline your heart, ye shall be preserved alive and after death obtain mercy” (14.34).

The following episode is especially interesting, where Ezra, under inspiration from God, dictates to five scribes a group of books, 24 of which will supposedly become the Hebrew canon:

So in forty days were written ninety-four books. And it came to pass when the forty days were fulfilled, that the Most High spake unto me saying: “The twenty-four books that thou hast written publish, that the worthy and unworthy may read (therein): but the seventy last thou shalt keep, to deliver them to the wise among thy people” (*4 Ezra* 14.44-46).

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<sup>1242</sup>Charles R. H., ed. *Apocrypha of the Old Testament*. – Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, 2004.

<sup>1243</sup>*Ibid*; deSilva, p. 295.

<sup>1244</sup>Charles, ed. *Apocrypha of the Old Testament*; Beckwith, p. 339; Filson F. V. *Which books belong in the Bible? A study of the canon*. – Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1957. – P. 75-76.

<sup>1245</sup>deSilva, p. 323-345; Filson, p. 75-76.

A number of early Christian writers cite *4 Ezra*: Clement of Alexandria, the *Epistle of Barnabas*, Cyprian, Tertullian and Ambrose. The Orthodox classify it as “non-canonical,” with the exception of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, which canonized it.<sup>1246</sup> Its absence in the Hebrew canon of Jesus’ time disqualifies it for inclusion in our Old Testament canon.

### Psalm 151

In cave 11 of the Qumran collection, researchers discovered manuscript 11QPss, which, among other things, contains two non-canonical psalms that also appear together in the Septuagint under the title Psalm 151.<sup>1247</sup> For a long time, it was thought that the variant in the Septuagint was originally written in Greek, but now it is clear that it goes back to a Hebrew original. The Septuagint version reads as follows:

1 I was small among my brothers, and the youngest in my father’s house; I tended my father’s sheep. 2 My hands made a harp; my fingers fashioned a lyre. 3 And who will tell my Lord? The Lord himself; it is he who hears. 4 It was he who sent his messenger and took me from my father’s sheep, and anointed me with his anointing oil. 5 My brothers were handsome and tall, but the Lord was not pleased with them. 6 I went out to meet the Philistine, and he cursed me by his idols. 7 But I drew his own sword; I beheaded him, and took away disgrace from the people of Israel.<sup>1248</sup>

Mroczek comes to this conclusion: “At this time, there was no such thing as a biblical book of Psalms. There were, instead, different collections of inspired prayers, of various lengths, orders, and contents, compiled for different purposes.”<sup>1249</sup> Others suggest an alternate explanation. The Qumran community utilized various hymnbooks in their liturgy, some of which did not necessarily contain only canonical psalms. We must note that other manuscripts were discovered at Qumran that do contain the full set of canonical psalms.<sup>1250</sup>

We must also consider Psalm 151’s contents. Canonical psalms characteristically lack historical data. The goal of a psalmist is to allow the reader to express his/her personal emotions to God, using the psalm as a model. Therefore, the literary style of this psalm markedly differs from the others. We lack, then, substantial reason to include 151 among the inspired psalms.

### Sirach

Among the non-canonical books, one of the most popular and influential among the Church Fathers was the *Wisdom of ben-Sirach*, or simply *Sirach*. It is also known by the title “Ecclesiasticus.” In *Sirach* 50.27, the author is identified as Jeshua, son of Eleazar, son of Sirach.<sup>1251</sup> The book originated in the early second century BC. At the end of that century, the grandson of Jeshua added a preface.

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<sup>1246</sup>[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2\\_Esdras#4\\_Ezra](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2_Esdras#4_Ezra)

<sup>1247</sup>Mikoski G. S. Of texts lost and found // *Theology Today*. 2015. 72(3). P. 259; Sanders J. A. Ps 151 in 11QPss // *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*. 1963. 75(1). P. 73; [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psalm\\_151](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psalm_151); deSilva, p. 301.

<sup>1248</sup>From [https://coptics.info/Bible\\_Study/Bible/Psalm%20151.pdf](https://coptics.info/Bible_Study/Bible/Psalm%20151.pdf).

<sup>1249</sup>Mroczek E. Hidden Scriptures, then and now: Rediscovering 'Apocrypha' // *Interpretation*. 2108. 72(4). P. 389. Charlesworth agrees (Charlesworth J. H. *Writings ostensibly outside the Canon* // Evans C. A., Tov E. *Exploring the origins of the Bible*. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2008. – P. 62).

<sup>1250</sup>Schnabel E. History, theology and the biblical canon: an introduction to basic issues // *Themelios*. January 1, 1995. P. 16-24; Homan M. J. A comparative study of the Psalter in light of 11QPsa // *Westminster Theological Journal*. 1977. 40(1). P. 122.

<sup>1251</sup>The Hebrew text reads differently: “Simon, son of Jeshua, son of Eliazer, son of Sirach,” yet this is considered a later insertion (Charles, ed. *Apocrypha of the Old Testament*.).

The *Book of Sirach* reminds us in many ways of the Proverbs of Solomon. It distinguishes itself, however, in that the author draws not only from Old Testament truth, but also from the wisdom of Egypt and Greece. The work contains practical advice for nearly all sectors of human experience. Surprisingly, though, nothing is said about life after death. The work emphasizes leading a moral life, observing the Law, and doing good works. These things secure for the individual forgiveness of sins: “A flaming fire doth water quench, so doth almsgiving atone for sin.” At times, *Sirach* seems to degrade women and slaves. It also contains prayers to God and praises to Him.<sup>1252</sup>

We give special attention to chapters 44-50, which lists “heroes of the faith,” from Enoch to Simeon the high priest (3rd c. BC). The list, though, is not exhaustive. It omits such figures as Ezra, Daniel, Ruth and Esther.<sup>1253</sup> Beckwith notes that, although at times the author of *Sirach* seems to consider his work inspired (see 33:16-18), nonetheless, he does not include himself among the “heroes of the faith.”<sup>1254</sup> Some assert that New Testament writers drew on *Sirach*.<sup>1255</sup>

Copies of *Sirach* were discovered at Qumran, and the Mishna, the Talmud, and other Jewish writings often mention it as well. Even once, it is called Scripture.<sup>1256</sup> On the other hand, the Tosefta reminds us that the work was written after the cessation of authorized prophets. According to Jewish tradition, this disqualifies it for inclusion among the inspired writings (see *t. Yadayim*, 2.13).<sup>1257</sup>

Even though the Jews refused to receive as canonical any book written after Malachi, the Early Church did not share that hesitation.<sup>1258</sup> We find citations on *Sirach* as early as the beginning the second century in the *Didache* and the *Epistle of Barnabas*. Clement of Alexandria frequently refers to it as an authoritative document. His pupil, Origen, even spoke of it as Scripture (*Against Celcus*, 6.7; 7.12). We also encounter such a view in the works of Tertullian, Cyprian, Methodius of Olympus, and the *Apostolic Constitutions* (6.14-15). Athanasius assigned it to the category of “ecclesiastical books,” which were not canonical, but considered useful for reading. Augustine thought it to be canonical, and the Councils of Hippo and Carthage followed his lead. Even Jerome, who rejected *Sirach*’s canonicity, once did cite it as Scripture (see *Commentary on Isaiah*, 2.3).

Nonetheless, although many found in the Book of Sirach material for edification and inspiration, its exclusion from the Hebrew canon disqualifies it for inclusion in the Christian Old Testament canon. We must also consider that its teaching on salvation by works contradicts New Testament teaching.<sup>1259</sup>

## Tobit

The Book of Tobit, written in the late third or early second century BC, has a romantic thematic, allegedly relating the story of Tobit and his son Tobias.<sup>1260</sup> Tobit and his family had settled in Nineveh after the deportation of Israel by Assyria. Tobit, now blind, sends his son to retrieve money he had left in Media. Media is also the residence of a woman named Sarah, who had lost several husbands by the hand of the evil spirit Asmodeus before the marriages were consummated (3.17).

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<sup>1252</sup>deSilva, p. 153-155, 162-168; 181-186; Charles, ed. *Apocrypha of the Old Testament*; <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sirach>.

<sup>1253</sup><https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sirach>.

<sup>1254</sup>Beckwith R. *The Old Testament canon of the New Testament Church*. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985. – P. 378.

<sup>1255</sup>They note similarities between Matthew 6:14 and *Sirach* 28.2; Matthew 11:28-30 and *Sirach* 51:23-27; Matthew 5:42 and *Sirach* 4.4, Matthew 6:7 and *Sirach* 7.14, James 1:19 and *Sirach* 5.11, James 1:13-14 and *Sirach* 15.11-12, 20, Romans 12:15 and *Sirach* 7.34, Romans 9:20f and *Sirach* 33.12f. See deSilva, p. 195-196; Charlesworth J. H. *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha and the New Testament*. – Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985. – P. 84.

<sup>1256</sup>deSilva, p. 32, 192; Beckwith, p. 379.

<sup>1257</sup>Miller, p. 203.

<sup>1258</sup>Charles, ed. *Apocrypha of the Old Testament*.

<sup>1259</sup>Andrews, p. 16.

<sup>1260</sup><https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sirach>; deSilva, p. 67-69; Andrews, p. 39; Filson, p. 76; Charles, ed. *Apocrypha of the Old Testament*.



Tobias is accompanied to Media by the angel Raphael, who pretends to be a relative of Tobias. During the journey, Raphael directs Tobias to acquire the heart, liver and gallbladder of a certain fish, and instructs, “As regards the heart and the liver of the fish, make thou a smoke before a man or a woman who hath an attack of a demon or an evil spirit; and every attack will flee from him, and they shall nevermore find an abode with him. And as for the gall – anoint a man’s eyes, upon which white films have come up, or blow into them on the white films, and they become well” (6.8-9).

In Media, Tobias meets Sarah, marries her, and burns up the heart and liver of the fish, thereby protecting himself from the evil spirit Asmodaeus. Upon his return to Nineveh, Tobias anoints his father’s eyes with salve from the gallbladder, and Tobit recovers his sight.

The *Book of Tobit* not only tells the story of Tobit, but contains many ethical exhortations as well. Especially emphasized are keeping the Law and giving alms.<sup>1261</sup> Almsgiving can actually lead to salvation: “Because alms delivereth from death, and suffereth not to come into darkness” (4.10), and “Almsgiving doth deliver from death, and it purges away all sin” (12.8).

Although the book was found among the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Jews did not include it in their canon.<sup>1262</sup> In contrast, the Early Church welcomed it. For example, Polycarp (*Philippians* 10.2; cf. *Tobit* 4.10) and Origen (*Letter to Africanus*, 14; cf. *Tobit* 1.12-14) cite it authoritatively. Clement of Alexandria calls it Scripture (*Stromata*, 2.23; cf. *Tobit* 4.16). Athanasius assigned it to the category of “ecclesiastical books,” which were not canonical, but considered useful for reading.

The Roman Catholic Church considers Tobit “deuterocanonical,” and Eastern Orthodox – “non-canonical.” Protestants rejects its canonicity outright, although Luther stated, “Is it history? Then is it a holy history. Is it fiction? Then is it a truly beautiful, wholesome, and profitable fiction, the performance of a gifted poet.”<sup>1263</sup>

In spite of Luther’s positive assessment, the book encounters several serious drawbacks.<sup>1264</sup> First, as noted earlier, the book advances the teaching of salvation by works. Second, Raphael employs deception in order to fulfill his mission. Third, the biblical narrative lacks a parallel account, where an angel accompanies someone for an extended period of time and befriends him/her. Fourth, the method for healing the sick resembles shamanism. In addition, the book contains several geographical and historical errors.

All these factors, together with *Tobit’s* exclusion from the Hebrew canon, prevent us from welcoming it into the Christian canon.

## Judith

The *Book of Judith* was composed in the second century BC, assumedly in Hebrew. At the present time, it exists only in the Septuagint Greek.<sup>1265</sup> The book tells a fictional story about Nebuchadnezzar, who “reigned over the Assyrians in Nineveh, the great city; in the days of Arphaxad, who reigned over the Medes in Ecbatana” (1.1). Nebuchadnezzar wages war against Media, summoning Egypt and Syria to support him, yet they declined. As a result, Nebuchadnezzar sends his armies under the command of Holofernes to punish them. However, the inhabitants of Bethulia, in Israel, resist Holofernes, who, in response, puts the city under siege and cuts off its water supply.

In Bethulia lived a young widow named Judith, who promises the elders of the city to deliver it from Holofernes. She adorns herself in fine clothes, approaches Holofernes, and informs him that, because of the sin of Bethulia, the God of Israel will hand it over to him. She then promises to help him ascertain the best time for the attack. Holofernes is taken by Judith’s beauty, and repeatedly invites her to dine with him, to which she eventually agrees. After dinner, all those present depart the hall, leaving Holofernes and Judith alone. While

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<sup>1261</sup>Andrews, p. 38; deSilva, p. 74.

<sup>1262</sup>deSilva, p. 32.

<sup>1263</sup>Noted in Charles, ed. *Apocrypha of the Old Testament*.

<sup>1264</sup>Geisler, Nix, p. 270-271; deSilva, p. 66-68.

<sup>1265</sup>Andrews, p. 37. deSilva, p. 92; Charles, ed. *Apocrypha of the Old Testament*.

the intoxicated Holofernes was reclining on a bed, Judith seizes a sword and slays him. Inspired by her heroism, the inhabitants of Bethulia take courage and drive the Assyrians from their territory.

Even though the early Church Fathers failed to ascribe to *Judith* canonical status, they nonetheless viewed it as a good source of edifying reading. Numerous early Christian writers give it a positive review: Clement of Rome (1 *Clem*, 55:4-5), Clement of Alexandria (*Stromata*, 2.7; cf. *Judith* 8.27), Origen (*Against Rufinus*, 3.1.474), Tertullian, Methodius of Olympus, Ambrose, and Jerome.<sup>1266</sup> Athanasius assigned it to the category of “ecclesiastical books,” which were not canonical, but considered useful for reading. Augustine included *Judith* in his canon, a decision endorsed by the Council of Trent.

In evaluating the quality of this book, one cannot help to notice the obvious geographical and historical errors.<sup>1267</sup> First, Nebuchadnezzar ruled over Babylon, not Assyria. Second, there is no historical confirmation of the reign of Arphaxad over Media. Third, we also lack historical confirmation of an attack by Nebuchadnezzar on Media, or of the existence of the city Bethulia. Furthermore, according to this account, Holofernes led his troops over 300 miles from Nineveh to Bectileth in the course of only three days. Finally, in this narrative the Judeans have already returned from their captivity and rebuilt the temple (5.17-19).

On the positive side, some have noted the inspirational value of the work. Luther called it “a fine, good, holy, useful book, well worth reading by us Christians” (*Preface to the Apocrypha*).<sup>1268</sup> DeSilva claims the book shows: (1) how God can use a woman, (2) that God is greater than all gods, (3) a demonstration of courage before danger, and (4) that God answers prayer.<sup>1269</sup> DeSilva’s assessment, though, suffers from the weakness that this is not actual history.

On the negative side, as Charles points out, Judith not only keeps God’s Law, but exceeds its requirements (8.5-6), which reminds one of the attitude of the Pharisees of Jesus’ time. Charles summarizes, “She is thus a perfect type of Pharisaic righteousness.”<sup>1270</sup> It is also important to note that Judith deceived Holofernes in promising a victory over Israel, and used her beauty to seduce him.

In summary, a work of such low quality, both historical and ethical, which also was excluded from the Hebrew canon, is not worthy of acceptance in the Christian community.

### Additions to Esther

At the end of the second century BC, some passages were added to the Book of Esther that, in general, expand the narrative, especially with the goal of showing God’s intervention in this story. Much is said about God and His nature. The following additions are noted:<sup>1271</sup>

1. A dream of Mordecia about impending trouble for Israel (preface)
2. Expansion of the order of King Artaxerxes concerning the annihilation of the Jews (3.13)
3. Prayers of Mordecia and Esther (4.17)
4. Expansion of the episode when Esther first appeared before King Artaxerxes (5.1)
5. Expansion of the order of King Artaxerxes, allowing the Jews to defend themselves (8.12)
6. The interpretation of Mordecia’s dream mentioned above (10.3)
7. The expanded version of Esther concludes as follows: “In the fourth year of the reign of Ptolemy and Cleopatra, Dositheus, who said he was a priest and a Levite, and Ptolemaeus his son brought in to Egypt the Epistle of Phrurai here set forth, which they said was true, and that Lysimachus the son of Ptolemaeus, of the dwellers in Jerusalem, had interpreted it.”

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<sup>1266</sup>DeSilva, p. 108-109; Charles, ed. *Apocrypha of the Old Testament*.

<sup>1267</sup>DeSilva, p. 93.

<sup>1268</sup>Taken from Allison G. R. *Historical theology: An introduction to Christian doctrine*. – Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011. – P. 52.

<sup>1269</sup>DeSilva, p. 103-106.

<sup>1270</sup>Charles, ed. *Apocrypha of the Old Testament*.

<sup>1271</sup>[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book\\_of\\_Esther#Additions\\_to\\_Esther](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Esther#Additions_to_Esther); Charles, ed. *Apocrypha of the Old Testament*.

It is curious to note that, in his historical work, Josephus assumes the truth of these additions (*Jewish Antiquities*, 11.184-296).<sup>1272</sup> Moreover, Clement of Rome (*1 Clem.* 55.6) and Clement of Alexandria (*Stromata*, 4.19) cite the prayer of Esther. Although Origen admitted that the Jews did not accept these additions, he nonetheless defended their acceptance by the Church (see *Letter to Africanus*, 3).<sup>1273</sup>

In evaluation of this work, one can clearly see that the goal of these additions was to answer the objection about God's absence in this narrative. Consequently, these additions were not part of the original composition and therefore do not share the inspired nature of the book.

### Wisdom of Solomon

Scholars disagree about when *Wisdom of Solomon* was written. The date is somewhere in the interval between the second century BC and the first century AD, yet most commentators place it before Christ. The author was most likely an Alexandrian Jew, who composed the original in Greek. Its literary style resembles the Proverbs of Solomon, and the author even identifies himself as Solomon (see chp. 9). Yet the general opinion is that the work is pseudonymic.<sup>1274</sup>

*Wisdom of Solomon* consist of the following parts.<sup>1275</sup> The first part (1.1-6-8) deals with eschatology and describes the afterlife for both the righteous and the wicked. The second part (6.9-11.1) lauds the excellence of wisdom. The final part (11.2 to the end) retells Israel's exodus from Egypt and journey through the wilderness. Much is said about the evils of idolatry.

In the Early Church, Clement of Rome quotes verbatim 2.24 (see *1 Clem.* 3.4) and 12.12 (*ibid*, 27.5). Irenaeus does likewise (cf. 6.19 with *Against heresies*, 4.38.3). The *Epistle of Barnabas* refers to 2.12 as Scripture. In his epic *City of God*, Augustine quotes 2.12-20 as an authoritative source, and several times refers *Wisdom of Solomon* in his treatise *On the Trinity*.<sup>1276</sup> Ignatius and Origen also cite this work.<sup>1277</sup>

Even though he rejected its canonicity, John of Damascus described *Wisdom of Solomon* as "virtuous and noble" (*An Exact exposition of the Orthodox faith*, 4.17). In like manner, Athanasius includes it with the non-canonical "ecclesiastical" books. Surprisingly, the Muratonian Canon places it in the New Testament canon! Even Luther praised the book: "It pleases me beyond measure that the author here extols the Word of God so highly and ascribes to the Word all the wonders God has performed, both on enemies and in his saints."<sup>1278</sup>

Concerning the possible use of *Wisdom* by New Testament writers, some see an echo of it in Matthew 27:43.<sup>1279</sup> The later reads, "He trusts in God; let God rescue {Him} now, if He delights in him; for He said, 'I am the Son of God,'" which is compared to *Wisdom* 2.18: "For if the righteous man is God's son, he will uphold him, and he will deliver him out of the hand of his adversaries." Yet, we must also consider that Matthew here quotes the words of Christ's enemies.

The Epistle to the Hebrews presents us with other possible parallels.

- And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature (Heb 1:3)

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<sup>1272</sup>deSilva, p. 125.

<sup>1273</sup>Charles, ed. *Apocrypha of the Old Testament*.

<sup>1274</sup>Andrews, p. 33; deSilva, p. 127-132; Filson, p. 76.

<sup>1275</sup>Charles, ed. *Apocrypha of the Old Testament*.

<sup>1276</sup>See *On the Trinity*, 4.5, 10; 8.2; 17.28; 24.44; 15.2.3; 3.21; 2.5.6; 2.8.14; 3.3 (Taken from deSilva, p. 152).

<sup>1277</sup>See Ignatius, *Ephesians*, 19.2-3; *Magnesians*, 8.2; Origen, *de Principiis*, 1.2.9, *Against Celsus*, 3.62; 5.10; 6.63; 8.14 (Taken from deSilva, p. 152).

<sup>1278</sup>Noted in Charles, ed. *Apocrypha of the Old Testament*.

<sup>1279</sup>Charles, ed. *Apocrypha of the Old Testament*; Charlesworth J. H., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha and the New Testament*, c. 84; deSilva, p. 151.

- For she is a breath of the power of God, and a clear effluence of the glory of the Almighty... she is an effulgence from everlasting light and an unspotted mirror of the working of God, and an image of his goodness (*Wisdom of Solomon*, 7.25-26).

Some assume that the author of Hebrews drew material about Enoch from *Wisdom*: "Being found well-pleasing unto God he was beloved of him, and while living among sinners he was translated" (*Wisdom of Solomon*, 4.10; cf. Hebrews 11:5). Yet, one must also note that *Wisdom* is not referring to Enoch specifically, but a "righteous man."

Commentators give special attention to the similarities between *Wisdom* and the writings of Paul. Maybe most striking is the comparison of the behavior of the unrighteous Gentiles in Romans 1:19-24 and *Wisdom* 13.5-10 and 14.22-27. Other passages are compared:

- Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use? (Rom 9:21).
- For a potter, kneading soft earth, laboriously mouldeth each vessel for our service. Nay, out of the same clay doth he fashion both the vessels that minister to clean uses, and those of a contrary sort, all in like manner. But what shall be the use of either sort, the craftsman himself is the judge (*Wisdom of Solomon*, 15.7).

Another parallel is seen in Paul's teaching on predestination:

- You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?" On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it? (Rom 9:19-20)
- For who shall say, What hast thou done? Or who shall withstand thy judgement? And who shall accuse thee for the destruction of nations which thou didst make? Or who shall come and stand before thee as an avenger for the unrighteous? (*Wisdom of Solomon*, 12.12).

Again:<sup>1280</sup>

- Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil {one.} And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God (Eph 6:13-17).
- He shall take his jealousy as complete armour, and shall make the *whole* creation his weapons for vengeance on *his* enemies. He shall put on righteousness as a breastplate, and shall take judgement unfeigned as a helmet. He shall take holiness as an invincible shield, and shall sharpen stern wrath for a sword (*Wisdom of Solomon*, 5.17-20a).

Charles argues that one can explain one or two parallels by appealing to a common thought or a common source, but a large number of parallels is best explained by borrowing of material. Since *Wisdom* was written

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<sup>1280</sup>DeSilva also sees parallels between 1 Cor 2:7-12 and *Wisdom*, 9.13, 17; and between 1 Pet 1:6-7 together with Heb 8:2-5 and *Wisdom*, 3.5-6 (deSilva, p. 151).

before Paul's epistles, it logically follows that Paul borrowed from the author of *Wisdom*. On the other hand, Paul often indicates the sources of his citations, but not in regard to *Wisdom*.<sup>1281</sup>

The most likely explanation is that Paul was familiar with *Wisdom* and borrowed some terms and illustrations from it in order to express his own thoughts. This does not mean, however, that Paul endorsed the entire contents of the book or considered it canonical. It is most important to note that Paul never cited passages from *Wisdom* with the formula "Scripture says," or "it is written," but only, at best, indirectly referred to it.

In evaluating *Wisdom*, we would advise caution. First, the work is pseudonymic, which means that the author was purposely deceptive. Even Augustine, who including the work among the inspired New Testament books, acknowledged, "It has been customary to ascribe to Solomon other two, of which one is called Wisdom, the other Ecclesiasticus... but the more learned have no doubt that they are not his" (*City of God*, 17.20). Second, not a few passages in *Wisdom* depart from biblical revelation and lean toward Greek philosophy.<sup>1282</sup> We may offer the following examples.<sup>1283</sup>

Wisdom is presented as an omnipresent force that penetrates all things, which resembles the Stoic concept of the "World Soul": "For wisdom is more mobile than any motion; yea, she pervadeth and penetrateth all things by reason of her pureness (7.24); "She reacheth from one end of the world to the other with full strength, and ordereth all things well" (8.1). Wisdom is almighty, all-knowing, and glorified with God: "She, though but one, hath power to do all things; and remaining in herself, reneweth all things" (7.27); "With thee is wisdom, which knoweth thy works... she knoweth all things" (9.9, 11); "Give me wisdom, her that sitteth by thee on thy throne" (9.4). Wisdom is even nearly identified with God (see 7.25-26 above).

This book also advances a false cosmology. For example, God created the world from "formless matter" (11.17). A person's soul exists before his/her birth: "Now I was a child good by nature and a good soul fell to my lot. Nay rather, being good, I came into a body undefiled" (8.19-20). Sometimes the body is degraded: "A corruptible body weigheth down the soul, and the earthy frame lieth heavy on the mind that is full of cares" (9.15). Charles summarizes, "The influence of Platonism in the book is... undeniable."<sup>1284</sup>

Finally, *Wisdom* teaches salvation by personal righteousness: "They knew not the mysteries of God, neither hoped they for wages of holiness, nor did they judge that there is a prize for blameless souls" (2.22); and "Having borne a little chastening, they shall receive great good, because God tested them, and found them worthy of himself" (3.5).

The above-mentioned objections, along with the fact that *Wisdom of Solomon* was excluded from the Hebrew canon, require us to exclude it from the Christian canon as well.

### The Epistle of Jeremiah

The *Epistle of Jeremiah*, supposedly written by Jeremiah, is addressed to the Judean captives in Babylon. "Jeremiah" warns them that they will be in captivity for seven generations, and that they should refrain from idolatry, which he mocks in this letter. The work, though, it thought to have been written at the end of the fourth century BC in Greek.<sup>1285</sup>

Often this writing was included with *1 Baruch* and Lamentations in the book of the prophet Jeremiah as one volume (see Epiphanius of Salamis, *Panarion*, 8.6.1-3; Origen in Eusebius, *Church history*, 6.25.2 [without mention of *1 Baruch*]; Athanasius, *Festal letter*, 39.4; Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical lectures*, 4.35; Council of

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<sup>1281</sup>Charles, ed. Apocrypha of the Old Testament.

<sup>1282</sup>deSilva, p. 141-148.

<sup>1283</sup>Ibid; Charles, ed. Apocrypha of the Old Testament.

<sup>1284</sup>Charles, Apocrypha of the Old Testament.

<sup>1285</sup>[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Letter\\_of\\_Jeremiah](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Letter_of_Jeremiah); deSilva, c. 216; Charles, ed. Apocrypha of the Old Testament.

Laodicea). Sometimes the *Epistle of Jeremiah* functions as the sixth chapter of *1 Baruch*, and is so found in the Catholic Bible. The Orthodox preserve it as a separate work.<sup>1286</sup>

Origen and Epiphanius of Salamis claim that the combination of the *Epistle of Jeremiah* with the Book of Jeremiah reflects the true Hebrew canon.<sup>1287</sup> The *Epistle of Jeremiah* was found at Qumran as well. Jerome, however, who fervently defended the Hebrew canon, insisted that this epistle “was not read” among the Jews (see Preface to the *Commentary on Jeremiah*).<sup>1288</sup>

Did Jeremiah really compose this epistle? Although some early Christian writers appear to think so, Jewish sources do not confirm this claim. We must also take seriously the testimony of Jerome, who was more familiar with the Jewish faith than any of his contemporaries. Also important is that the prediction of a seven-generation exile was not fulfilled and contradicts Jeremiah’s known prophecy about a seventy-year captivity (Jer 25:11-12; 29:10). Therefore, we do not accept the claim that Jeremiah authored this work.

## 1 Baruch

The work *1 Baruch* is attributed to the associate of Jeremiah by that name, and is dated in the second century BC. It is thought to have originally been written in Hebrew.<sup>1289</sup> There are three divisions.<sup>1290</sup> The first part relates how, in the fifth year of the Judean captivity, Baruch read this book before Jeconiah, the son of Jehoiakim and king of Judah, together with other captives. The words touched their hearers, and they sent money to the high priest in Jerusalem, so that he would make sacrifices and offer prayers for them and for Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon.

The second division recounts the confession of Judah’s sin and recognition of God’s justice in punishing them. The people plead for mercy from God and are reminded of God’s promise through Moses of restoration after repentance. The third division contains praises to God for His wisdom and exhortations to seek Him. In addition, the people grieve about the calamities they have encountered and receive a word of comfort along with a promise of future restoration and victory over their enemies.

The Church Fathers held *1 Baruch* in high esteem. A number of Fathers cite it as an authoritative source: Athanasius (*Against Arius*, 12), Irenaeus (*Against heresies*, 5.35.1), Clement of Alexandria (*Pædagogus*, 1.10.91-92), Origen (*Homily on Jeremiah*, 7.3), Augustine (*City of God*, 18.33.1), John Chrysostom, *Apostolic Constitutions*, Tertullian, Cyprian, and others. Sometimes early commentators assign the contents to Jeremiah himself.<sup>1291</sup>

As we already mentioned, *1 Baruch* was sometimes included in the Book of Jeremiah along with Lamentations and the *Epistle of Jeremiah* in one volume. We observe this in Epiphanius of Salamis, *Panarion*, 8.6.1-3, Athanasius, *Festal letter*, 39.4, Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical lectures*, 4.35, and the Council of Laodicea.<sup>1292</sup>

In evaluating this work, we find it difficult to believe that in the fifth year of their exile, the Jews had already returned the utensils to the temple in Jerusalem (1.8). Furthermore, we know that Baruch did not end up in Babylon, but in Egypt (Jer 43:6-7).<sup>1293</sup> Finally, Jerome, who was more familiar with the Jewish faith than any of his contemporaries, insisted that this epistle “was not read” among the Jews.<sup>1294</sup> Considering his testimony and the historical errors mentioned above, we join Jerome in rejecting the canonicity of *1 Baruch*.

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<sup>1286</sup>deSilva, p. 215; [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Letter\\_of\\_Jeremiah](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Letter_of_Jeremiah).

<sup>1287</sup>[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Letter\\_of\\_Jeremiah](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Letter_of_Jeremiah); deSilva, p. 32.

<sup>1288</sup>Charles, ed. *Apocrypha of the Old Testament*.

<sup>1289</sup>deSilva, p. 45; Charles, ed. *Apocrypha of the Old Testament*.

<sup>1290</sup>Charles, ed. *Apocrypha of the Old Testament*; Andrews, p. 44-45.

<sup>1291</sup>Charles, ed. *Apocrypha of the Old Testament*; deSilva, p. 212.

<sup>1292</sup>deSilva, p. 215; [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Letter\\_of\\_Jeremiah](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Letter_of_Jeremiah).

<sup>1293</sup>deSilva, p. 202.

<sup>1294</sup>Charles, ed. *Apocrypha of the Old Testament*.

## 2 Baruch

We will attempt a brief summary of *2 Baruch*.<sup>1295</sup> It is written in apocalyptic style and speaks of Jerusalem's destruction and its future restoration under Messiah. Since the book was authored in the first or second century AD, some feel the author is in reality writing not so much about Babylon's destruction of Jerusalem, as its demolition by Rome.

Most likely, *2 Baruch* comes from a Hebrew original, was translated into Greek, but now is only available in its Syrian version.<sup>1296</sup> Other features of this work: (1) *2 Baruch* 1.1 mistakenly assigns Jehoiakim a 25-year reign, and (2) salvation is attained by good works:

But those who have been saved by their works,  
And to whom the law has been now a hope,  
And understanding an expectation,  
And wisdom a confidence,  
Shall wonders appear in their time.  
For they shall behold the world which is now invisible to them,  
And they shall behold the time which is now hidden from them:  
And time shall no longer age them (*2 Baruch*, 51.7-9).

The second book of Baruch is absent in the Septuagint, the Hebrew canon and all Christian canons of Scripture.

## Susanna

The story of *Susanna* is usually an addition to the Book of Daniel, enumerated as its thirteenth chapter. It was composed, however, much later – in the first century BC.<sup>1297</sup> The story is about a woman named Susanna, whom two elders in Israel, infatuated by her beauty, plan to rape. When their plan fails, they accuse her of adultery, of which she is subsequently declared guilty. Before her execution, Daniel discovers the truth about the matter, exonerates her, and her two accusers are executed instead.<sup>1298</sup>

Was this story part of the original Book of Daniel? Some in the Early Church thought so.<sup>1299</sup> Irenaeus quotes it as such (*Against heresies*, 4.26.3). Tertullian (*de Corona*, 4), and Athanasius (*Against Arius*, 12) accept it as real history. John Chrysostom preached a sermon in praise of Susanna. Even Jerome gave it a place in his Vulgate translation.

We find especially intriguing a now famous correspondence between Origen and Africanus concerning the question of whether the book was genuine. Africanus objected (and Origen admitted) that the Jews did not accept this account. He also noted the difference in literary style between Daniel and *Susanna*, as well as a discrepancy in Daniel's prophetic activity – only in *Susanna* does he prophecy. In the Book of Daniel, he sees and interprets visions and dreams. Africanus also questioned whether Jews were allowed to execute anyone in Babylon. He also noted a play on words in the Greek, which shows that the original was in Greek, not Hebrew.<sup>1300</sup> In his reply, Origen attempted, unsuccessfully, to answer these objections.

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<sup>1295</sup>Andrews, p. 58-60.

<sup>1296</sup>Andrews, p. 58; Charles, ed. Apocrypha of the Old Testament.

<sup>1297</sup>Charles, ed. Apocrypha of the Old Testament.

<sup>1298</sup>Ibid.

<sup>1299</sup>deSilva, p. 236; Charles, ed. Apocrypha of the Old Testament.

<sup>1300</sup>In spite of this observation, some contemporary scholars still believe that the original was in Hebrew (see deSilva, p. 224; Charles, ed. Apocrypha of the Old Testament).

Examining the existing documents of *Susanna* is also revealing.<sup>1301</sup> One can find it in the Septuagint and the Greek translation by Theodotian, yet in the translation of Aquila, the Dead Sea Scrolls, Josephus' history, and the Hebrew Masoretic Text, it is absent.

Andrews concludes with this judgment: "The stories are full of anachronisms and extravagances, and evidently are merely folklore adapted as a vehicle of religious instruction."<sup>1302</sup>

### The Prayer of Azariah

Another "addition" to the Book of Daniel is the *Prayer of Azariah*, one of the three companions of Daniel, who was thrown into the furnace by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. The date of composition is thought to be the first century BC.<sup>1303</sup> In the Book of Daniel, it is located after Daniel 3:23. It has four parts: (1) an introduction, (2) the prayer of Azariah for deliverance, (3) the heating of the furnace and the descent of the Angel of the Lord, (4) the deliverance of the three Jews and praises to God.<sup>1304</sup>

Like the story of *Susanna*, the Church Fathers favored this account. It can be found in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of Theodotian, and the Vulgate, but it is absent from the Dead Sea Scrolls, Josephus' history, and the Hebrew Masoretic Text.<sup>1305</sup> Because of this rejection by Jewish sources, we refrain from its acceptance as well.

### Bel and the Dragon

The final "addition" to Daniel is a combination of two stories: *Bel* and *The Dragon*. They are placed at the end of Daniel (chapter 14) and were composed in the second century BC.<sup>1306</sup> In *Bel*, Daniel refuses to worship the idol Bel at the command of King Cyrus. In an attempt to convince Daniel to do homage to Bel, Cyrus shows the prophet how Bel consumes the food brought to him each night (yet, the priests actually eat it). Daniel obtains permission to test this claim. In the evening, he covers the floor with ashes, and in the morning the ashes reveal the footprints of the priests and their families. As a result, the king executes the priests and destroys the idol.<sup>1307</sup>

The second story is about a dragon in Babylon, whom the people cater to and worship. Again, Daniel refuses to worship the dragon and receives permission to slay it, which he does. The people are infuriated with Daniel and demand he be punished. The king, then, casts him into a lion's den. In the course of seven days, however, the lions do not touch him. In addition, God commands the prophet Habakkuk, who was in Palestine at the time, to feed Daniel. An angel seizes Habakkuk by the hair and transports him to Babylon, suspending him above the lion's den. Later, when the king discovers that Daniel is unharmed, he releases him and punishes his accusers.<sup>1308</sup>

Several Church Fathers cite these stories,<sup>1309</sup> and they are found in the Septuagint and the Greek translation of Theodotian. Yet they are lacking in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Hebrew Masoretic Text.<sup>1310</sup>

Some problems, though, exist. DeSilva informs us that the temple of Bel was destroyed after the reign of Xerxes I (5th c. BC), but Daniel lived in the sixth century. Regarding *The Dragon*, one must question whether

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<sup>1301</sup>deSilva, p. 222.

<sup>1302</sup>Andrews, p. 41.

<sup>1303</sup>Charles, ed. *Apocrypha of the Old Testament*.

<sup>1304</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>1305</sup>deSilva, p. 222-224; Charles, ed. *Apocrypha of the Old Testament*.

<sup>1306</sup>Charles, ed. *Apocrypha of the Old Testament*.

<sup>1307</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>1308</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>1309</sup>See Irenaeus, *Against heresies*, 4.5.2; 4.26.3; Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, 1.21; Tertullian, *On idolatry*, 18.

<sup>1310</sup>deSilva, p. 29, 224.



such a creature actually existed. Moreover, this story clearly borrows material from other passages: the history of Daniel and the lion's den from Daniel chapter 6, and the account of Ezekiel's translation in a vision. In Ezekiel 8:3, we read, "He stretched out the form of a hand and caught me by a lock of my head; and the Spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem."

Due to their absence in the Hebrew text and the presence of dubious elements in these stories, we concur with deSilva: "Bel and the Dragon is no longer regarded as a historical narrative... This narrative is another manifestation of Judaism's polemic against idolatry."<sup>1311</sup>

## 1 Maccabees

The book of **1 Maccabees** enjoys great popularity as a quality historical narrative of the Jewish rebellion against Greek rule in the second century BC, headed by the Maccabees family. Charles gives the book the following assessment:

The book is a sober and, on the whole, trustworthy account of the Jewish struggle for religious liberty and political independence during the years 175–135 B.C., i.e., from the accession of Antiochus Epiphanes to the death of Simon the Maccabee.<sup>1312</sup>

It is believed that the book was originally written in Aramaic or Hebrew, but it exists now only in translation.<sup>1313</sup> It originated in the second century BC.<sup>1314</sup> Flavius employed it in his composition of Jewish history. Although there is no mention of God's name, His intervention on behalf of His people is clearly evident.<sup>1315</sup>

Unlike Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox, Protestants do not recognize *1 Maccabees* as canonical. This is due to its absence from the Hebrew canon, endorsed by the Lord Jesus. The Jews assert that any book written after Malachi lacks prophetic authorship and is therefore excluded from the canon.

Even though this book provides us with invaluable historical insight into the intertestamental period and with inspiration from the heroism of the Maccabees, these qualities still do not qualify it as God-inspired Scripture.

## 2 Maccabees

*2 Maccabees* was written, most likely, in the second or first centuries BC by an anonymous author.<sup>1316</sup> The author claims that he is compiling a summary of a five-volume work by a certain Jason of Cyrene on the history of the Maccabees (2.24). Therefore, **2 Maccabees** claims to provide another account of the Jewish rebellion against the Greeks, headed by the Maccabees, yet in a condensed format. It summarizes the first seven chapters of *1 Maccabees*. Yet, it lacks the quality of historical narrative seen in the first book. In addition, *2 Maccabees*, introduces supernatural elements into the story (see 2.22; 3.24-30; 5.2-4; 10.29-31).<sup>1317</sup>

Besides the emphasis on God's intervention, *2 Maccabees* distinguishes itself in still other ways. Israel supposedly found itself in this predicament due to its sins. Quite often, the resurrection of the dead is mentioned (7.9-29; 12.43-45; 14.46), which is rarely mentioned in the Old Testament itself. Some feel the author of Hebrews drew on material from *2 Maccabees* (see Heb 11:35).

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<sup>1311</sup>ibid, p. 239.

<sup>1312</sup>Charles, ed. Apocrypha of the Old Testament.

<sup>1313</sup>Andrews, p. 17-20.

<sup>1314</sup>Charles, ed. Apocrypha of the Old Testament.

<sup>1315</sup>deSilva, p. 265.

<sup>1316</sup>Andrews, p. 22-24; Charles, ed. Apocrypha of the Old Testament.

<sup>1317</sup>Andrews, p. 22-24; deSilva, p. 273; Charles, ed. Apocrypha of the Old Testament.

Especially significant is that *2 Maccabees* advances some doctrines totally foreign to the biblical witness. For example, prayer for the dead is advised (12.43-45). The author also claims that the dead pray for God's people and can appear to the living (15.11-16). In addition, the death of a martyr can provide God's people with redemption (7.37-38). In the light of these obvious doctrinal errors and the exclusion of *2 Maccabees* from the Hebrew canon, we deny it that status as well.

### 3 Maccabees

The *Third Book of Maccabees* tells the legendary story of how King Ptolemy IV (Philopator), after his victory at the battle of Raphia, attempted to enter the temple in Jerusalem. In answer to the prayers of His people, God struck the king, which forced him to depart from Israel.

Philopator, however, upset by his humiliation, began to oppress the Jews in Alexandria. He gathered them in the arena, planning to release elephants to stampede them. Two angels, though, descended from heaven, causing terror among the spectators, and the elephants turned on their attendants and stampeded them instead. When the king witnessed these events, he repented of his hostility to the Jews and became their benefactor in Alexandria.<sup>1318</sup>

Some features of the story appear to have roots in history and were recorded by Josephus. Yet, Josephus identifies the king as Ptolemy VIII, who arranged a pogrom against the Jews supporting Cleopatra. Josephus also records that elephants turned on the accompanying soldiers and stampeded them, after which Ptolemy VIII became a support to the Jews (*Jewish Antiquities*, 2.50-55). In addition, Ptolemy IV did win a military victory over the Seleucids at Raphia, after which he visited Jerusalem. Yet, Josephus does not relate an attempt to enter the temple.

Charles gives the following evaluation of the book: "The story as it stands is full of impossibilities and bombastic exaggerations, but each one of the incidents taken singly may well rest on some basis of fact, though they certainly did not all take place in the same reign."<sup>1319</sup>

DeSilva concurs: "The author was seeking to write not history, but an edifying tale loosely anchored in history."<sup>1320</sup> It appears that the goal of this work was to prevent the spread of Hellenism among the Jews of that time. The story was written in the second or first century BC, when the threat of Hellenization was very real.<sup>1321</sup>

So then, because of the Jewish rejection of this book's canonicity and its historical inaccuracies, we do not include it in our collection of inspired books.

### 4 Maccabees

We will only briefly treat the fourth book of Maccabees (1st c. AD), which no group, Jewish or Christian, accepts as inspired, yet the present Septuagint contains it.<sup>1322</sup>

The work combines the streams of conservative Judaism and Greek philosophy. On the one hand, the author is a Jew, who defends the observation of the Torah. On the other hand, he embraces many of the fundamental concepts of Stoicism. For him, the key to victory in spiritual life is ὁ εὖσεβὴς λογισμός, i.e., "inspired reason," obtained through study of the Torah. One's "inspired reason" must harness one's feeling and desires. The author points to the seven martyred brothers of *2 Maccabees* as examples.

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<sup>1318</sup>Charles, ed. *Apocrypha of the Old Testament*.

<sup>1319</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>1320</sup>deSilva D. A. *Introducing the Apocrypha*. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2002. – P. 310.

<sup>1321</sup>Charles, ed. *Apocrypha of the Old Testament*.

<sup>1322</sup>deSilva, p. 354-373; Charles, ed. *Apocrypha of the Old Testament*.

Andrews provides the following summary: “The influence of Greek thought is patent on every page,” yet “He is a loyal Jew, devoted to the Law.”<sup>1323</sup> For the Church, though, this work provides no edification or instruction for Christian faith.

### **Psalms of Solomon**

The *Psalms of Solomon* were composed by an unknown author in the first century BC. They were, most likely, written in Hebrew, but now exist only in their Greek and Syrian translations. The *Psalms of Solomon* are found in the present Septuagint, but the Hebrew canon and all Christian confessions exclude them. The Church Fathers rarely appeal to them.<sup>1324</sup>

The collection consist of 18 psalms, and their style resembles the biblical Psalter. They emphasize keeping the Torah. Psalm 17.27-51 speaks of Messiah, but only in general terms as a human liberator and ruler.<sup>1325</sup> The exclusion of the *Psalms of Solomon* from the Hebrew canon allows us to exclude them from the Christian Old Testament canon as well.

### **Prayer of Manasseh**

The *Prayer of Manasseh* allegedly informs us of what King Manasseh prayed when he repented before the Lord. It is interesting to note that in 2 Chronicles, chapter 33, we read that the contents of his prayer are recorded in “the records of the kings of Israel” (v. 18) and in “the records of the Hozai” (v. 19). DeSilva postulates that these two verses “issued an open invitation for some pious Jew to compose a fine penitential psalm in order to fill this gap in the tradition.”<sup>1326</sup> One has to agree with deSilva’s assessment, knowing that the book was written about the time of Christ.<sup>1327</sup> Andrews concurs: “There is no justification for regarding the prayer as genuine. Everything points to the fact that it was an imaginative composition.”<sup>1328</sup>

Among the Orthodox, the *Prayer of Manasseh* finds itself among the “non-canonical” books, yet is absent from the Hebrew canon and the present Septuagint.

### **Jubilees**

The *Book of Jubilees* contains a paraphrase of Genesis 1 to Exodus 12.<sup>1329</sup> It was written in the second century BC, in the Hebrew tongue.<sup>1330</sup> *Jubilees* was found at Qumran, but is not in the present Septuagint. According to this narrative, when Moses was on Sinai, God directed the “Angel of the face” to relate to Moses the events of biblical history prior to that time.

Some fascinating, but puzzling features are worth noting. From time to time, the “Angel of the face” reveals to Moses how the angels were involved in the events of history. Moreover, God did not test Abraham, but an evil spirit did. The failures of the patriarchs of Israel are sometimes omitted. People in antiquity already observed certain Jewish feasts: Noah – the Feast of Weeks (6.17), and Abraham – the Feast of Tabernacles (16.21). Angels observe the Feast of Weeks as well (6.18), as well as the Sabbath and the rite of circumcision. In addition, sin began not in the Garden of Eden, but in Genesis 6, when the “sons of God” went into the “daughters of men.”

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<sup>1323</sup> Andrews, p. 79.

<sup>1324</sup> Charles, ed. *Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*.

<sup>1325</sup> Andrews, p. 81-83.

<sup>1326</sup> deSilva, p. 296.

<sup>1327</sup> Andrews, p. 43.

<sup>1328</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>1329</sup> Andrews, p. 63-66; Charles, ed. *Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*.

<sup>1330</sup> Charles, ed. *Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, v. 2, p. 6.

This book advances its own unique view of eschatology. The kingdom of Messiah will progressively exert a greater and greater influence on the earth, until all humanity and nature itself will be transformed. Then a new heavens and a new earth will appear, where there will be no sin or pain. People will live for 1000 years and, after death, will enter an incorporeal state of bliss in the spiritual world.

All things considered, we affirm the position of Andrews that the author of *Jubilees* “wrote over again the story of the patriarchal age, and brought it into harmony with his own conceptions of what ought to have happened during that period.”<sup>1331</sup>

## 1 Enoch

The *Book of 1 Enoch* claims to narrate the experience of Enoch: how an angel visited him and how he saw a vision of the spiritual world and future events. The book was, in fact, written by various authors over the period from the second to the first centuries BC. It contains five books joined into a whole. The original appeared in Aramaic or Hebrew, but the work is preserved only in Greek, Latin and Ethiopic translations, the later being the most complete.<sup>1332</sup>

The first book (chps. 1-36) recounts the supposed sexual union between fallen angels (the “Watchers”) and the “daughters of men” (see Gen 6), which led to humanity’s fall into sin, the Great Deluge, and God’s judgement on fallen angels. The second book (chps. 37-71) contains three proverbs that touch on various topics, especially God’s judgement, eschatology and cosmology. The third book (chps. 72-82) discusses the movement of heavenly bodies and the establishment of the solar calendar. The fourth book (chps. 83-90) covers biblical history, which concludes with the appearance of the glorious messianic kingdom. This section also further details the fall of angels and humans. The final book (chps. 91-108) covers world history with emphasis on future events, especially the fate of the righteous and unrighteous. More is also said about the history of Noah.<sup>1333</sup>

Although *1 Enoch* was found at Qumran and quoted in the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* and *Judith*, the rabbis deemed it unworthy for inclusion in the Hebrew canon of Scripture.<sup>1334</sup> Origen (*Commentary on Numbers*, 28.2) and Tertullian (*On the adornment of women*, 1.3), who employed the work as an authoritative source, also acknowledged that the Jews did not accept it.<sup>1335</sup>

Unlike the hesitancy by the Jews, the Church Fathers freely employed *1 Enoch* until the fourth century. Such notables as Irenaeus (*Against heresies*, 4.16.2), Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian (*On idolatry*, 15), and others cited it authoritatively.<sup>1336</sup> Origen reveals, however, that not all Christian congregations accepted the book (*Against Celsus*, 3.54; *Commentary on John*, 6.25). Sometimes he cites it as an authoritative source, while at other times he distinguishes it from Holy Scripture (*de Principiis*, 1.3.3).<sup>1337</sup> Nonetheless, from the fourth century on, due to a negative assessment of the book by Augustine, Jerome and Hilary, its popularity waned and it lost its prestigious status among the churches.<sup>1338</sup>

Certain features of the book deserve notice. In *1 Enoch* we encounter the title for Messiah “Son of Man,” which Jesus often applied to Himself. He is also called the “Righteous One” and the “Chosen One” (cf. Acts

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<sup>1331</sup>Andrews, p. 63.

<sup>1332</sup>Ibid, p. 53; Charles, ed. Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament.

<sup>1333</sup>[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book\\_of\\_Enoch](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Enoch).

<sup>1334</sup>Charles, ed. Apocrypha of the Old Testament.

<sup>1335</sup>Noted in Gallagher E. L. Hebrew Scripture in patristic biblical theory // den Boeft J., et. al. Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae. – Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2012. – P. 47.

<sup>1336</sup>Moore N. J. Is Enoch also among the prophets?: The impact of Jude's citation of 1 Enoch on the reception of both texts in the early church // The Journal of Theological Studies. 2013. 64(2). P. 505.

<sup>1337</sup>Ibid, p. 505-506.

<sup>1338</sup>Moore, p. 515; Charles, ed. Apocrypha of the Old Testament.

3:14; Lk 23:35). In addition, according to *1 Enoch*, the Son of Man has a heavenly origin (62.7) and will sit on a glorious throne (62.5).<sup>1339</sup>

*1 Enoch* has several significant shortcomings. Charles, for example, sees a number of inconsistencies in its teaching on Messiah, His kingdom, the origin of sin, and eschatology. Some object that Enoch could not have survived the flood of Noah. In defense, Tertullian claims that he passed on this information through Methuselah (*On the adornment of women*, 1.3), yet this is only an assumption by Tertullian. Another minus – the exclusion of *1 Enoch* from the Hebrew canon.

The most intriguing feature is that in verses 14-15 of his epistle, Jude quotes *1 Enoch*: “And behold! He cometh with ten thousands of ‘His’ holy ones to execute judgement upon all, and to destroy ‘all’ the ungodly, and to convict all flesh of all the works ‘of their ungodliness’ which they have ungodly committed, ‘and of all the hard things which’ ungodly sinners ‘have spoken’ against Him” (*1 Enoch*, 1.9). In acknowledgement of the true prophetic character of these words, Jude introduces the quotation with the words, “{It was} also about these men {that} Enoch, {in} the seventh {generation} from Adam, prophesied...”. The significance of this citation is discussed in our analysis of Jude’s epistle below.

### Testament-Ascension of Moses

There once existed two pseudonymic books attributed to Moses, which some feel were joined together into one volume – the *Testament of Moses*, and the *Ascension of Moses*. The later was mentioned at the Council of Nicaea, but in other ancient sources, both titles are encountered.<sup>1340</sup>

Both books appeared in the first Christian century and were likely written in Hebrew. The *Testament of Moses* is only partially preserved in its Latin translation, while the *Ascension of Moses* has disappeared completely except for isolated citations in the works of the Fathers.<sup>1341</sup> Clement of Alexandria, for example, gleaned the following from the *Ascension of Moses*: “Rightly, therefore, Jesus the son of Nave saw Moses, when taken up [to heaven], double, – one Moses with the angels, and one on the mountains, honoured with burial in their ravines” (*Stromata*, 6.15).

The *Testament of Moses* relates a supposed conversation between Moses and Joshua, during which Moses predicts Israel’s future from the time of the conquest of Canaan to the time of the Maccabees. In addition, he prophecies about the end times and the ultimate victory of God’s people. Israel will triumph, however, not by violence, but by God’s supernatural intervention.<sup>1342</sup> Most interesting is the prediction that from the time of Moses’ death to the inauguration of the messianic kingdom will be “250 weeks” (10.12), which means 1750 years.

Moreover, in the *Testament of Moses*, Moses encourages his understudy Joshua and assures him of God’s future aid and support.<sup>1343</sup> Unlike the *Ascension of Moses*, in the *Testament of Moses*, Moses dies a natural death (see 1.15; 3.13; 10.14). The word “ascension,” found in *Testament of Moses* 10.12 after the word “death,” is likely a later insertion.<sup>1344</sup>

The final part of the *Testament of Moses* is lost. Some consider that it contained an account of Michael the archangel disputing with the Devil about the body of Moses, of which Jude speaks (Jude 9).<sup>1345</sup> Charlesworth, along with others, challenges that assumption, insisting that Jude is citing a different, unknown

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<sup>1339</sup>Andrews, p. 55; Charles, ed. *Apocrypha of the Old Testament*.

<sup>1340</sup>Priest J. *Testament of Moses* // Charlesworth J. H. *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. – Peabody, MS: Hendrickson, 1983. – V. 1 – P. 925.

<sup>1341</sup>We also find quotations in *2 Baruch*, Origen and others (Charles, ed. *Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*). Also, see Andrews, p. 60.

<sup>1342</sup>Andrews, p. 61; Charles, ed. *Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*.

<sup>1343</sup>Priest, v. 1, p. 920.

<sup>1344</sup>Charles, ed. *Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*.

<sup>1345</sup>Priest, v. 1, p. 924.

source.<sup>1346</sup> Yet, other parallels can be drawn: (1) similarities of the description of the ungodly in Jude 4 and the *Testament of Moses* 7.3-9, and (2) discussion of the end times (Jude 18; *Testament of Moses*, 7.1).

As was the case in our discussion of *1 Enoch*, we find here a book which by rights should be excluded from the Old Testament canon because of its exclusion from the Hebrew canon. On the other hand, how are we to understand the possible reference to it in the Epistle of Jude? We will table that discussion until we resume it in our study of Jude's epistle a little later.

### Ascension of Isaiah

The work consists of three parts: the *Martyrdom of Isaiah*, the *Ascension of Isaiah*, and the *Testament of Hezekiah*. It is thought that the first part was written by a Jewish author, but the other two – by a Christian. The first part tells about Hezekiah advising his son Manasseh before the former's death, Manasseh's rebellion, and the martyrdom of Isaiah, whom Manasseh sawed in two. Most likely, the author of Hebrews drew on this history in writing Hebrews 11:37 (see *Ascension of Isaiah*, 5.11-14). *Ascension of Isaiah*, in fact, had been written not long before that. We can find citations to *Ascension of Isaiah* in the works of Ambrose, Jerome, Origen, Tertullian and Justin Martyr.<sup>1347</sup>

The second part relates how Isaiah, having ascended to heaven, testifies of the descent of God's Son to the earth, who died, rose, and ascended to heaven. We also encounter there hints of the doctrine of the Trinity.<sup>1348</sup>

Clearly, the parts of *Ascension of Isaiah* written by Christians cannot qualify for admission to the Old Testament canon. Nonetheless, the reference in Hebrews 11:37 indicates that that book may well have historical value. At the same time, as we noted in *1 Maccabees*, historicity of a work does not necessarily qualify it for canonicity.

Finally, we note Jerome's claim that in the copy of *Ascension of Isaiah* that he possessed, he found the verse quoted by Paul in 1 Cor 2:9 (see *Commentary on Isaiah*, 64.4).<sup>1349</sup> This presents us with a dilemma in that Paul introduces this quotation with the words "it is written." Nonetheless, it is now impossible to confirm Jerome's claim.

### Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs

In this work, the twelve sons of Jacob tell of events in their lives and give advice to their descendants. The main part of the work was written at the end of the second century BC, yet many think that it contains interpolations by Christian writers.<sup>1350</sup> For example:

Now, therefore, observe whatsoever I command you, children; for whatsoever things I have heard from my fathers I have declared unto you. And behold I am clear from your ungodliness and transgression, which ye shall commit in the end of the ages [against the Saviour of the world, Christ, acting godlessly], deceiving Israel, and stirring up against it great evils from the Lord (*Testament of Levi*, 10.1-2).

For our father Israel is pure from the transgressions of the chief priests [who shall lay their hands upon the Saviour of the world (*Testament of Levi*, 14.2)].

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<sup>1346</sup>Charlesworth J. H., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha and the New Testament*, p. 75-76.

<sup>1347</sup>Charlesworth J. H., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha and the New Testament*, p. 84; Charles R. H., ed. *Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*. – Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, 2004. – V. 2. – P. 157-158.

<sup>1348</sup>Andrews, p. 66-68.

<sup>1349</sup>Brakke D. Canon formation and social conflict in fourth-century Egypt: Athanasius of Alexandria's Thirty-Ninth Festal Letter // *Harvard Theological Review*. 1994. 87(4). P. 413.

<sup>1350</sup>Andrews, p. 70; Charles, ed. *Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, v. 2, p. 282.

And the veil of the temple shall be rent, and the Spirit of God shall pass on to the Gentiles as fire poured forth (*Testament of Benjamin*, 9.4).

We also note parallels between the following passages and New Testament texts:<sup>1351</sup>

- And if any one seeketh to do evil unto you, do well unto him, and pray for him, and ye shall be redeemed of the Lord from all evil (*Testament of Joseph*, 18.2).
- But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you (Matt 5:44).
- Love ye one another from the heart; and if a man sin against thee, speak peaceably to him, and in thy soul hold not guile; and if he repent and confess, forgive him (*Testament of Gad*, 6.3).
- If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother (Matt 18:15).
- Love the Lord through all your life, and one another with a true heart (*Testament of Dan*, 5.3).
- He said to him, "You shall love the lord your god with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt 22:37-39).
- I was alone, and God comforted me. I was sick, and the Lord visited me. I was in prison, and my God showed favour unto me; in bonds, and He released me; slandered, and He pleaded my cause; bitterly spoken against by the Egyptians, and He delivered me; envied by my fellow-slaves, and He exalted me (*Testament of Joseph*, 1.6-7).
- For I was hungry, and you gave Me {something} to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me {something} to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; 36 naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me. (Matt 25:35-36)
- Then shall all the spirits of deceit be given to be trodden under foot, and men shall rule over wicked spirits (*Testament of Simeon*, 6.6).
- Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing will injure you (Lk 10:19)
- What will all the Gentiles do, if ye be darkened through transgressions? Yea, ye shall bring a curse upon our race, because the light of the law which was given to lighten every man... (*Testament of Levi*, 14.4).
- There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man (Jn 1:9).
- The good inclination receiveth not glory nor dishonour from men (*Testament of Benjamin*, 6.4).
- I do not receive glory from men (Jn 5:41)
- But his God and the God of his fathers sent forth His angel, and delivered him out of my hands (*Testament of Simeon*, 2.8).

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<sup>1351</sup>Charles, ed. Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament, v. 2, p. 291-292. Other examples are cited, but the parallels are not as clear: *Testament of Levi*, 14:4 with Jn 1:9; *Testament of Levi*, 6:2 with Lk 2:19; *Testament of Benjamin*, 6.4 with Jn 5:41; *Testament of Levi*, 6:11 with 1 Thes 2:16; *Testament of Issachar*, 7.1 with 1 Cor 4:4.

- When Peter came to himself, he said, “Now I know for sure that the Lord has sent forth His angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting” (Acts 12:11).
- For they that are double-faced are guilty of a twofold sin; for they both do the evil thing and they have pleasure in them that do it, following the example of the spirits of deceit, and striving against mankind (*Testament of Asher*, 6.2).
- Although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them (Rom 1:32).
- And though they devise with evil intent concerning him, by doing good he overcometh evil, being shielded by God; and he loveth the righteous as his own soul (*Testament of Benjamin*, 4.3).
- Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good (Rom 12:21).
- For there is a season for a man to embrace his wife, and a season to abstain therefrom for his prayer (*Testament of Naphtali*, 8.8).
- Stop depriving one another, except by agreement for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control (1 Cor 7:5).
- For true repentance after a godly sort [destroyeth ignorance, and] driveth away the darkness, and enlighteneth the eyes, and giveth knowledge to the soul, and leadeth the mind to salvation (*Testament of Gad*, 5.7).
- For the sorrow that is according to {the will} {of} God produces a repentance without regret, {leading} to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death (2 Cor 7:10).

However, since Christian interpolations are clearly present in this book, one cannot determine with confidence who borrowed material from whom. It is possible that Jesus and the New Testament writers were familiar with these writings and borrowed phraseology from them to express their own thoughts. Yet, that does not mean that they endorsed all the contents of this book, or considered it canonical. It is vital to note that New Testament authors never quote passages from the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* with formulas like “Scripture says,” or “it is written.” At best, they only indirectly refer to them.

### Sibylline Oracles

The final disputed book we will examine is the *Sibylline Oracles*. Although no New Testament author cites it, the Church Fathers do so in abundance.<sup>1352</sup>

The *Sibylline Oracles* are a collection of various sayings, allegedly made by prophetesses (Sibyls), who advance various ideas, some consistent with paganism, others with Judaism, and still others with Christianity. It is thought that this variety of views resulted from editorial changes made over time by different hands. In its more original form, the *Sibylline Oracles* was highly esteemed in the pagan world, especially in the Roman Empire.

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<sup>1352</sup> Andrews, p. 73; Charles, ed. *Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, v. 2, p. 368; Collins J. J. *Sibylline Oracles* // Charlesworth J. H. *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. – Peabody, MS: Hendrickson, 1983. – V. 1 – P. 324.



Collins comments, “It was doubtless because of the high esteem in which these prophecies were held that Jewish and Christian writers used the form so extensively to present their own messages,” and, “Christian writers adapted the Sibyls for their apologetic purposes.”<sup>1353</sup>

This book contains much ethical instruction, but especially stresses eschatology: rewards for the righteous and punishments for the unrighteous. It also places stress on God’s sovereignty and the refutation of idolatry.<sup>1354</sup> Nevertheless, the pagan roots of these writings place them outside of the range of acceptability for acceptance in the Old Testament canon.

### **3. Conclusions**

Our survey of apocryphal and pseudepigraphic books reveals their inferior quality compared to genuine inspired works. Not infrequently, they contain elements of Hellenistic thought, pagan ritualism, improper behavior by the “heroes-heroines” of the story, false teaching, or historical inconsistencies. Some of them read more like romantic novels than conveyors of God’s truth. The Jews correctly excluded them from the canon. Yet, we are amazed that they held such sway over the Early Church Fathers.

## **B. New Testament**

### **1. Books Accepted as Canonical**

#### **2 Peter**

The debate about 2 Peter involves several issues. First, we will look at the contents of the epistle itself.<sup>1355</sup> The careful reader will quickly recognize the stylistic differences between this letter and 1 Peter. Moreover, it seems strange that Peter, being an apostle himself, would speak of the “commandment of the Lord and Savior {spoken} by your apostles” (3:2).

In addition, according to 2 Peter 3:4, believers have already been waiting a long time for Christ’s return. Also, 2 Peter contains less Old Testament citations than 1 Peter does. The second epistle has several expressions that stand in contrast with typical New Testament phraseology: “partakers of {the} divine nature” (1:4), and the divine title – the “Majestic Glory” (1:17).

We must also examine the epistle from a historical perspective.<sup>1356</sup> The Church Fathers rarely cited this work. Those who did often expressed doubts about its genuineness. The earliest copy of 2 Peter still in circulation dates only from the third century (papyrus 72). They may be, however, indirect allusions to it in the works of Clement of Alexandria (2nd c.) and Cyprian (3rd c.). Hippolytus of Rome (2nd-3rd c.) definitely cites it. Curiously, the Muratorian Canon (2nd c.) omits 2 Peter, but one must consider that other books are also missing in it, like 1 Peter.

Origen and Eusebius definitely refer to this epistle, yet hesitate to attribute it to the apostle. Jerome accepted it, but also related that this opinion was not universal. The Syrian church canonized it only in the sixth century. The Reformers Luther and Calvin also wavered about its authorship.

On the other hand, the following factors favor its inclusion among the inspired books.<sup>1357</sup> The author identifies himself as the great apostle (1:1, 14-18). We note, however, that several other pseudonymic works

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<sup>1353</sup>Collins, v. 1, p. 320, 322.

<sup>1354</sup>Charles, ed. *Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, v. 2, p. 374.

<sup>1355</sup>Guthrie D. *New Testament introduction*. – 4th ed. – Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1996. – P. 811-841.

<sup>1356</sup>Davidson P. H. *The Catholic Epistles as a canonical Janus: a New Testament glimpse into Old and New Testament canon formation* // *Bulletin for Biblical Research*. 2009. 19(3). P. 414-415; Geisler, Nix, p. 299-300; Guthrie, p. 811-841.

<sup>1357</sup>Guthrie, p. 811-841; Harris R. L. *What books belong in the canon of scripture?* // *Presbyterion* 1981. 7.1. P. 144; Zahn T. *Introduction to the New Testament*. – In 3 Vols. – New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1917. – V. 2. – P. 271; Allison, p. 44.

appeared in the post-apostolic period, supposedly written by Peter (*Gospel of Peter, Apocalypse of Peter*). Some feel that the Early Church hesitated to receive 2 Peter out of fear that it was also pseudonymic. Nevertheless, the fact that, in spite of that fear, the Church eventually did canonize the book, lends support to the claim of its authenticity. By the fourth century, with the exception of the Syrian Church, all Christian congregations accepted it.

We might explain, along with Jerome, the difference in literary style by the use of an amanuensis. It is also significant that Jude quotes 2 Peter 3:3 as the words of an apostle: "...that they were saying to you, 'In the last time there will be mockers, following after their own ungodly lusts'" (Jude 18). In addition, the contents of Jude closely follow that of 2 Peter, which shows that Jude was familiar with the work and considered it authoritative. Finally, the emphasis on eschatology better coincides with the New Testament period than the post-apostolic era.

In conclusion, since the contents of 2 Peter is not unworthy of the apostle and does not contradict other New Testament teaching, we may accept its claim to apostolic authorship. Although some Fathers expressed doubts about 2 Peter, no one rejected it outright.<sup>1358</sup>

### James

Along with several other of the Catholic Epistles, the Book of James had a rocky road to canonical recognition. We will investigate the contents of the epistle as well as the opinions of early Christian writers.<sup>1359</sup> Before this, though, we must tackle the question, "Which James is this?" Without doubt, the author is not James, the son of Zebedee. He was martyred early in the history of the apostolic church. There was another James among the Twelve, James the son of Alphaeus, but little is known about him.

This epistle is characteristic of James, the half-brother of Jesus.<sup>1360</sup> The author is definitely a Jew. His stress on morals corresponds to his allegiance to the Law of Moses, as depicted in the Book of Acts. This James certainly held a prominent position in the Early Church, as also indicated in the Book of Acts. Finally, some note similarities between James' speech in Acts 15:13-21 and the contents of this epistle.

As far as the content of this epistle, we immediately notice the apparent conflict with Paul's insistence on justification by faith alone (cf. Jam 2:24 and Eph 2:8-9). Not only Martin Luther noted this tension, but some of the Church Fathers as well. Also significant is the absence of reference to the redemptive work of Christ, which is the heart of the gospel. Finally, some feel the quality of the author's Greek is too good for a simple Jew.

The Early Church seemed divided on the question. Origen and Jerome inform us that some doubted its canonicity, and Eusebius includes it among the doubtful books. Nonetheless, in their theological discussions, they use as an authoritative resource. The Eastern Church was the first to recognize James as canonical, in particular, Cyril of Jerusalem, Gregory Nazianzen, and Athanasius. The first in the West was Hilary.

James is also absent from the Muratorian Canon and the canon of the Syrian Church (until the 4th century). However, as was mentioned before, many books, accepted by the Church, are missing from the Muratorian Canon likely because of damage to the document. In addition, the Syrian Church hesitated to accept all the Catholic epistles, not just James.

In defense of James' inclusion among the inspired New Testament books, we may say the following. The good Greek employed by the author can be explained by use of an amanuensis. In addition, we have noted that the epistle's contents correspond to the character of James, the Lord's brother. The book's teaching closely corresponds with the Lord's teaching, which one might expect from one closely related to Him. In addition, we would expect a pseudonymic author to take advantage of James' reputation in the Early Church

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<sup>1358</sup>Bruce F. F. *The canon of Scripture*. – Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1988. – P. 259; Guthrie, p. 837.

<sup>1359</sup>Daids, p. 411-412; Geisler, Nix, p. 299; Metzger B. M. *The canon of the New Testament*. – Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987. – P. 232; Guthrie, p. 723-742.

<sup>1360</sup>We are fascinated (and disheartened) by the fact that this individual's name is not James, but Jacob (Ἰάκωβος), yet no English translator, to this author's knowledge, has dared to break convention by assigning him his proper name.

and personal connection with Jesus to make his forgery more convincing. Yet, these ties are not mentioned in the epistle.

The evidence seems adequate to attribute this work to James, the Lord's half-brother, who was a "pillar" of the Early Church (Gal 2:9; 1 Cor 15:7). Since he was part of the "apostolic circle," his epistle is worthy of inclusion in the canon of the Church. As far as his "conflict" with Paul's teaching, we will return to this issue at the end of this Appendix.

## Hebrews

For a long time now, the identity of the author of Hebrews has puzzled scholars and students of the Bible. For this very reason, the Western Fathers were hesitant about accepting its canonicity. Eusebius comments, "Some have rejected the Epistle to the Hebrews, saying that it is disputed by the church of Rome, on the ground that it was not written by Paul" (*Church history*, 3.3.5). From the beginning, however, the Eastern Church has ascribed Hebrews to Paul and therefore has recognized its inspired status.

One Eastern Father, Clement of Alexandria held the following view. He felt that Paul wrote the epistle in Hebrew, and that Luke translated it into Greek, which explains the stylistic differences between Hebrews and Paul's other epistles. Furthermore, Clement explains that Paul wrote Hebrews anonymously out of fear that Jews would immediately reject his message.<sup>1361</sup> Origen felt likewise, that the epistle contains Paul's thoughts, which were written down by one of his disciples.

In the West, Christian thinkers not only doubted Paul's authorship, but also objected to the teaching that the apostate could not be restored (Heb 6:4-6)<sup>1362</sup>. The first Western Father to acknowledge Hebrews was Hilary.<sup>1363</sup> The Western Church as a whole accepted it only due to the positive assessment of Augustine and Jerome (and possibly Athanasius).<sup>1364</sup>

Certain factors, however, weigh against Pauline authorship.<sup>1365</sup> It is unlike Paul to write an anonymous work – he customarily emphasizes his apostolic authority. In addition, in his epistles, Paul usually makes some personal comments, which are absent in Hebrews. Many typical Pauline themes are also absent: the resurrection of Christ, the believer's position "in Christ," the contrast of spirit and flesh, and others. Furthermore, such notables as Luther, Calvin and Erasmus questioned Pauline authorship of the epistle.<sup>1366</sup>

Nonetheless, even if we doubt Paul's authorship, convincing arguments exist for attributing Hebrews to one of his coworkers. Along with Clement's proposal that Luke translated Paul, others suggest the following possible authors: Luke, Clement of Rome, Barnabas, Silas, or Apollos.<sup>1367</sup>

In defense of Barnabas' authorship, we may note that Tertullian so taught. Additionally, Barnabas was a Levite, and so likely had a special interest in the temple order, a feature strongly stressed in this book. He was also called the "son of encouragement" (παρακλήσεως) (Acts 4:36), which corresponds to the author's parting words, "Bear with this word of exhortation (παρακλήσεως)" (Heb 13:22). In defense of Luke's authorship, we observe common stylistic features between Hebrews and the known writings of Luke. Silas was a coworker with Paul and also a Jew.<sup>1368</sup>

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<sup>1361</sup>See Eusebius, *Church history*, 6.14.1-2.

<sup>1362</sup>Von Campenhausen H. *The formation of the Christian Bible* / Trans. J. A. Baker. – Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1972. – P. 232. Luther also objected to this (Metzger, *The canon of the New Testament*, p. 243).

<sup>1363</sup>Metzger, *The canon of the New Testament*, p. 232; Guthrie, p. 670.

<sup>1364</sup>Geisler, Nix, p. 299.

<sup>1365</sup>Guthrie, p. 671-673.

<sup>1366</sup>*Ibid*, p. 671.

<sup>1367</sup>Bleek, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 2.115; noted in Shedd W. G. T. *Dogmatic theology* / A. W. Gomes, Ed. – 3rd ed. – Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Pub., 2003. – P. 149.

<sup>1368</sup>Guthrie, p. 674-678.

Another variant to consider is Apollos. He was well acquainted with Paul and was “mighty in the Scriptures” (Acts 18:24). He was also “an eloquent man” (ibid), which fits the style of this writing. His place of origin is also significant – Alexandria, where the Septuagint originated. All the quotations in Hebrews are from this Greek translation. Luther preferred this variant, yet the Church Fathers apparently did not.<sup>1369</sup>

Summing up the question, we may fairly assume that Hebrews was composed either by Paul or by one of his close associates. Therefore, in the strength of: (1) authorship by an apostle or close associate, (2) orthodox teaching of the epistle, and (3) acknowledgement by the Church, immediately in the East, and eventually in the West, the epistle to the Hebrews satisfies the criteria for canonicity. We recall the words of Origen: “The thoughts of the epistle are admirable, and not inferior to the acknowledged apostolic writings, anyone who carefully examines the apostolic text will admit” (from Eusebius, *Church history*, 6.25.12).

## 2-3 John

Concerning the canonization of the Second and Third Epistles of John, we encounter two problems.<sup>1370</sup> First, these letters are brief and read more like personal communications. Second, the author calls himself the “Elder,” which is atypical for an apostle. We are also aware that in the second century, Papias mentioned a certain “Elder John” in distinction from the apostle John: “...what Andrew or what Peter said, or what was said by Philip, or by Thomas, or by James, or by John, or by Matthew, or by any other of the disciples of the Lord, and what things Aristion and the presbyter John, the disciples of the Lord, say” (*Church history*, 3.39.4).

Some early Christian writers challenged it as well. Both Eusebius (*Church history*, 3.25.3) and Origen included it among the “disputed books.” Origen wrote, “(John) has left also an epistle of very few lines; perhaps also a second and third; but not all consider them genuine” (from *Church history*, 6.25.10). The Muratorian Canon acknowledges only two epistles of John, but does not indicate which two. Finally, Jerome ascribed 1 John to the apostle, but 2-3 John to the “Elder John.”<sup>1371</sup>

On the other hand, other Fathers defended Johannine authorship. Irenaeus, for example, attributed 2 John 7-8 to the apostle (*Against heresies*, 3.16.8). Dionysius of Alexandria considered 2-3 John apostolic (see *Church history*, 7.25.11). Eventually the entire Church embraced it, but the Syrian Church did so only in the sixth century.

Other arguments can be advanced. Papias once used the term “elder” in reference to an apostle (see *Church history*, 3.39.4). In addition, the literary style of these “lesser” epistles is identical to that of 1 John. Thus, in the strength of probable apostolic authorship and edifying instructional material, we are ready to accept 2-3 John as Scripture.

## Jude

The Epistle of Jude is also numbered among the disputed New Testament books for two main reasons. First, doubt exists concerning the epistle’s authorship and the author’s apostolic status. Second, to support his teaching, the author appeals to non-canonical, pseudepigraphical writings.<sup>1372</sup>

As far as the book’s origins, the author identifies himself as “Jude, a bond-servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James” (Jude 1). Therefore, he is not only a “bond-servant” of Jesus Christ, but also his half-brother (see Mark 6:3). According to verse 17, Jude did not consider himself an apostle, yet his association with the apostolic circle in Jerusalem entitles him to a special status. Tertullian called him an “apostle” (*On the adornment of women*, 1.3).

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<sup>1369</sup>Ibid, p. 679.

<sup>1370</sup>Geisler, Nix, p. 300; Allison, p. 44-45.

<sup>1371</sup>Guthrie, p. 884-885.

<sup>1372</sup>Moore also notes the brevity of the epistle (Moore, p. 510).

Attempts to prove pseudonymity for this epistle fail. As Zahn relates, who would have taken Jude as his pseudonym? Among those in the apostolic circle, he was among the least well-known and the least influential.<sup>1373</sup>

Along with Tertullian, other early Christian writers cite this epistle, but usually with reservations about its authorship. We observe this in the Muratorian Canon, and in the works of Clement of Alexandria (see *Church history*, 6.14.1), Eusebius (ibid, 3.25.3; 2.23.25), and Jerome (*Lives of illustrious men*, 4). The Syrian Church accepted it only in the sixth century. Luther challenged Jude's authorship as well. On the other hand, in papyrus 72 (3rd-4th c.) Jude is found together with other canonical epistles.<sup>1374</sup>

The second objection to Jude's canonicity is the author's use of non-canonical books. The first such instance is in verse 9: "But Michael the archangel, when he disputed with the devil and argued about the body of Moses, did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgment, but said, 'The Lord rebuke you!'" Although no one knows for certain where this citation comes from, some assume that it came from a lost portion of the pseudepigraphic book *Testament of Moses*.<sup>1375</sup> The second instance is in verses 14-15:

{It was} also about these men {that} Enoch, {in} the seventh {generation} from Adam, prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones, to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.

The passage in *1 Enoch* reads as follows:

"And behold! He cometh with ten thousands of <His> holy ones to execute judgement upon all, and to destroy <all> the ungodly, and to convict all flesh of all the works <of their ungodliness> which they have ungodly committed, <and of all the hard things which> ungodly sinners <have spoken> against Him" (*1 Enoch*, 1.9).

The Epistle of Jude and *1 Enoch* share other commonalities.<sup>1376</sup> Jude's mention of angels "who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode" (v. 6) reminds one of *1 Enoch's* claim that some angels left heaven and had sexual relations with women (*1 Enoch*, 12.4). We also note the following parallels: "judgment of the great day" (cf. Jude 6, *1 Enoch*, 10.6); "in eternal bonds under darkness" (cf. Jude 6, *1 Enoch*, 10.4-6); "...clouds without water... autumn trees without fruit... wandering stars" (cf. Jude 12-13, *1 Enoch*, 80.2-6); "the seventh from Adam" (cf. Jude 14, *1 Enoch*, 60.8; 93.3).

Due to Jude's apparent dependence on *1 Enoch*, Jerome relates the Church's reluctance to endorse it: "Jude the brother of James, left a short epistle which is reckoned among the seven catholic epistles, and because in it he quotes from the apocryphal book of Enoch it is rejected by many" (*Lives of illustrious men*, 4). Moore makes the interesting observation that early Christian writers began objecting to Jude's usage of *1 Enoch* not immediately, but only later, in the 4th century. Before that time, as we noted above, *1 Enoch* enjoyed great popularity in the Church.<sup>1377</sup>

Several explanations are offered for Jude's employment of pseudepigraphical sources. Most conservative commentators feel that Jude found accurate information in these documents, which he then included in his epistle.<sup>1378</sup> Yet, his endorsement of these portions does not imply that he considered the *Testament of Moses*

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<sup>1373</sup>Zahn, v. 2, p. 268.

<sup>1374</sup>Moore, p. 513-514; Davids, *The Catholic Epistles*, p. 414; Metzger, *The canon of the New Testament*, p. 243; Guthrie, p. 901-902.

<sup>1375</sup>DeSilva challenges this point (deSilva, p. 75-76).

<sup>1376</sup>Moore, p. 501-503; Davids, *The use of Second Temple traditions*, p. 416.

<sup>1377</sup>Moore, p. 515.

<sup>1378</sup>For example, deSilva, p. 27.

or *1 Enoch* canonical in their entirety. In the words of Zahn, Jude considered these passages “reliable witnesses of genuine tradition and true prophecy.”<sup>1379</sup>

Augustine, having carefully considered the question, comes to this conclusion:

For though there is some truth in these apocryphal writings, yet they contain so many false statements, that they have no canonical authority. We cannot deny that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, left some divine writings, for this is asserted by the Apostle Jude in his canonical epistle. But it is not without reason that these writings have no place in that canon of Scripture which was preserved in the temple of the Hebrew people by the diligence of successive priests (*City of God*, 15.23.4).

Other biblical examples exist where non-canonical works are cited, yet there is no indication that the entire non-canonical work is inspired (see Num 21:14-15, 27-30; Ezra 6:1-5; Acts 17:28; 1 Cor 15:33; 2 Tim 3:8; Tit 1:12)<sup>1380</sup>.

On the other hand, deSilva points out an important detail. Jude appeals to the words of “Enoch” as a genuine prophecy and attributes this prediction to Enoch himself, the “seventh from Adam.”<sup>1381</sup> Since the *1 Enoch* is the only source of the “prophetic ministry” of Enoch, on what basis could Jude distinguish genuine material in the book from legendary? Beckwith answers that Jude himself believed the entire book to be legendary, but nonetheless found it useful, since his readers valued it.<sup>1382</sup> Yet, judging from the text, it seems clear that Jude himself accepted “Enoch’s” prophecy as true.

Finally, one must consider the relationship between Jude and 2 Peter, since their contents are nearly identical. Scholars usually believe that Peter borrowed material from Jude. Yet, such thinkers ignore some important facts. First, Jude quotes 2 Peter 3:3, ascribing the passage to an apostle: “But you, beloved, ought to remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, that they were saying to you, ‘In the last time there will be mockers, following after their own ungodly lusts’” (Jude 17-18). Second, in 2 Peter the appearance of false teachers is a future event, while in Jude it is a present threat.<sup>1383</sup> Third, it is more probable that Jude would appeal to a more authoritative source, than that Peter would appeal to a less authoritative one.

Regarding the canonicity of Jude, we do not see any insurmountable obstacles to its acceptance. Jude served in the context of the apostolic circle. His teaching is in full agreement with the teaching of the apostle Peter, and is therefore orthodox. Eventually, the entire Church embraced this epistle.

Regarding Jude’s use of pseudepigraphical writings, this observation does not violate any criterion for canonicity, assuming the fact that Jude accepted those borrowed passages as genuine history. His employment of those passages does not affect the canonicity of his epistle as much as it does the canonicity of these quoted works. Yet, we have already ruled out their canonicity based on their failure to meet the required criteria. The question of why Jude employed *1 Enoch*, and possibly the *Testament of Moses*, remains an enigma.

## Revelation

The matter of Revelation’s canonicity resonates with the experience of several other disputed books, in that questions arose concerning both the book’s authorship, and its contents.

As far as the origin of the Apocalypse, on the one hand, many early commentators supported the view of Johannine authorship.<sup>1384</sup> We can list the following: Justin Martyr (*Dialogue*, 82), Irenaeus (*Against heresies*,

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<sup>1379</sup>Zahn, v. 2, p. 270.

<sup>1380</sup>Schnabel, p. 20; Geisler, Nix, p. 300; Guthrie, p. 916.

<sup>1381</sup>deSilva, p. 74.

<sup>1382</sup>Beckwith, p. 402-403.

<sup>1383</sup>Guthrie, p. 921.

<sup>1384</sup>Ibid, p. 930-931.

4.30.4), Tertullian (*Against Marcion*, 3.14), Clement of Alexandria (*Stromata*, 6.13), Origen (see Eusebius, *Church history*, 6.25.9), Melito (ibid, 4.26.2), and Theophilus of Antioch (ibid, 4.24.1). The Muratorian Canon lists it as well. Eusebius writes about persecuted believers in Gaul in the second century who call Revelation 22:11 “Scripture” (ibid, 5.1.58).

Donald Guthrie joins in the defense of Johannine authorship as well.<sup>1385</sup> The author writes with authority, expecting his words to be heeded. He speaks of Jesus as the “Logos,” i.e., the “Word” (cf. Jn 1:1 and Rev 19:13), a “Shepherd” (cf. John 10:1 and Rev 7:17), and the “Lamb of God” (cf. Jn 1:29 and Rev 5:6).

On the other hand, Dionysius, bishop of Alexandria, rejects this claim (see Eusebius, *Church history*, 7.25.7ff). Because of stylistic differences, he declined to attribute the book to the “disciple that Jesus loved.” He also noted that in John’s Gospel and Epistles, the author does not identify himself, whereas in Revelation, he does. Additionally, we lack in Revelation themes characteristic of John, like “light,” “life,” “love,” and others. The Greek of Revelation is much different as well. Therefore, Dionysius thought that another individual named John wrote the book.

Following the lead of Dionysius, for some time the Eastern Church refrained from acknowledging the Apocalypse as Scripture. It is absent from the canonical lists of the Council of Laodicea, Cyril of Jerusalem (*Catechetical lectures*, 4.36), and Gregory Nazianzen (*Theological verses*, 12). Eusebius also expressed doubts (*Church history*, 3.25.2-4; 3.3.2). Eventually, Athanasius recognized it (*Festal letter*, 39), as well as John of Damascus (*Exact exposition of the Orthodox faith*, 4.17), and then the entire Eastern Church (except for the Syrian branch – only in the sixth century).

As far as doctrinal questions, some in the Early Church (especially in the East) objected to the teaching of a material, thousand-year messianic reign, thinking that participation in an earthly kingdom was unbecoming for saints. Eastern theologians also feared that such a teaching would lend support to the Montanist movement, which was threatening the Church at that time.<sup>1386</sup>

However, for those who do not reject the possibility of an earthly reign of Christ, such an objection is unconvincing. Concerning the difference in literary style, one could postulate that John wrote in an apocalyptic style in conformity with similar works, or, possibly, an amanuensis was involved in the composition of John’s other writings.<sup>1387</sup> It seems that there are no convincing reasons to exclude Revelation from the New Testament canon.

## 2. Books Not Accepted as Canonical

### Didache

The *Didache*, which means “Teaching of the Twelve Apostles,” claims to contain the actual teaching of the original disciples of Jesus. Two themes are highlighted – proper behavior and proper church order. It was penned in the mid-second century.

The Early Church valued this book to the point that Clement of Alexandria and Origen considered it Scripture.<sup>1388</sup> On the other hand, Eusebius placed it in the category of “rejected writings” (*Church history*, 3.25.4). In the opinion of Harnack, “It never could give the same impression of unassailable authenticity as did works Apostolic in form and title.”<sup>1389</sup>

Also important – the *Didache* is anonymous, which also arouses suspicion, since we cannot confirm that the book actually contains the teachings of the Twelve. We must know who wrote the book and where he

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<sup>1385</sup>Ibid, p. 935-937.

<sup>1386</sup>Geisler, Nix, p. 300-310.

<sup>1387</sup>Guthrie, p. 940.

<sup>1388</sup>Bruce, p. 191, 194; Metzger, B. M. A textual commentary on the Greek New Testament. – 2nd ed. – London; New York: United Bible Societies, 1994. – P. 132-133, 187; Geisler, Nix, p. 314.

<sup>1389</sup>Harnack A. von. The origin of the New Testament. – Covent Garden, W.C.: Williams & Norgate, 1925. – P. 175.

gathered his information in order to be convinced of its apostolic origin. We cannot accept a claim to apostolic authorship without substantiation. Additionally, a study of the book will reveal that its teaching departs from the New Testament norm. Nonetheless, the *Didache* is valuable as a historical record of the condition of the Church in the second century.

### Epistle of Barnabas

The *Epistle of "Barnabas"* resembles the Epistle to the Hebrews in that it discusses the relationship of the Old Testament to Christianity. Unlike Hebrews, though, it abounds in allegorical treatment of the Old Testament. Guthrie, commenting on the quality of the work, claims that in comparison with Hebrews "*The Epistle of Barnabas* is greatly inferior in spiritual grasp, in historical appreciation and in breadth of understanding of the problems with which it deals."<sup>1390</sup>

In the Early Church, Clement of Alexandria and Origen considered it Scripture, and Codex Sinaiticus (4<sup>th</sup> c.) places it after the Book of Revelation.<sup>1391</sup> Eusebius, however, delegated it to the category of "rejected writings" (*Church history*, 3.25.4).

Andrews comments on the authorship of *Barnabas*, "The traditional view which ascribes the book to the Apostle Barnabas is very improbable, and has now been almost universally rejected."<sup>1392</sup> Andrews backs up his view by observing that the author, supposedly being a Levite, nonetheless makes mistakes in his description of Jewish rituals. In addition, the book conveys a certain anti-Semitic tone. Noted expert in textual criticism, Brooke Foss Westcott, also expresses concern: "While the antiquity of the Epistle is firmly established, its Apostolicity is more than questionable."<sup>1393</sup>

In light of the inferior quality and doubtful apostolic authorship of this work, we refrain from including it in the canon of Holy Scripture.

### Pastor (Shepherd) of Hermas

The *Pastor of Hermas* was composed in the mid-second century. The author claims to be Hermas, whom Paul greeted in Romans 16:14. Origen and Jerome were ready to attribute the book to Hermas, but the author reveals that he lived during the time of Clement (*Visions*, 2.4). In addition, according to the Muratorian Canon, the author's brother was Pius, bishop of Rome, who lived in the second century.<sup>1394</sup>

The book has three parts. The first, "Visions," relates the visions of Hermas when he saw the Church in the guise of an old woman, who revealed certain mysteries to him. At the end of this section, the "Pastor" (i.e., "Shepherd") appears to Hermas, gives him "Commandments," and relates to him certain "Parables," which are the designations for the last two sections of the book.<sup>1395</sup> Rife describes his overall impression of the book with the words, "The Shepherd is the work of a naive mind, slow style is rambling, confused and often tiresome."<sup>1396</sup>

*Pastor of Hermas* stresses repentance and moral perfection. It warns against sinning after water baptism:

If any one is tempted by the devil, and sins after that great and holy calling, in which the Lord has called His people to everlasting life, he has opportunity to repent but once. But if he should sin frequently after this, and then repent, to such a man his repentance will be of no avail; for with difficulty will he live (*Commandments*, 4.3).

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<sup>1390</sup>Guthrie, p. 676.

<sup>1391</sup>Geisler, Nix, p. 313; Metzger, *The canon of the New Testament*, p. 236; Andrews, p. 105.

<sup>1392</sup>Andrews, p. 106.

<sup>1393</sup>Noted in Geisler, Nix, p. 313.

<sup>1394</sup>Metzger, *The canon of the New Testament*, p. 64.

<sup>1395</sup>Andrews, p. 107.

<sup>1396</sup>Rife J. M. *The nature and origin of the New Testament*. – New York: Philosophical Library, 1975. – P. 110.



The Early Church held this book in high regard. Some regarded it as Scripture: Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Irenaeus.<sup>1397</sup> For example, Irenaeus quoted Commandment 3.1 with the formula “the Scripture declared” (*Against heresies*, 4.20.2). Codex Sinaiticus placed it after the Book of Revelation, along with several other works.<sup>1398</sup>

Eusebius acknowledged that congregations read *Pastor of Hermas*, but nonetheless he categorized it with the “rejected writings” (*Church history*, 3.25.4).<sup>1399</sup> Jerome felt it was useful for reading, but the Muratonian Canon advised not employing it in public worship.<sup>1400</sup>

In light of the late date of the book, its pseudonymic authorship, and its inferior instructional quality, *Pastor of Hermas* is unqualified for acceptance into the New Testament canon.

## 1 Clement

Clement served as bishop of the church at Rome at the conclusion of the first century. All agree as to the epistle’s genuine authorship. Here, Clement reproves the church at Corinth for their disrespect of leaders and summons the congregation to unity. To substantiate his teaching, Clement frequently cites Paul’s letter to the same Corinthian congregation.

Quite a few early Fathers speak well of Clement and his epistle. Origen calls him a “disciple of the apostles” (*de Principiis*, 2.3.6), while Clement of Alexandria acknowledges him as an “apostle” (*Stromata*, 4.17). Irenaeus wrote of him that “he had seen the blessed apostles, and had been conversant with them, might be said to have the preaching of the apostles still echoing [in his ears], and their traditions before his eyes” (*Against heresies*, 3.3.3). The Alexandrian Codex of the New Testament (4th c.) locates *1 Clement* among the New Testament books.<sup>1401</sup> Finally, Eusebius weighs in:

There is extant an epistle of this Clement which is acknowledged to be genuine... We know that this epistle also has been publicly used in a great many churches both in former times and in our own (*Church history*, 3.16).

However, although Clement was familiar with the apostles and their teaching, his epistle was not written under their supervision or with their endorsement. Therefore, *1 Clement* lacks the main criterion for canonicity – apostolic authorship. Moreover, in this work we encounter a most strange phenomenon – recognition of the existence of the phoenix (*1 Clement*, 25). Finally, Andrews provides this assessment of the epistle’s overall quality:

It cannot be said that the Epistle of Clement possesses a very great intrinsic value of its own. The style is diffuse and tedious, and the writer’s ideas rarely rise above the commonplace. The theology is conventional, and shows but little appreciation of the great truths which constitute the essence of the teaching of St. Paul.<sup>1402</sup>

## Gospel of Thomas

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<sup>1397</sup>Andrews, p. 107; Metzger, *The canon of the New Testament*, p. 188; Sundberg A. C. *The making of the New Testament canon* // Laymon C. M.. *The interpreter's one volume commentary*. – Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1971. P. 1221.

<sup>1398</sup>Geisler, Nix, p. 313.

<sup>1399</sup>Andrews, p. 107.

<sup>1400</sup>Metzger, *The canon of the New Testament*, p. 188.

<sup>1401</sup>Geisler, Nix, p. 313-314.

<sup>1402</sup>Andrews, p. 102.

The *Gospel of Thomas*, written no later than the second century, contains 114 sayings attributed to the Lord Jesus. In all, 80 of these resemble sayings in the canonical Gospels, yet with some variation, for example: "...the kingdom is inside of you" (v. 3), and, "Jesus said, 'Let him who seeks continue seeking until he finds. When he finds, he will become troubled. When he becomes troubled, he will be astonished, and he will rule over the All'" (v. 2).<sup>1403</sup>

Besides these 80, the remainder of the sayings are absent from the New Testament. Some commentators hold the view, however, that some of these remaining sayings may be the genuine words of the Savoir as well.<sup>1404</sup> Koester defends this view: "At least four apocryphal gospels belong to a very early stage in the development of gospel literature – a stage that is comparable to the sources which were used by the gospels of the NT."<sup>1405</sup>

With rare exception, though, the Church Fathers were united in the stance against these spurious gospels. Origen called the *Gospel of Thomas* heretical (see *Homily on Luke 1*).<sup>1406</sup> Cyril of Jerusalem stated, "The Manichæans also wrote a Gospel according to Thomas, which being tintured with the fragrance of the evangelic title corrupts the souls of the simple sort" (*Catechetical lectures*, 4.36). We hear this from Eusebius:

...such books as the Gospels of Peter, of Thomas, of Matthias, or of any others besides them... the character of the style is at variance with apostolic usage, and both the thoughts and the purpose of the things that are related in them are so completely out of accord with true orthodoxy that they clearly show themselves to be the fictions of heretics (*Church history*, 3.25.6-7).

We observe many instances, where sayings of Jesus parallel no New Testament passage and contain strange, even idiotic ideas, which in no way can be attributed to the Son of God. Consider the following examples:

Jesus said, "Blessed is the lion which becomes man when consumed by man; and cursed is the man whom the lion consumes, and the lion becomes man" (7).

Simon Peter said to him, "Let Mary leave us, for women are not worthy of life." Jesus said, "I myself shall lead her in order to make her male, so that she too may become a living spirit resembling you males. For every woman who will make herself male will enter the kingdom of heaven" (114).

The disciples said to Jesus, "We know that you will depart from us. Who is to be our leader?" Jesus said to them, "Wherever you are, you are to go to James the righteous, for whose sake heaven and earth came into being" (12).

Jesus said, "The kingdom of the father is like a certain man who wanted to kill a powerful man. In his own house he drew his sword and stuck it into the wall in order to find out whether his hand could carry through. Then he slew the powerful man" (98).

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<sup>1403</sup>Gospel of Thomas, trans. Thomas Lambdin. <https://www.marquette.edu> (subsequent quotations as well).

<sup>1404</sup>Noted in Ehrman B. D. *Lost Christianities*. – Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003. – P. 55; Koester H. *Apocryphal and canonical gospels* // *Harvard Theological Review*. 1980. 73 (1-2). P. 116; Piper O. A. *Change of perspective: gnostic and canonical gospels* // *Interpretation*. 1962. 16(4). P. 414.

<sup>1405</sup>Koester, p. 112.

<sup>1406</sup>Ehrman, p. 13.

The fact is that the *Gospel of Thomas* has strong leanings toward Gnosticism.<sup>1407</sup> It teaches that people existed as spirits before their physical birth and that the goal of the spiritual life is to return to that condition. The characteristic feature of God's kingdom is the restoration of unity in the universe. One obtains salvation through knowing divine mysteries, revealed by Jesus through the Word, and by knowing one's true position before God: "When you come to know yourselves, then you will become known, and you will realize that it is you who are the sons of the living father" (3).

Furthermore, the *Gospel of Thomas* promotes disregard of the body: "Jesus said, 'If the flesh came into being because of spirit, it is a wonder. But if spirit came into being because of the body, it is a wonder of wonders. Indeed, I am amazed at how this great wealth has made its home in this poverty'" (29). This "Gospel" errs not only in what it teaches, but also in what it fails to teach. There is no mention of repentance, sin, the God of Israel, salvation through the death and resurrection of Christ, or the earthly reign of Messiah.

Ehrman summarizes the teaching of the *Gospel of Thomas*:

And so, salvation for this Gospel of Thomas, which presupposes a unification of all things so that there is no up and down, in and out, male and female, requires that all divine spirits return to their place of origin... This gospel assumes that some humans contain the divine spark that has been separated from the realm of God and entrapped in this impoverished world of matter, and that it needs to be delivered by learning the secret teachings from above, which Jesus himself brings.<sup>1408</sup>

In light of all that has been said, it presents us no difficulty to join the Early Church in rejecting the *Gospel of Thomas*. It is actually amazing that some modern commentators should attribute some of these sayings to the Lord Himself. It is perfectly clear that this publication is an attempt by Gnostics to promote their teaching through false sayings of Christ. The book records some actual sayings of Christ in order to deceive the reader into thinking that the remainder of the citations are legitimate as well.

### **Gospel of Truth**

Along with the *Gospel of Thomas*, the so-called *Gospel of Truth* was found in the ancient library of Nag Hammadi in Egypt among other Gnostic publications. Its contents fully correspond to that heretical teaching.<sup>1409</sup> The Gnostic coloring of the following excerpt is clear:

In this way the Word of the Father goes forth in the totality, as the fruit [of] his heart and an impression of his will. But it supports the totality; it chooses there and also receives the impression of the totality, purifying them, bringing them back into the Father, into the Mother, Jesus of the infinite sweetness. The Father reveals his bosom. – Now his bosom is the Holy Spirit (23-24).<sup>1410</sup>

According to this "Gospel," humanity's problem is ignorance of its true relationship with God and position before Him. People fear God's wrath for no reason. This "Gospel" proclaims, "Ignorance of the Father brought about anguish and terror; and the anguish grew solid like a fog, so that no one was able to see. For this reason

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<sup>1407</sup>Schröter J. Apocryphal and canonical Gospels within the development of the New Testament canon // Early Christianity. 2016. 7(1). P. 36, 58-64.

<sup>1408</sup>Ehrman, p. 64.

<sup>1409</sup>Piper O. A., p. 403-407; Geisler, Nix, p. 308; Pagels E. Beyond belief: The secret Gospel of Thomas. – New York: Random House, 2005. – P. 121; Ehrman, p. xii, 127-128.

<sup>1410</sup>Attridge H. W., MacRae G. W. The Gospel of Truth // J. M. Robinson (Ed.), The Nag Hammadi library in English. – 4th rev. ed. – Leiden; NY: E. J. Brill, 1996. – P. 43.

error became powerful” (17).<sup>1411</sup> Jesus, then, appeared to reveal humanity’s true spiritual conditions – one can find God within oneself.

We may well understand why Irenaeus responded to this writing so caustically: “Indeed, they have arrived at such a pitch of audacity, as to entitle their comparatively recent writing ‘the Gospel of Truth,’ though it agrees in nothing with the Gospels of the Apostles, so that they have really no Gospel which is not full of blasphemy” (*Against heresies*, 3.11.9).

### **Gospel of Peter**

The *Gospel of Peter* presently exists only in fragments. Yet, even in the limited material still available, we see several significant deviations from the Four Gospels.<sup>1412</sup> First, Herod alone was responsible for Jesus’ crucifixion – Pilate is totally vindicated. Second, the Gospel advances an anti-Semitic polemic. Third, Jesus is presented in a docetic form, i.e., His humanity is rejected. For example, Jesus experienced no pain on the cross. Fourth, the brothers and sisters of Jesus were from Joseph’s first wife. Finally, we read this fantastic version of Jesus’ resurrection:

And in the night in which the Lord’s day was drawing on, as the soldiers kept guard two by two in a watch, there was a great voice in the heaven; and they saw the heavens opened, and two men descend from thence with great light and approach the tomb. And that stone which was put at the door rolled of itself... they see three men come forth from the tomb, and two of them supporting one, and a cross following them: and of the two the head reached unto the heaven, but the head of him that was led by them overpassed the heavens. And they heard a voice from the heavens, saying, Thou hast preached to them that sleep. And a response was heard from the cross, Yea (9-10).

Eusebius makes a proper evaluation of such “Gospels” by saying,

...we might be able to know both these works and those that are cited by the heretics under the name of the apostles, including, for instance, such books as the Gospels of Peter, of Thomas, of Matthias, or of any others besides them... which no one belonging to the succession of ecclesiastical writers has deemed worthy of mention in his writings (*Church history*, 3.25.6).

### **Gospel of the Hebrews**

The *Gospel of the Hebrews* is a missing document, excerpts of which we find only in the works of the Church Fathers, namely: Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Cyril of Jerusalem, Eusebius, and Jerome. Irenaeus informs us that the Ebionites used this “Gospel” in order to glorify the Law and undermine the teachings of Paul. Jerome claims that some in the Church felt that this was the original copy of the Gospel of Matthew in Hebrew before its translation into Greek (yet, its contents differ).<sup>1413</sup> Eusebius gave this assessment: “Among these some have placed also the Gospel according to the Hebrews, with which those of the Hebrews that have accepted Christ are especially delighted. And all these may be reckoned among the disputed books” (*Church history*, 3.25.5).

Certain features of this book are worth noting.<sup>1414</sup> After His resurrection, Jesus appeared to James, who had made a vow not to eat from the time of the Last Supper (at which he was supposedly present) until he saw

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<sup>1411</sup>Ibid, p. 40.

<sup>1412</sup>Koester, p. 126; Schröter, p. 40-42; Geisler, Nix, p. 303-304; Ehrman, p. 15; Andrews, p. 113.

<sup>1413</sup>Geisler, Nix, p. 304-305, 315; Metzger, The canon of the New Testament, p. 169.

<sup>1414</sup>Andrews, p. 109-110; Geisler, Nix, p. 304-305.

the risen Christ. Jesus refers to the Holy Spirit as His mother. He objected to being baptized by John the Baptist, since He had no sin to be cleansed from. The message of the Voice from heaven during Jesus' baptism differs markedly from the true Gospel accounts.

It is clear that the narrative and teaching of this work deviates from the Gospel norm. In addition, it is difficult to consider a book canonical that is no longer in circulation.

### Other Apocryphal Gospels

The ***Gospel of Phillip*** was discovered in the ancient library of Nag Hammadi in Egypt among other Gnostic publications. Ehrman characterizes its contents as "Gnostic mystical accounts,"<sup>1415</sup> and as "a seemingly random series of reflections and dialogues of Jesus and the disciples about the secrets of the universe, the meaning of the world, and our place in it."<sup>1416</sup>

This apocryphal work rejects the teaching of Christ's virgin birth and physical resurrection: "Some said, 'Mary conceived by the holy spirit.' They are in error. They do not know what they are saying" (55); and, "Those who say that the lord died first and (then) rose up are in error, for he rose up first and (then) died" (56). There may be an allusion to a romance between Jesus and Mary Magdalene: "And the companion of the [...] Mary Magdalene. [...] loved] her more than [all] the disciples [and used to] kiss her [often] on her [...]" (63).<sup>1417</sup>

The ***Gospel of Nicodemus*** consists of two parts. The first part, the *Acts of Pilate*, tells of Jesus' trial before Pilate prior to His crucifixion. The second part gives a detailed account of Jesus' alleged sojourn to Hades. Here is a brief excerpt from this imaginative narrative:

Hades, answering, said to Prince Satan: Who is he that is so powerful, when he is a man in fear of death? For all the powerful of the earth are kept in subjection by my power, whom thou hast brought into subjection by thy power. If then, thou art powerful, what is that man Jesus like, who, though fearing death, withstands thy power? If he is so powerful in humanity, verily I say unto thee, he is all-powerful in divinity, and his power can no one resist. And when he says that he fears death, he wishes to lay hold on thee, and woe will be to thee to the ages of eternity (4).

The ***Protoevangelium of James*** is a fabricated story about the childhood and later life of Mary. The obvious goal of this work was to glorify Mary and advance unbiblical doctrines about her. According to this narrative, Mary remained a virgin her entire life. The brothers and sisters of Jesus are Joseph's children by his first wife. Moreover, Jesus' birth was supernatural – He passed through the birth canal without leaving any marks of the birth process. Finally, at the moment of Jesus' birth, time stood still for several seconds, and everyone froze in place.<sup>1418</sup>

This book borrows freely from other, biblical books. For example, like Elkanah and Hannah, Joachim and Anna, Mary's parents, attempted for years to conceive a child without success. In addition, like Moses, Elijah, and Jesus, Joachim fasted 40 days in the wilderness to receive this miracle. Like Sampson, an angel announced the future birth of Mary first to the wife, and then to the husband. When Mary was three years old, Joachim and Anna brought her to the temple to live there in imitation of the story of Samuel. Finally, as in the story of Elijah, an angel fed Mary.

The ***Infancy Gospel of Thomas*** allegedly relates an expanded history of Jesus' childhood. As a youth, Jesus supposedly did many miracles, some of which, however, do not fit the biblical picture of Jesus Christ. For example, in violation of the Sabbath and in spite of Joseph's warning, He formed birds out of clay, and then

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<sup>1415</sup>Ehrman, p. xi.

<sup>1416</sup>Ibid, p. 122.

<sup>1417</sup>Attridge, The Nag Hammadi library in English.

<sup>1418</sup>Ehrman, p. 207-210.

made them fly. He rebuked people who offended him, with the result that they died.<sup>1419</sup> The matter came to the point that Joseph told Mary, “From this time we shall not let him go out of the house, since everyone who opposes him is struck dead” (49). On the other hand, Jesus does many “good” miracles, like healing the sick and raising the dead.

Andrews critiques this book as follows: “The miracles are generally puerile displays of magical power, and lack the ethical motive which is so prominent in the Gospels of the NT.”<sup>1420</sup> Commenting on a passage from this work, Irenaeus wrote, “Besides the above [misrepresentations], they adduce an unspeakable number of apocryphal and spurious writings, which they themselves have forged, to bewilder the minds of foolish men, and of such as are ignorant of the Scriptures of truth” (*Against heresies*, 1.20.1).

The ***Gospel of the Egyptians*** exists today only in fragments. It promotes asceticism and a demeaning attitude toward the human body and the birth of children. We also observe in it a distorted understanding of the Trinity: the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are only one Person.<sup>1421</sup> Origen considered the book heretical (see *Homily on Luke 1*).<sup>1422</sup>

The ***Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*** provides a fabricated description of the birth and early history of both Mary and Jesus. Its distinctive feature, according to Andrews, is that it “contains more mythical stories, probably, than any other Gospel.”<sup>1423</sup> We will cite just a few of many examples.<sup>1424</sup>

The light from God so shone in the cave, that neither by day nor night was light wanting as long as the blessed Mary was there. And there she brought forth a son... And as soon as He was born, He stood upon His feet (13).

And on the third day after the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, the most blessed Mary went forth out of the cave, and entering a stable, placed the child in the stall, and the ox and the ass adored Him (14).

Then the child Jesus, with a joyful countenance, reposing in the bosom of His mother, said to the palm: O tree, bend thy branches, and refresh my mother with thy fruit. And immediately at these words the palm bent its top down to the very feet of the blessed Mary; and they gathered from it fruit (20).

The contents of the ***Gospel of the Nazarites*** overlap in many cases with the Synoptic Gospels except that some details are exaggerated, sometimes grossly. For example, the story of the man Jesus healed of the withered hand is expanded. When Jesus prayed on the cross, “Father forgive them, for they do not know what they do,” thousands of people repented on the spot. The book also offers an explanation as to how the apostle John became acquainted with the high priest. The conversation between Jesus and the “rich young ruler” (Lk 18) is also expanded.<sup>1425</sup>

The ***Gospel of the Ebionites*** supports the heretical teaching of the Ebionites, Jews who acknowledged Jesus as Messiah, but rejected His Deity. The Ebionites keep the Law of Moses, refrain from eating meat, and deny that John the Baptist ate locusts.<sup>1426</sup>

The ***Correspondence of Jesus and Abgar*** supposedly relates how King Abgar of Edessa appealed to Jesus for healing, and Jesus subsequently promised to send Abgar one of His disciples. After Jesus’ ascension,

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<sup>1419</sup>Ehrman, p. 205; Andrews, p. 123; Geisler, Nix, p. 302.

<sup>1420</sup>Andrews, p. 123.

<sup>1421</sup>Geisler, Nix, p. 305; Ehrman, p. xi; Metzger, *The canon of the New Testament*, p. 171.

<sup>1422</sup>Metzger, *The canon of the New Testament*, p. 171.

<sup>1423</sup>Andrews, p. 121.

<sup>1424</sup>Attridge, *The Nag Hammadi library in English*.

<sup>1425</sup>Geisler, Nix, p. 306.

<sup>1426</sup>*Ibid*, p. 302-303; Ehrman, p. 102.

Thomas sent Thaddeus, “one of the seventy,” who healed Abgar and preached the gospel to the people of Edessa. None other than the noted historian Eusebius retold this story (*Church history*, 1.13.1-20).

However, Andrews offers the following rebuttal: “There seems to be no possibility of doubt that the correspondence is fictitious. The first trace of Christianity in Edessa is not found till about A.D. 200. The letters were probably written in the third century by an Edessan Christian who was anxious to bring the origin of his Church into relation with Christ.”<sup>1427</sup>

Our final example will be the ***Gospel of Mary (Magdalene)***.<sup>1428</sup> According to this narrative, Jesus revealed certain “truths” to His disciples during the time between His resurrection and ascension. After that period, the disciples appealed to Mary Magdalene to learn what Jesus had revealed to her. The “truths” that the disciples thus learned correspond more to a Gnostic worldview, than to a Christian one.

For example, Jesus’ teaching on sin is as follows: “There is no sin, but it is you who make sin when you do the things that are like the nature of adultery, which is called ‘sin.’” (7), and, “[Matter gave birth to] a passion that has no equal, which proceeded from (something) contrary to nature. Then there arise a disturbance in the whole body” (8).<sup>1429</sup> Salvation comes when the soul overcomes the evil powers that seek to prevent its elevation.

In summary, we can confidently say that not one of these Apocryphal Gospels can demonstrate its apostolic origin, antiquity, orthodoxy or endorsement by the Church. Their spiritual quality is far below the New Testament standard. We reject, therefore, their inclusion in the canon of Scripture.

### Acts of Paul

The ***Acts of Paul*** contains four sections, which are sometimes found in separate volumes: *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, *Letter of the Corinthians to Paul*, *Third Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*, and *Martyrdom of the Holy Apostle Paul*.

The *Acts of Paul and Thecla* claims to narrate the ministry of Paul in Iconium, where a certain young woman named Thecla heard his teaching. When she heard Paul instruct about the necessity of celibacy to qualify for the resurrection, she broke off her engagement with her future husband. This caused an uproar, and, as a result, Paul was arrested and expelled from the city. The authorities attempted several times to execute Thecla, but God delivered her each time. Subsequently, Thecla became a disciple of Paul and preacher of the gospel, remaining a virgin her entire life.

In the second section, the Corinthian church notifies Paul that two elders had come to them, teaching that: God is not almighty, there is no resurrection of the dead, humans are not God’s creation, Jesus was not human and was not born of Mary, and angels created the world. In Paul’s supposed *Third Epistle to the Corinthians* (which he mentions in 2 Cor 2:3-4), he refutes these errors. In the *Martyrdom of the Holy Apostle Paul*, when Nero beheaded Paul, milk flowed from his neck instead of blood.<sup>1430</sup>

In assessing the *Acts of Paul*, one must consider several factors. First, the work promotes the false teaching that celibacy is required for obtaining the resurrection. Second, in one episode in the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, Paul tells a lie in saying that he does not know Thecla. Third, Eusebius places this work among the “rejected writings” (*Church history*. 3.25.4). Finally, Tertullian writes that a certain elder in Asia Minor, out of admiration for Paul, wrote the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, and was subsequently removed from the church office (*On baptism*, 17). We join Tertullian in his rejection of not only *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, but this work in its entirety.

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<sup>1427</sup> Andrews, p. 132.

<sup>1428</sup> Schröter, p. 37-38; Ehrman, p. xi; [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel\\_of\\_Mary](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Mary).

<sup>1429</sup> Attridge, *The Nag Hammadi library in English*.

<sup>1430</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts\\_of\\_Paul](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_Paul); Ehrman, p. 211.

## Other Apocryphal Acts

The ***Acts of Andrew*** tells of Andrew's martyrdom under Ægeates, the Roman proconsul in Asia. The proconsul was infuriated with Andrew, because he refused to worship idols and turned others away from the practice. After brutally torturing him, Ægeates crucified the apostle. During his crucifixion, which lasted three days, Andrew was able to smile and to preach to the people assembled there, in number about twenty thousand. The book describes his condition on the cross as follows:

And when also on the fourth day they beheld his nobleness, and the unweariedness of his intellect, and the multitude of his words, and the serviceableness of his exhortations, and the steadfastness of his soul, and the sobriety of his spirit, and the fixedness of his mind, and the perfection of his reason, they were enraged against Ægeates.

On the fourth day, the people insisted that Ægeates release Andrew, but the latter refused release, prayed to God, and departed magnificently:

...he became in the sight of all glad and exulting; for an exceeding splendour like lightning coming forth out of heaven shone down upon him, and so encircled him, that in consequence of such brightness mortal eyes could not look upon him at all. And the dazzling light remained about the space of half an hour. And when he had thus spoken and glorified the Lord still more, the light withdrew itself, and he gave up the ghost.

This incredible tale is undoubtedly legendary. Eusebius correctly assigned it to the group of "rejected writings" (*Church history*, 3.25.6-7).

Another writing classified as an Apocryphal Acts is the ***Acts of the Holy Apostle Thomas***.<sup>1431</sup> According to this legend, Thomas and Jesus are twins. After the latter's ascension to heaven, the apostles gathered in Jerusalem to determine the future ministry of each by casting lots. Thomas was appointed for India. Although he initially refused the mission, he received a vision of Christ confirming his calling. It turned out that Thomas was sold into slavery to India, and so ended up in that land after all. There he had many adventures, successfully evangelizing the people and performing many miracles. Due to the conversion of the king's wife, though, he was martyred.

Historians are, for the most part, willing to accept the historicity of Thomas' mission to India. At the same time, the theology of the *Acts of Thomas* deviates from the biblical norm. There is a definite leaning toward asceticism. For example, in one episode, Jesus appears to a new bride and advises her not to consummate her marriage. Some commentators warn of this trend as well:

(The book) is designed to show that a source for supernatural power, and in fact for all right relationship with God, comes from living the life of renunciation, free from sexual activity of any kind, even within the context of marriage.<sup>1432</sup>

The other stories in the book are all written to support the view that marriage is sinful, and celibacy is the only right mode of life.<sup>1433</sup>

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<sup>1431</sup>Ehrman, p. xiii, 40-41; Andrews, p. 127-128; [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts\\_of\\_Thomas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_Thomas).

<sup>1432</sup>Ehrman, p. 40.

<sup>1433</sup>Andrews, p. 127.



In spite of the possible historical accuracy of Thomas' mission to India, due to its theological irregularities, the Acts of Thomas is nonetheless an unacceptable addition to the New Testament Scriptures.

The publication ***The Acts of Holy Apostle and Evangelist, John the Theologian***<sup>1434</sup> contains several episodes allegedly taken from the life of the apostle, which are sometimes found in separate volumes. There exists still a fifth episode, which was not part of this set – *The Acts of John in Rome* – where his trial before Diocletian and exile to Patmos are described.

The first episode relates several miracles supposedly performed by John: the destruction of a pagan temple with a word, during which the priests perished, the "exorcism" of an infestation of bed bugs, and the resurrection of several individuals from the dead. In one bizarre instance, a woman, who refrained from sexual intercourse with her husband for the Lord's sake, died prematurely, and another man attempted to have sex with her corpse. God struck down the offender, and he died, but John resurrected both parties from the dead, and the offender repented.

In the second episode, "John" recalls some special moments in his experience of following Jesus. Yet, his description of these events shows traces of docetic theology, i.e., the rejection of Jesus' true humanity. When Jesus walked, for example, He left no footprints. Chapter 101 hints that Jesus did not suffer on the cross. In chapter 93, John reveals, "Sometimes when I meant to touch him, I met a material and solid body; at other times again I felt him, the substance was immaterial and bodiless and as if it were not existing at all."<sup>1435</sup>

The third episode relates the death of the apostle John.

We must note that, in one form or another, the *Acts of John* was condemned as heretical by the Second Council of Nicaea. Eusebius also rejected it (*Church history*, 3.25.6). This assessment by the Early Church and the historical and theological irregularities of the book requires us to reject it as well.

The ***Acts of the Phillip*** reportedly tells of the ministry of Phillip in Athens and his debate with 300 philosophers there. When the philosophers could not silence Phillip, they summoned to their aid the Jewish high priest, Ananias, who arrived with 500 assistants. In the course of time: (1) Ananias and his assistants were struck with blindness, (2) Jesus made a glorious appearance to them and the entire city, (3) Phillip raised a person from the dead, and (4) the 500 men of Ananias repented. Ananias himself, though, refused to repent, and at the command of Phillip, the earth opened up and swallowed him.

The *Acts of Phillip* also tells of his missionary journey with his sister and Bartholomew to Hierapolis in Asia Minor. Because of the conversion of the ruler's wife, the three were subjected to torture, and Phillip was hung upside down. Against the advice of his sister, Bartholomew, and the apostle John (who somehow happened on the scene), Phillip cursed the people, and the earth opened up and swallowed the ruler and 7000 inhabitants of the town, their families, and the town's idols. Jesus immediately appeared to Phillip, rebuked him for this deed, and announced that after death Phillip would suffer in a place of punishment for 40 days before being allowed into heaven. Jesus then released the "engulfed" inhabitants of Hierapolis from the pit, except for the ruler and the idols.

The presence of clearly grandiose elements in this narrative makes its contents very questionable, to say the least. It seems that the author was dealing more with legend, than with fact.

The apocryphal ***Acts of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul*** narrates the meeting of these two saints in Rome, where they assure the church that they hold to the same Faith. The magician, Simon Magnus, opposes them before the Caesar Nero. They debate one another before the Emperor, demonstrating supernatural powers in confirmation of their views. Peter speaks for the apostolic team, while Paul supports him in prayer. At one point, Simon demonstrates his ability to fly. Yet, Peter rebukes the demon supporting Simon in the air, and the latter falls to the ground and expires. Nero then executes the apostles for this deed.

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<sup>1434</sup>[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts\\_of\\_John](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_John); Ehrman, p. xii, 42-44; Metzger, The canon of the New Testament, p. 177; Andrews, p. 129.

<sup>1435</sup>Ehrman, p. 42.

As in similar “Acts,” this work is full of legendary elements. Andrews concludes, “There can be no doubt that the contents of the books are mainly fiction. They may contain some germs of fact, but it is almost impossible to disconnect the fact from the fiction.”<sup>1436</sup>

Finally, we will examine the **Acts of Peter**.<sup>1437</sup> The main feature of this work is the competition between Peter and Simon Magnus, similar in content to the *Acts of Peter and Paul*. The work also includes an account where Peter attempts to flee persecution in Rome, but meets Jesus on the way, who directs him to return for execution. Peter is sentenced to crucifixion and requests crucifixion upside down. Some Church Fathers echo this account, namely Origen and Jerome. This book, again, tends toward asceticism and Docetism.

Again, we heed the warning of Eusebius:

We have felt compelled to give this catalogue in order that we might be able to know both these works and those that are cited by the heretics under the name of the apostles, including, for instance, such books as the Gospels of Peter, of Thomas, of Matthias, or of any others besides them, and the Acts of Andrew and John and the other apostles, which no one belonging to the succession of ecclesiastical writers has deemed worthy of mention in his writings. And further, the character of the style is at variance with apostolic usage, and both the thoughts and the purpose of the things that are related in them are so completely out of accord with true orthodoxy that they clearly show themselves to be the fictions of heretics (*Church history*, 3.25.6-7).

### Apocryphal Epistles

Next, we continue with the examination of epistles supposedly written by apostles. The **Epistle to the Laodiceans** enjoyed popularity in the Western Church from the sixth to the fifteenth centuries and was included in many Latin Bibles.<sup>1438</sup> Some assumed that this was the letter Paul mentioned in Colossians 4:16: “Read my letter {that is coming} from Laodicea.”

The Muratonian Canon negatively assess this work, yet some feel the author of the Canon had in mind a different work.<sup>1439</sup> Nevertheless, Jerome and the Second Council of Nicaea rejected the *Epistle to the Laodiceans*.<sup>1440</sup>

As far as the letter’s composition, J. B. Lightfoot writes, “The Epistle is a centro of Pauline phrases strung together without any definite connection or any clear object.”<sup>1441</sup> Geisler and Nix continue, “Unlike most forgeries it had no ulterior aim.... It has no doctrinal peculiarities. Thus it is quite harmless, so far as falsity and stupidity combined can ever be regarded as harmless.”<sup>1442</sup> It is certainly possible that in Colossians 4:16, Paul had in mind his Epistle to the Ephesians, which most likely was circulated around Asia Minor.<sup>1443</sup>

The **Correspondence between Paul and Lucius Annaeus Seneca** attracted the attention of early Christian apologists, since they found it potentially valuable in defending the Faith.<sup>1444</sup> Jerome, together with others, considered it genuine (see *Lives of illustrious men*, 12). The *Correspondence* consists of 14 letters, eight from Seneca and six from Paul.

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<sup>1436</sup>Andrews, p. 131.

<sup>1437</sup>[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts\\_of\\_Peter](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_Peter); Ehrman, p. xii, 212-213; Metzger, The canon of the New Testament, p. 178-179.

<sup>1438</sup>Sawyer M. J. Evangelicals and the canon of the New Testament. – Grace Theological Journal. 1990. 11(1). P. 44; Geisler, Nix, p. 315.

<sup>1439</sup>Ehrman, p. 215; Metzger, The canon of the New Testament, p. 197.

<sup>1440</sup>Andrews, p. 132.

<sup>1441</sup>Noted in Geisler, Nix, p. 315. Also, see Metzger, The canon of the New Testament, p. 197.

<sup>1442</sup>Noted in Geisler, Nix, p. 315.

<sup>1443</sup>Ibid.

<sup>1444</sup>Metzger, Literary forgeries, p. 10.

Modern scholars, however, ascribe the *Correspondence* to a pseudonymic author. They characterize the work in the following words:

Bruce Metzger: “The commonplace manner and the colourless style of the epistles show that they cannot be the work either of the moralist or of the apostle Paul.”<sup>1445</sup>

J. B. Lightfoot: “The poverty of thought and style, the errors in chronology and history, and the whole conception of the relative positions of the Stoic philosopher and the Christian Apostle... betray clearly the hand of a forger.”<sup>1446</sup>

Phillip Schaff: “They are very poor in thought and style, full of errors of chronology and history, and undoubtedly a forgery.”<sup>1447</sup>

Herbert Andrews: “The contents of these letters are very flimsy and uninteresting. They consist mainly of an interchange of compliments between the Apostle and the philosopher.”<sup>1448</sup>

In conclusion, it is important to mention various other writings, which allegedly trace back to the apostles: the *Didache*, i.e., “Teaching of the Twelve Apostles,” the *Epistles of the Apostles*, and the *Apostolic Constitutions*, which include the 85 *Apostolic Canons*. None of them were written in the first century, that is, during the apostolic age. The *Didache* and the *Epistles of the Apostles* were composed in the second century, and the *Apostolic Constitutions* with the *Apostolic Canons* – between one and two hundred years later.<sup>1449</sup>

Furthermore, the *Apostolic Constitutions* (and, consequently, the *Apostolic Canons* as well), begin with the words, “The apostles and elders to all those who from among the Gentiles have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ; grace and peace from Almighty God, through our Lord Jesus Christ...” This means that these writings are pseudonymic and therefore a forgery, which automatically excludes them from the canon. The *Didache* is anonymous, which also arouses suspicion, since we cannot confirm that the book actually contains the teachings of the Twelve. We must know who wrote the book and where he gathered his information in order to be convinced of its apostolic origin. We cannot accept a claim to apostolic authorship without substantiation.

### Apocalypse of Peter

In brief, we will touch on one of the apocryphal apocalypses. The *Apocalypse of Peter* relates a vision of Jesus that Peter allegedly saw, where the latter is shown the bliss of heaven and the torment of hell. In the Early Church, Clement of Alexandria cited this work, and Codex Bezae (5th c.) lists it with canonical New Testament books.

The author of the Muratonian Canon expressed doubts about its instructional value, and Jerome and Eusebius outright reject it: “Among the rejected writings... the Apocalypse of Peter” (*Church history*, 3.25.4).<sup>1450</sup>

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<sup>1445</sup>Metzger, The canon of the New Testament, p. 184.

<sup>1446</sup>Lightfoot J. B. St Paul and Seneca. Dissertations on the Apostolic, 1892. Noted in [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Correspondence\\_of\\_Paul\\_and\\_Seneca](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Correspondence_of_Paul_and_Seneca)

<sup>1447</sup>Schaff P. History of the Christian Church, Vol. 1, Chap. V, Sect. I. Noted in [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Correspondence\\_of\\_Paul\\_and\\_Seneca](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Correspondence_of_Paul_and_Seneca)

<sup>1448</sup>Andrews, p. 132-133.

<sup>1449</sup>Ehrman, p. xi; Metzger, The canon of the New Testament, p. 180; Roberts, Donaldson, Coxe, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, v. 7, p. 388-389.

<sup>1450</sup>Geisler, Nix, p. 314; Andrews, p. 133; Metzger, The canon of the New Testament, p. 184, 204.

### 3. Conclusions

When we examined books now accepted into the New Testament canon, we were able to confirm their canonicity based on accepted canonical criteria. Based on those same criteria, we exclude the apocryphal and pseudepigraphical works discussed above.

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Appendix B: Supposed Borrowing from Non-Canonical Books

A. Old Testament

Similarities

Old Testament history

- Creation of the world (Gen 1)
- Woman made from the rib of man (Gen 2)
- Tree of Life (Gen 2)
- Worldwide flood (Gen 6-8)
- Tower of Babel (Gen 11)
- Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19)

Babylonian legends¹⁴⁵¹

- Creation of the world (similar in general scheme, differences in detail)
- Woman made from the rib of man
- Tree of Life
- Worldwide flood
- Tower of Babel
- Destruction of a city by raining fire

Comments:

1. Overlap of Old Testament history and Babylonian legends explained by preservation in Babylon of the original tradition recounting these events.

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### ***Similarities***

#### Law of Moses

- Laws about miscarriage after trauma (Ex 21:22-25).
- Laws about unruly ox (Ex 21:35)
- Laws for slaves
- Forbid murder, adultery, incest
- Structure of Deuteronomy
- Seventh day – day of rest, work forbidden

#### Ancient Near Eastern Laws<sup>1452</sup>

- Laws about miscarriage after trauma (HL §§17, SL §§1–2, LH §§209–214, MAL §§A 21, 50–52)
- Laws about unruly ox (LE §53 identical to Ex 21:35, overlap with other similar laws)
- Laws for slaves (similar to biblical laws)
- Forbid murder, adultery, incest (LH §1, 129, 157)
- Structure of the suzerain-vassal treaties of the Hittites

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<sup>1451</sup>Page S. H. T. Powers of evil: A Biblical study on Satan and demons. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1995. – P. 31ff.

<sup>1452</sup>Key to abbreviations: Ur-Nammu of Ur (2112-2095 BC), Lipit-Ishtar of Isin (approx. 1925 BC), Sumerian Laws (SL)(approx. 1800 BC), Laws of Eshnunna (LE)(approx. 1800 BC), Laws of Hammurapi (LH)(approx. 1750 BC), Edict of Ammisaduqa (approx. 1650 BC), Middle Assyrian Laws (MAL)(approx. 1100 BC, Hittite Laws (HL)(up to 1200 BC), Neo-Babylonian Laws (7th c. BC). Sprinkle J. M. Law // Elwell W. A. Evangelical dictionary of biblical theology. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1996. – P. 467.

Seventh day – day of rest, work forbidden (Akkadian practice)<sup>1453</sup>

## ***Differences***

### **Law of Moses**

Laws concern all spheres of life (ethical, religious, national)  
Religious motive base  
Laws from God  
Laws have both instructional and regulatory functions  
Laws for God's glory  
The authority of ruler limited (Deut 17:14-20)  
Restitution up to five times, no death penalty for thief (Ex 22:1-4)  
Punishment of unruly ox goring a slave more than for goring another ox.

### **Ancient Near Eastern Laws**<sup>1454</sup>

Laws concern secular life only  
No religious motive base  
Laws from the ruler  
Laws have regulatory function alone  
Laws for the glory of the ruler  
Authority of the ruler unlimited  
Restitution up to 30 times, death penalty for thief (LH §§8, 265; HL §§57–59, 63, 67, 69)  
Punishment of unruly ox goring a slave the same as for goring another ox.

### **Comments:**

1. Concerning the overlap in laws, Sprinke comments, "The parallels are insufficient to suppose biblical laws were simply borrowed from ancient Near Eastern ones. On the other hand, the parallels seem too close for chance. It is best to say that the Bible shows awareness of extrabiblical laws... Where an existing law is just, the Bible can happily adopt it."<sup>1455</sup>
2. The partial overlap between biblical and secular laws may be explained by the effect of general revelation (through conscience and observation of creation) on the pagan world.
3. The observance of the Sabbath in the Akkadian Empire could be a remnant of the original tradition based on creation.

## **B. New Testament**<sup>1456</sup>

Matt 6:7 – "And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words."

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<sup>1453</sup>Page, p. 30.

<sup>1454</sup>Key to abbreviations: Ur-Nammu of Ur (2112-2095 BC), Lipit-Ishtar of Isin (approx. 1925 BC), Sumerian Laws (SL)(approx. 1800 BC), Laws of Eshnunna (LE)(approx. 1800 BC), Laws of Hammurapi (LH)(approx. 1750 BC), Edict of Ammisaduqa (approx. 1650 BC), Middle Assyrian Laws (MAL)(approx. 1100 BC, Hittite Laws (HL)(up to 1200 BC), Neo-Babylonian Laws (7th c. BC). Sprinkle, p. 467.

<sup>1455</sup>Ibid, p. 468.

<sup>1456</sup>See deSilva D. A. *Introducing the Apocrypha*. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2002. – P. 22-25, 195-196; Harrington D. J. *The Old Testament Apocrypha in the Early Church and today* // McDonald L. M., Sanders J. A. *The canon debate*. – Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002. – P. 204; Charlesworth J. H., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha and the New Testament*, p. 84; Constantelos D. J. *The apocryphal/deuterocanonical books: An Orthodox view* // Kohlenberger J. R. *The parallel Apocrypha*. – Oxford: Oxford University, 1997. – P. xxvii-xxviii; Charles R. H., ed. *Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*. – Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, 2004. – V. 2. – P. 292.



*Sirach*, 7.14 – “Prate not in the assembly of elders, and repeat not (thy) words in (thy) prayer.”

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Matt 26:64 – “Jesus said to him, ‘You have said it {yourself;} nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.’”

1 Enoch, chps. 46ff tells of the heavenly Son of Man

Comments: Most likely, in Matthew 26:67 Jesus cites Daniel chp. 7, not *1 Enoch*.

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Matt 27; Mk 15; Lk 23; Jn 19 – Crucifixion of Jesus

*Wisdom of Solomon*, 2.12-20 – But let us lie in wait for the righteous man, because he is of disservice to us, and is contrary to our works, and upbraideth us with sins against the law, and layeth to our charge sins against our discipline. He professeth to have knowledge of God, and nameth himself servant of the Lord. He became to us a reproof of our thoughts. He is grievous unto us even to behold, because his life is unlike other men’s, and his paths are of strange fashion. We were accounted of him as base metal, and he abstaineth from our ways as from uncleannesses. The latter end of the righteous he calleth happy; and he vaunteth that God is his father. Let us see if his words be true, and let us try what shall befall in the ending of his life. For if the righteous man is God’s son, he will uphold him, and he will deliver him out of the hand of his adversaries. With outrage and torture let us put him to the test, that we may learn his gentleness, and may prove his patience under wrong. Let us condemn him to a shameful death; for according to his words he will be visited.<sup>1457</sup>

Comments: We must keep in mind that the crucifixion of Jesus was not a legend, based on the *Wisdom of Solomon*, but a real event of history.

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Acts 7:22 – “Moses was educated in all the learning of the Egyptians, and he was a man of power in words and deeds.”

Philo, *On the life of Moses*, 1.20f – “He himself exhibited a modest and dignified deportment in all his words and gestures, attending diligently to every lesson of every kind which could tend to the improvement of his mind. And immediately he had all kinds of masters... in a short time he surpassed all their knowledge...”¹⁴⁵⁸

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Rom 1:21-27 – “For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened... Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged

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<sup>1457</sup>Nickelsburg W.E. *Ancient Judaism and Christian origins*. – Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003. – P. 20.

<sup>1458</sup>Yonge C. D. ed. *The works of Philo*. – Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995. – P. 461.

the natural function for that which is unnatural, and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.”

*Wisdom of Solomon*, 14.22-27 – Afterward it was not enough for them to go astray in the knowledge of God; but also, while they live in sore conflict through ignorance of him, that multitude of evils they call peace. For either slaughtering children in solemn rites, or celebrating secret mysteries, or holding frantic revels of strange ordinances, no longer do they guard either life or purity of marriage, but one slays another treacherously, or grieves him by adultery. And all things confusedly are filled with blood and murder, theft and deceit, corruption, faithlessness, tumult, perjury, disquieting of the good, ingratitude for benefits received, defiling of souls, confusion of sex, disorder in marriage, adultery, and wantonness. For the worship of those unnameable idols is the beginning and cause and end of every evil.<sup>1459</sup>

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Rom 9:20-21 – “On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, “Why did you make me like this,” will it? Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use?”

Sirach, 33.12-13 – “Some He blessed and exalted, and others He hallowed and brought nigh to Himself. Some He cursed and abased, and overthrew them from their places. As the clay is in the power of the potter, to fashion it according to his good pleasure; so is man in the power of his creator, to make him according to His ordinance.”

Wisdom of Solomon, 12.12 – “For who shall say, What hast thou done? Or who shall withstand thy judgement? And who shall accuse thee for the destruction of nations which thou didst make? Or who shall come and stand before thee as an avenger for the unrighteous?”

Wisdom of Solomon, 15.7 – “For a potter, kneading soft earth, laboriously mouldeth each vessel for our service. Nay, out of the same clay doth he fashion both the vessels that minister to clean uses, and those of a contrary sort, all in like manner. But what shall be the use of either sort, the craftsman himself is the judge.”

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Rom 10:6-7 – “But the righteousness based on faith speaks as follows: ‘Do not say in your heart, “Who will ascend into heaven?’ (that is, to bring Christ down), or “Who will descend into the abyss?’ (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).”<sup>1460</sup>

*1 Baruch*, 3.28-30 – “So they perished, because they had no wisdom, they perished through their own foolishness. Who hath gone up into heaven, and taken her, and brought her down from the clouds? Who hath gone over the sea, and found her, and will bring her for choice gold?”

Comment: Baruch, however, does not apply Deut 30:12 to Messiah, as Paul does.

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<sup>1459</sup>Nickelsburg, p. 22.

<sup>1460</sup>Darrell Bock: Single meaning, multiple contexts and referents // Berding K., Lunde J., Gundry S. Three views on the New Testament use of the Old Testament. – Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008. – P. 134-135.

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Jam 1:19 – “[This] you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak {and} slow to anger.”

Sirach, 5.11 (13) – “Be swift to hear, but with patience make reply.”

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1 Cor 10:4 – “And all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ.”

Rabbinic tradition of a rock, which followed Israel and provided them with water (*Targum Onkelos*, Num 19:25-26; *Midrash Sifre*, Num 21:17; *b. Shabbath*, 35a, *b. Aboth*, 5:6; *Midrash Rabbah*, Num 19:25-26; *t. Sukkah*, 3.11).<sup>1461</sup>

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Gal 3:19 – “Why the Law then? ... ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed would come to whom the promise had been made.”

Heb 2:2 – “For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty.”

Moses received from an angel a revelation of the events that became the narrative of Genesis and Exodus, along with the laws for Passover, the Sabbath, and the jubilees (*Book of Jubilees*, 1.27ff).¹⁴⁶²

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Eph 6:13-17 – “Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil {one.} And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”

*Wisdom of Solomon*, 5.17-20a – “He shall take his jealousy as complete armour, and shall make the whole creation his weapons for vengeance on his enemies. He shall put on righteousness as a breastplate, and shall take judgement unfeigned as a helmet. He shall take holiness as an invincible shield, and shall sharpen stern wrath for a sword.”

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¹⁴⁶¹Thiselton A. C. *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* // New international Greek Testament commentary. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000. – P. 727ff.

¹⁴⁶²Enns P. Fuller meaning, single goal // Berding K., Lunde J., Gundry S. *Three views on the New Testament use of the Old Testament*. – Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008. – P. 196.

2 Tim 3:8 – “Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these {men} also oppose the truth, men of depraved mind, rejected in regard to the faith.”

Jannes and Jambres are mentioned in *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*, 1.3; 7.2; 40.6; *Damascus Document*, 5.18; *Rabbah Exodus*; *b. Menahoth*, 85a.¹⁴⁶³

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Heb 11:35-38 – “Women received {back} their dead by resurrection; and others were tortured, not accepting their release, so that they might obtain a better resurrection; and others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated ({men} of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground.”

Martyrdom of seven brothers, hope in the resurrection (*2 Maccabees*, chp. 7).

Eleazar tortured (*2 Maccabees*, 6.18ff).

Isaiah sawn in two (*Martyrdom of Isaiah*, chp. 5).

According to tradition, Jeremiah was stoned.<sup>1464</sup>

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Jam 5:11 – “You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and {is} merciful.”

Description of Job's patience in the *Testament of Job*.¹⁴⁶⁵

Comments: Yet, the patience of Job is evident in the Book of Job as well.

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Jude 6-7 – “And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day, just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh...”

*1 Enoch*, chps. 6-11 – Angels (sons of God) went into the daughters of men.

*Book of Jubilees*, 5.1, 6 – “... daughters were born unto them, that the angels of God saw them on a certain year of this jubilee, that they were beautiful to look upon; and they took themselves wives... And against the angels whom He had sent upon the earth, He was exceedingly wroth, and He gave commandment to root them out of all their dominion, and He bade us to bind them in the depths of the earth, and behold they are bound in the midst of them, and are (kept) separate.”<sup>1466</sup>

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<sup>1463</sup>Mounce W. D. Pastoral Epistles // Word Biblical commentary. – Dallas, TX: Word, 2000. – P. 550.

<sup>1464</sup>Lane, W. L. Hebrews 9–13 // Word Biblical commentary. – Dallas, TX: Word, 1998. – P. 388-390.

<sup>1465</sup>Nickelsburg, p. 24.

<sup>1466</sup>Ibid, p. 12.

Comments: Some feel that Jude is referring to the story as related in *Jubilees*. Yet, this contradicts the teaching of Jesus that angels (who have not physical bodies) do not marry (Matt 22:30). Therefore, it is unlikely that Jude is referring to *Jubilees*.

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Jude 9 – “But Michael the archangel, when he disputed with the devil and argued about the body of Moses, did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgment, but said, ‘The Lord rebuke you!’”

According to the traditions of the Church Fathers, this story is found in the last part of the book *The Testament of Moses*, but that section is now missing.¹⁴⁶⁷

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Jude 14-15 – “{It was} also about these men {that} Enoch, {in} the seventh {generation} from Adam, prophesied, saying, ‘Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones, to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.’”

1 *Enoch*, 1.9 – “And behold! He cometh with ten thousands of ‹His› holy ones to execute judgement upon all, and to destroy ‹all› the ungodly, and to convict all flesh of all the works ‹of their ungodliness› which they have ungodly committed, and of all the hard things which› ungodly sinners ‹have spoken› against Him.”

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Comments: In the following examples, it is important to keep in mind that the book *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* contains some Christian interpolations, but their exact number and location are unknown.

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Matt 5:7 – “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.”

*Testament of Zebulun*, 8.1 – “Have, therefore, yourselves also, my children, compassion towards every man with mercy, that the Lord also may have Compassion and mercy upon you.”

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Matt 5:14-16 – “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does {anyone} light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”

Testament of Levi, 14.4 – “But if ye be darkened through transgressions, what, therefore, will all the Gentiles do living in blindness? Yea, ye shall bring a curse upon our race, because the light of the law which was given for to lighten every man this ye desire to destroy by teaching commandments contrary to the ordinances of God.”

¹⁴⁶⁷Kaiser W. C. Jr., Davids P. H., Bruce F. F., Brauch M. T. *Hard sayings of the Bible*. – Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1996. – P. 754.

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Matt 5:44 – “But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.”

*Testament of Joseph*, 18.2 – “And if any one seeketh to do evil unto you, do well unto him, and pray for him, and ye shall be redeemed of the Lord from all evil.”

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Matt 18:15 – “If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother.”

Testament of Gad, 6.3 – “Love ye one another from the heart; and if a man sin against thee, speak peaceably to him, and in thy soul hold not guile; and if he repent and confess, forgive him.”

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Matt 22:37-39 – “And He said to him, ‘you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, you shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”

*Testament of Dan*, 5.3 – “Love the Lord through all your life, and one another with a true heart.”

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Matt 25:35-36 – “For I was hungry, and you gave Me {something} to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me {something} to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.”

Testament of Joseph, 1.5-6 – “I was sold into slavery, and the Lord of all made me free. I was taken into captivity, and His strong hand succoured me. I was beset with hunger, and the Lord Himself nourished me. I was alone, and God comforted me. I was sick, and the Lord visited me. I was in prison, and my God showed favour unto me. In bonds, and He released me.”

Comments: Yet, unlike Matthew, in the *Testament of Joseph*, the Lord does not receive support, but gives it.

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Luke 10:19 – “Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing will injure you.”

*Testament of Simeon*, 6.6 – “Then shall all the spirits of deceit be given to be trodden under foot, and men shall rule over wicked spirits.”

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Luke 17:3 – “Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him.”

Testament of Gad, 6.3 – “Love ye one another from the heart; and if a man sin against thee, speak peaceably to him, and in thy soul hold not guile; and if he repent and confess, forgive him.”

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John 1:9 – “There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man.”

*Testament of Levi, 14.4* – “But if ye be darkened through transgressions, what, therefore, will all the Gentiles do living in blindness? Yea, ye shall bring a curse upon our race, because the light of the law which was given for to lighten every man.”

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John 5:41 – “I do not receive glory from men.”

Testament of Benjamin, 6.4 – “The good inclination receiveth not glory nor dishonour from men.”

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Acts 12:11 – “When Peter came to himself, he said, “Now I know for sure that the Lord has sent forth His angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting.”

*Testament of Simeon, 2.8* – “But his God and the God of his fathers sent forth His angel, and delivered him out of my hands.”

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Rom 1:32 – “Although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.”

Testament of Ashur, 6.2 – “For they that are double-faced are guilty of a twofold sin; for they both do the evil thing and they have pleasure in them that do it, following the example of the spirits of deceit, and striving against mankind.”

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Rom 12:21 – “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”

*Testament of Benjamin, 4.3* – “And though they devise with evil intent concerning him, by doing good he overcometh evil, being shielded by God; and he loveth the righteous as his own soul.”

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1 Cor 7:5 – “Stop depriving one another, except by agreement for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.”

Testament of Naphtali, 8.8 – “For there is a season for a man to embrace his wife, and a season to abstain therefrom for his prayer.”

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2 Cor 6:15 – “Or what harmony has Christ with Belial?”

*Testament of Benjamin*, 3.3 – “Fear ye the Lord, and love your neighbour; and even though the spirits of Beliar claim you to afflict you with every evil, yet shall they not have dominion over you, even as they had not over Joseph my brother.”

*Testament of Naphtali*, 2.6 – “For as a man’s strength, so also is his work; as his eye, so also is his sleep; as his soul, so also is his word either in the law of the Lord or in the law of Beliar. ”

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Gal 6:8 – “For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.”

Testament of Levi, 13.6 – “And sow good things in your souls, that ye may find them in your life. But if ye sow evil things, ye shall reap every trouble and affliction.”

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1 Thes 2:16 – “...hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved; with the result that they always fill up the measure of their sins. But wrath has come upon them to the utmost.”

*Testament of Levi*, 6.11 – “But the wrath of the Lord came upon them to the uttermost.”

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2 Tim 2:22 – “Now flee from youthful lusts.”

Testament of Reuben, 5.5 – “Flee, therefore, fornication, my children.”

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Jam 4:7 – “Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.”

*Testament of Dan*, 6.1 – “And now, fear the Lord, my children, and beware of Satan and his spirits.”

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Conclusions:

1. The status of the Lord Jesus as the Son of God and His apostles as receivers of divine revelation makes the claim of their dependence on material from the intertestamental period improbable.

2. At the same time, one cannot exclude that they may have included certain thoughts or expressions, found in the intertestamental literature, in their teaching, if those ideas accurately expressed God's truth.

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# Appendix C: The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy

## A SHORT STATEMENT

1. God, who is Himself Truth and speaks truth only, has inspired Holy Scripture in order thereby to reveal Himself to lost mankind through Jesus Christ as Creator and Lord, Redeemer and Judge. Holy Scripture is God's witness to Himself.
2. Holy Scripture, being God's own Word, written by men prepared and superintended by His Spirit, is of infallible divine authority in all matters upon which it touches: it is to be believed, as God's instruction, in all that it affirms, obeyed, as God's command, in all that it requires; embraced, as God's pledge, in all that it promises.
3. The Holy Spirit, Scripture's divine Author, both authenticates it to us by His inward witness and opens our minds to understand its meaning.
4. Being wholly and verbally God-given, Scripture is without error or fault in all its teaching, no less in what it states about God's acts in creation, about the events of world history, and about its own literary origins under God, than in its witness to God's saving grace in individual lives.
5. The authority of Scripture is inescapably impaired if this total divine inerrancy is in any way limited or disregarded, or made relative to a view of truth contrary to the Bible's own; and such lapses bring serious loss to both the individual and the Church.

## ARTICLES OF AFFIRMATION AND DENIAL

### Article I

We affirm that the Holy Scriptures are to be received as the authoritative Word of God.

We deny that the Scriptures receive their authority from the Church, tradition, or any other human source.

### Article II

We affirm that the Scriptures are the supreme written norm by which God binds the conscience, and that the authority of the Church is subordinate to that of Scripture.

We deny that Church creeds, councils, or declarations have authority greater than or equal to the authority of the Bible.

### Article III

We affirm that the written Word in its entirety is revelation given by God.

We deny that the Bible is merely a witness to revelation, or only becomes revelation in encounter, or depends on the responses of men for its validity.

## **Article IV**

We affirm that God who made mankind in His image has used language as a means of revelation.

We deny that human language is so limited by our creatureliness that it is rendered inadequate as a vehicle for divine revelation. We further deny that the corruption of human culture and language through sin has thwarted God's work of inspiration.

## **Article V**

We affirm that God's revelation in the Holy Scriptures was progressive.

We deny that later revelation, which may fulfill earlier revelation, ever corrects or contradicts it. We further deny that any normative revelation has been given since the completion of the New Testament writings.

## **Article VI**

We affirm that the whole of Scripture and all its parts, down to the very words of the original, were given by divine inspiration.

We deny that the inspiration of Scripture can rightly be affirmed of the whole without the parts, or of some parts but not the whole.

## **Article VII**

We affirm that inspiration was the work in which God by His Spirit, through human writers, gave us His Word. The origin of Scripture is divine. The mode of divine inspiration remains largely a mystery to us.

We deny that inspiration can be reduced to human insight, or to heightened states of consciousness of any kind.

## **Article VIII**

We affirm that God in His Work of inspiration utilized the distinctive personalities and literary styles of the writers whom He had chosen and prepared.

We deny that God, in causing these writers to use the very words that He chose, overrode their personalities.

## **Article IX**

We affirm that inspiration, though not conferring omniscience, guaranteed true and trustworthy utterance on all matters of which the Biblical authors were moved to speak and write.

We deny that the finitude or fallenness of these writers, by necessity or otherwise, introduced distortion or falsehood into God's Word.

## **Article X**

We affirm that inspiration, strictly speaking, applies only to the autographic text of Scripture, which in the providence of God can be ascertained from available manuscripts with great accuracy. We further affirm that copies and translations of Scripture are the Word of God to the extent that they faithfully represent the original.

We deny that any essential element of the Christian faith is affected by the absence of the autographs. We further deny that this absence renders the assertion of Biblical inerrancy invalid or irrelevant.

#### **Article XI**

We affirm that Scripture, having been given by divine inspiration, is infallible, so that, far from misleading us, it is true and reliable in all the matters it addresses.

We deny that it is possible for the Bible to be at the same time infallible and errant in its assertions. Infallibility and inerrancy may be distinguished, but not separated.

#### **Article XII**

We affirm that Scripture in its entirety is inerrant, being free from all falsehood, fraud, or deceit.

We deny that Biblical infallibility and inerrancy are limited to spiritual, religious, or redemptive themes, exclusive of assertions in the fields of history and science. We further deny that scientific hypotheses about earth history may properly be used to overturn the teaching of Scripture on creation and the flood.

#### **Article XIII**

We affirm the propriety of using inerrancy as a theological term with reference to the complete truthfulness of Scripture.

We deny that it is proper to evaluate Scripture according to standards of truth and error that are alien to its usage or purpose. We further deny that inerrancy is negated by Biblical phenomena such as a lack of modern technical precision, irregularities of grammar or spelling, observational descriptions of nature, the reporting of falsehoods, the use of hyperbole and round numbers, the topical arrangement of material, variant selections of material in parallel accounts, or the use of free citations.

#### **Article XIV**

We affirm the unity and internal consistency of Scripture.

We deny that alleged errors and discrepancies that have not yet been resolved vitiate the truth claims of the Bible.

#### **Article XV**

We affirm that the doctrine of inerrancy is grounded in the teaching of the Bible about inspiration.

We deny that Jesus' teaching about Scripture may be dismissed by appeals to accommodation or to any natural limitation of His humanity.

## **Article XVI**

We affirm that the doctrine of inerrancy has been integral to the Church's faith throughout its history.

We deny that inerrancy is a doctrine invented by Scholastic Protestantism, or is a reactionary position postulated in response to negative higher criticism.

## **Article XVII**

We affirm that the Holy Spirit bears witness to the Scriptures, assuring believers of the truthfulness of God's written Word.

We deny that this witness of the Holy Spirit operates in isolation from or against Scripture.

## **Article XVIII**

We affirm that the text of Scripture is to be interpreted by grammatico-historical exegesis, taking account of its literary forms and devices, and that Scripture is to interpret Scripture.

We deny the legitimacy of any treatment of the text or quest for sources lying behind it that leads to relativizing, dehistoricizing, or discounting its teaching, or rejecting its claims to authorship.

## **Article XIX**

We affirm that a confession of the full authority, infallibility, and inerrancy of Scripture is vital to a sound understanding of the whole of the Christian faith. We further affirm that such confession should lead to increasing conformity to the image of Christ.

We deny that such confession is necessary for salvation. However, we further deny that inerrancy can be rejected without grave consequences both to the individual and to the Church.

[https://www.etsjets.org/files/documents/Chicago\\_Statement.pdf](https://www.etsjets.org/files/documents/Chicago_Statement.pdf)

## Appendix D: Biblical Phenomena

This appendix is devoted to many of the apparent inconsistencies encountered within Scripture – the so-called “biblical phenomena.” Proposed solutions to these discrepancies are also included. The material is organized as follows:

- A. Discrepancies between the narratives in Samuel/Kings and Chronicles.
- B. Other discrepancies within the Old Testament
- C. Discrepancies between the Old and New Testament narratives
- D. Discrepancies between the Gospel accounts
- E. Other discrepancies within the New Testament

### A. Discrepancies between the Narratives in Samuel/Kings and Chronicles.

1 Sam 9:1 – “Kish the son of Abiel, the son of Zeror”

1 Chr 8:33 – “Ner became the father of (lit. = “bore”) Kish, and Kish became the father of Saul” (also 1 Sam 9:39)

*Ner is the grandfather of Kish. The expression “bore” does not necessarily refer to an immediate direct descendent.*<sup>1468</sup>

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According to 1 Sam 16:6-11, Jesse had eight sons: Eliab, Abinadab, Shammah, David and four others.

1 Chr 2:13-15 – “Jesse became the father of Eliab his firstborn, then Abinadab the second, Shimea the third, Nethanel the fourth, Raddai the fifth, Ozem the sixth, David the seventh.”

(1) It is assumed that one of Jesse’s sons died at an early age and was therefore not included in the list in 1 Chronicles.

*(2) The Hebrew text of 1 Chronicles 27:18 mentions a certain Elihu, brother of David. In the Syriac text, his name was added to the list in 1 Chronicles 2:13-15. Possibly, he was somehow omitted in the Hebrew text of 1 Chronicles 2:13-15.*¹⁴⁶⁹

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1 Sam 28:6 – “When Saul inquired (אָפֶּשֶׁת) of the LORD, the LORD did not answer him, either by dreams or by Urim or by prophets.”

1 Chr 10:14 – “and (Saul) did not inquire (אָפֶּשֶׁת) of the LORD. Therefore He killed him and turned the kingdom to David the son of Jesse.”

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<sup>1468</sup>Haley J. W. Examination of the alleged discrepancies in the Bible. – London: Dickinson & Higham, 1875. – P. 351.

<sup>1469</sup>Archer G. L., Chirichingno G. Old Testament quotations in the New Testament. – Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1983. – P. 174-175; Kaiser W. C., Davids P. H., Bruce F. F., Brauch M. T. Hard sayings of the Bible. – Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1996. – P. 239.

*Saul only initially inquired of the Lord, but then appealed to a sorceress. He did not “seek” (דָּרַשׁ) the Lord.*<sup>1470</sup>

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1 Sam 31:6 – “Thus Saul died with his three sons, his armor bearer, and all his men on that day together.”

1 Chr 10:6 – “Thus Saul died with his three sons, and all {those} of his house died together.”

Not all the sons of Saul perished (see 2 Sam 2:8).

*The expression “all of his house” in 1 Chronicles 10:6 is explained in 1 Samuel 31:6 by the words “all his men,” i.e., all his army.*¹⁴⁷¹

1 Chronicles 10:6 confirms that only three of his sons perished.

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1 Chr 3:5-8 – “These were born to (David) in Jerusalem: Shimea, Shobab, Nathan and Solomon, four, by Bathshua the daughter of Ammiel; and Ibhar, Elishama, Eliphelet, Nogah, Nepheg and Japhia, Elishama, Eliada and Eliphelet, nine.

2 Sam 5:14-16 – No mention here of Eliphelet or Nogah.

*Haley proposes that Eliphelet and Nogah died in childhood and therefore were not included in 2 Samuel 5.*<sup>1472</sup>

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2 Sam 5:21 – “(The Philistines) abandoned their idols there, so David and his men carried them away.”

1 Chr 14:12 – “(The Philistines) abandoned their gods there; so David gave the order and they were burned with fire.”

*(1) In 2 Sam 5:21 of Lucian’s revision, we read that they were burned with fire.*¹⁴⁷³

(2) It is possible that they were burned with fire after David’s men carried them away.

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2 Sam 8:4 – “David captured from him 1,700 horsemen and 20,000 foot soldiers.”

1 Chr 18:4 – “David took from him 1,000 chariots and 7,000 horsemen and 20,000 foot soldiers”

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<sup>1470</sup>Haley, p. 395-396.

<sup>1471</sup>Ibid, p. 396.

<sup>1472</sup>Ibid, p. 332.

<sup>1473</sup>Dillard R. B. Harmonization: A help and a hindrance // Conn H. M. Inerrancy and hermeneutic: A tradition, a challenge, a debate. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1988. – P. 161.

*1 Chronicles 18:4 is the original version. When 2 Samuel 8:4 was being recopied, the word “chariots” was omitted and the letter ט (7000) was accidentally changed to י (700).<sup>1474</sup>*

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2 Sam 10:6 – The sons of Ammon sent and hired the Arameans of Beth-rehob and the Arameans of Zobah, 20,000 foot soldiers, and the king of Maacah with 1,000 men, and the men of Tob with 12,000 men” (33,000 total).

1 Chr 19:7 – “So they hired for themselves 32,000 chariots, and the king of Maacah and his people.”

(1) The missing 1000 in 1 Chronicles 19:7 are found in the expression “the king of Maacah and his people.”¹⁴⁷⁵

(2) The discrepancy between “foot soldiers” and “chariots” could be a mistake in copying, or maybe these soldiers fulfilled both functions.¹⁴⁷⁶

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2 Sam 10:18 – “But the Arameans fled before Israel, and David killed 700 charioteers of the Arameans and 40,000 horsemen.”

1 Chr 19:18 – “David killed of the Arameans 7,000 charioteers and 40,000 foot soldiers.”

*There occurred an incorrect copying of letters (confusion of ט [7000] and י [700]).<sup>1477</sup> The discrepancy between “foot soldiers” and “horsemen” could be a mistake in copying or, maybe these soldiers fulfilled both functions.*

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2 Sam 17:25 – “Now Amasa was the son of a man whose name was Ithra the Israelite, who went in to Abigail...”

1 Chr 2:17 – “Abigail bore Amasa, and the father of Amasa was Jether the Ishmaelite”

(1) Haley suggests that Jether was an Ishmaelite, but became an Israelite.¹⁴⁷⁸

(2) In the opinion of Keil and Delitzsch, 1 Chronicles 2:17 is the correct version, and 2 Samuel 17:25 was somehow altered. There is no reason to state the obvious – that the man was an Israelite.¹⁴⁷⁹

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2 Sam 17:25 – “Abigail the daughter of Nahash, sister of Zeruiah”

1 Chr 2:13-16 – “Jesse became the father of Eliab his firstborn... and their sisters {were} Zeruiah and Abigail.”

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<sup>1474</sup>Payne J. B. The validity of the numbers in Chronicles: Part I // Bibliotheca Sacra. 1979. 136. P. 118-119.

<sup>1475</sup>Ibid, p. 117.

<sup>1476</sup>Haley, p. 420-421.

<sup>1477</sup>Archer G. L. Alleged errors and discrepancies in the original manuscripts of the Bible // Geisler N. Inerrancy. – Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1980. – P. 60; Kaiser, p. 53; Payne J. B. The validity of the numbers in Chronicles: Part I // Bibliotheca Sacra. 1979. 136. P. 118-119.

<sup>1478</sup>Haley, p. 320.

<sup>1479</sup>Keil C. F., Delitzsch F. Commentary on the Old Testament. – Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996. – V. 2. – P. 658.



(1) *The rabbis taught that Nahash and Jesse were the same person.*<sup>1480</sup>

(2) *Some propose that Nahash was the second husband of Abigail's mother.*<sup>1481</sup>

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2 Sam 23:8 – “These are the names of the mighty men whom David had: Josheb-basshebeth a Tahchemonite, chief of the captains (or “the three”), he was {called} Adino the Eznite, because of eight hundred slain {by him} at one time.”

1 Chr 11:11 – “These {constitute} the list of the mighty men whom David had: Jashobeam (that is, Josheb-basshebeth), the son of a Hachmonite, the chief of the thirty; he lifted up his spear against three hundred whom he killed at one time.”

(1) *The copyist of 1 Chronicles 11:11 confused this verse with 1 Chronicles 11:20, “As for Abshai the brother of Joab, he was chief of the thirty, and he swung his spear against three hundred and killed them.”*¹⁴⁸²

(2) *The Syriac translation of 1 Chronicles 11:11 reads “800 men.”*¹⁴⁸³

(3) *The Greek and Coptic translations of 2 Samuel 23:8 read “300 men.”*¹⁴⁸⁴

(4) *The chief of “the three” would also be the chief of “the thirty.”*

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2 Sam 23:11-12 – “Now after him was Shammah the son of Agee a Hararite. And the Philistines were gathered into a troop where there was a plot of ground full of lentils, and the people fled from the Philistines. But he took his stand in the midst of the plot, defended it and struck the Philistines; and the LORD brought about a great victory.”

1 Chr 11:12-14 – “After him was Eleazar the son of Dodo, the Ahohite, who {was} one of the three mighty men... They took their stand in the midst of the plot and defended it, and struck down the Philistines; and the LORD saved them by a great victory.”

*Most likely, we are dealing here with two separate instances.*<sup>1485</sup>

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2 Sam 24:1 – “Now again the anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and it incited David against them to say, ‘Go, number Israel and Judah.’”

1 Chr 21:1 – “Then Satan (𐤒𐤕𐤔) stood up against Israel and moved David to number Israel.”

(1) *The absence of the article before the word 𐤒𐤕𐤔 (satan) requires that we translate it in its generic sense, “adversary” (see 1 Kin 5:4; 11:14, 23, 25; Ps 109:6, 20, 29). In the Old Testament, when the word 𐤒𐤕𐤔 indicates*

¹⁴⁸⁰Haley, p. 316.

¹⁴⁸¹*Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸²Payne, p. 118.

¹⁴⁸³*Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸⁵Haley, p. 428.

Satan, it takes the article (see Job, chps. 1-2 and Zech 3:1-2). So then, God punished Israel by stirring up an adversary (some pagan nation) against it, which prompted David to number the people in preparation for war.
(2) God allowed Satan to tempt David.¹⁴⁸⁶ In the Targum, God prompted Satan to tempt him.¹⁴⁸⁷
(3) Haley reminds us that in the Old Testament times, all events were ascribed to God.¹⁴⁸⁸

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2 Sam 24:9 – “There were in Israel eight hundred thousand valiant men who drew the sword, and the men of Judah were five hundred thousand men.”

1 Chr 21:5 – “And all Israel were 1,100,000 men who drew the sword; and Judah was 470,000 men who drew the sword.”

*(1) Either errors in copying, or use of round numbers/approximation.*  
*(2) 1 Chr 21:5 includes 288,000 permanent soldiers (see 1 Chr 27:1-15).<sup>1489</sup>*

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2 Sam 24:13 – “Shall seven years of famine come to you in your land? Or will you flee three months before your foes while they pursue you? Or shall there be three days' pestilence in your land? Now consider and see what answer I shall return to Him who sent me.”

1 Chr 21:12 – “...either three years of famine, or three months to be swept away before your foes, while the sword of your enemies overtakes {you,} or else three days of the sword of the LORD, even pestilence in the land.”

A copyist error occurred in 2 Sam 24:13. 1 Chr 21:12 has the correct version (three... three... three), as in the LXX of 2 Sam 24:13.¹⁴⁹⁰

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2 Sam. 24:24 – “So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver.”

1 Chr 21:25 – “So David gave Ornan 600 shekels of gold by weight for the site.”

*The price of the threshing floor and oxen was fifty shekels of silver. The price including the “site” on which it stood was 600 shekels of gold.<sup>1491</sup>*

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¹⁴⁸⁶Bergen R. D. 2 Samuel // The New American commentary. – Nashville, NT: Broadman & Holman, 1996. – P. 475.

¹⁴⁸⁷Blomberg C. L. The legitimacy and limits of harmonization // Carson D. A., Woodbridge J. D. Hermeneutics, authority and canon. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1986. – P. 165.

¹⁴⁸⁸Haley, p. 333

¹⁴⁸⁹Renwick A. M. I and II Samuel // The new Bible commentary. – P. 292, from Payne, p. 119-120.

¹⁴⁹⁰See Smith H. P. The Books of Samuel // Driver S. R., Plummer A., Briggs C. A. The international critical commentary. –Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1912. – P. 390; Payne, p. 120.

¹⁴⁹¹Renwick, I and II Samuel. – P. 292; from Payne, p. 120.

1 Kin 4:26 – “Solomon had 40,000 stalls of horses for his chariots, and 12,000 horsemen.”

2 Chr 9:25 – “Now Solomon had 4,000 stalls for horses and chariots and 12,000 horsemen, and he stationed them in the chariot cities and with the king in Jerusalem.”

*There occurred a confusion of numbers, ארבעים (40) instead of ארבעיה (4). Another Hebrew manuscript of 1 Kings 4:26 has 4000.*¹⁴⁹²

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1 Kin 5:11 – “Solomon then gave Hiram 20,000 kors of wheat as food for his household, and twenty kors of beaten oil (3785 liters); thus Solomon would give Hiram year by year.”

2 Chr 2:10 – “Now behold, I will give to your servants, the woodsmen who cut the timber, 20,000 kors of crushed wheat and 20,000 kors of barley, and 20,000 baths of wine and 20,000 baths of oil (378 541 liters).”

*The copyist of 2 Chronicles 2:10 may have mistakenly placed the numeral 20,000 in front of all the elements.*

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1 Kin 5:16 – “...besides Solomon’s 3,300 chief deputies who *were* over the project *and* who ruled over the people who were doing the work.”

2 Chr 2:2 – “...3,600 to supervise them.”

*2 Chronicles 8:10 speaks of 250 chief officers, and 1 Kings 9:23 speaks of 550 chief officers. Including the above figures, the sum in both books is 3850. The difference lies only in how the officers were defined.*¹⁴⁹³

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1 Kin 7:13-14 – “Now King Solomon sent and brought Hiram from Tyre. He was a widow's son from the tribe of Naphtali.”

2 Chr 2:13-14 – “Now I am sending Hiram-abi, a skilled man, endowed with understanding, the son of a Danite woman.”

*(1) The mother of Hiram was from the tribe of Naphtali through her father, but her mother (the grandmother of Hiram) was a “Danite woman.”*

*(2) One passage relates her ethnicity, and the other – her place of residence.*<sup>1494</sup>

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1 Kin 7:15 – “He fashioned the two pillars of bronze; eighteen cubits was the height of one pillar.”

¹⁴⁹²New American Standard Bible: 1995 update. – LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995; Payne, p. 123-124.

¹⁴⁹³Wenham, Large numbers. – P. 34; from Payne, p. 120-121.

¹⁴⁹⁴Blomberg, Legitimacy and limits, p. 165.

2 Chr 3:15 – “He also made two pillars for the front of the house, thirty-five cubits high.”

1 Kin 7:15-16 is correct (see 2 Kin 25:17 and Jer 52:21)

(1) 2 Chronicles 3:15 combines their individual heights.¹⁴⁹⁵

(2) A copyist error: ח' = 18, חל = 35.¹⁴⁹⁶

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1 Kin 7:24 – “Under its brim gourds went around encircling it ten to a cubit, completely surrounding the sea; the gourds were in two rows, cast with the rest.”

2 Chr 4:3 – “Now figures like oxen were under it and all around it, ten cubits, entirely encircling the sea. The oxen were in two rows, cast in one piece.”

*The “gourds” were shaped like oxen. The word פִּקְעִיּוֹת (gourds) may mean an object with an undefined form.*<sup>1497</sup>

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1 Kin 7:25-26 – “the (molten) sea... could hold two thousand baths.”

2 Chr 4:4-5 – “the (molten) sea... could hold 3,000 baths.”

*1 Kings 7:25-26 is correct, taking into consideration the size of the molten sea (cf. 1 Kin 7:23). A copyist’s error occurred in 2 Chronicles 4:4-5.*¹⁴⁹⁸

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1 Kin 8:66 – “On the eighth day (twenty-second day of the seventh month) he sent the people away and they blessed the king. Then they went to their tents.”

2 Chr 7:10 – “Then on the twenty-third day of the seventh month he sent the people to their tents.”

*Solomon “sent the people away” on the 22nd day (in the afternoon or evening), but the people departed on the 23rd day (in the morning).*<sup>1499</sup>

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1 Kin 9:26-28 – “King Solomon also built a fleet of ships in Ezion-geber... They went to Ophir.”

2 Chr 9:21 – “For the king had ships which went to Tarshish with the servants of Hiram.”

¹⁴⁹⁵Payne, p. 120-121.

¹⁴⁹⁶Keil C. F. The Books of the Kings / Trans. J. Martin. – 2nd ed. – Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark. – P. 97.

¹⁴⁹⁷Brown F., Driver S. R., Briggs C. A. Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English lexicon. – Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977. – P. 825; Haley, p. 431.

¹⁴⁹⁸Payne, p. 122.

¹⁴⁹⁹Keil C. F., Delitzsch F. The Books of the Chronicles // Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1950. – P. 138.

*(1) Ophir is located in Arabia along the Red Sea. Tarshish, however, is on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea. The fact that they brought “gold and silver, ivory and apes and peacocks” from Tarshish implies that there was a place with the same name in Arabia or Africa, close to Ophir.*¹⁵⁰⁰
(2) It is very possible that these are different instances. The parallel passage to 1 Kings 9:26-28 is not 2 Chronicles 9:21, but 2 Chronicles 8:18 (see below).

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1 Kin 9:28 – “They went to Ophir and took four hundred and twenty talents of gold from there, and brought it to King Solomon.”

2 Chr 8:18 – “And Hiram by his servants sent him ships and servants who knew the sea; and they went with Solomon's servants to Ophir, and took from there four hundred and fifty talents of gold and brought them to King Solomon.”

*(1) Copyist error: 20 = 20, 50 = 50.*<sup>1501</sup>

*(2) In Turretin's opinion, either thirty talents went for the expenses of the trip, or two separate instances are recorded.*<sup>1502</sup>

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1 Kin 15:2 – “(Abijah's) mother's name was Maacah the daughter of Abishalom.”

2 Chr 13:2 – “(Abijah's) mother's name was Micaiah the daughter of Uriel of Gibeah.”

*(1) 1 Kin 15:2 is the correct variant (cf. 2 Chr 11:20). A copyist error occurred in 2 Chr 13:2 and was corrected in the Syrian translation and the Septuagint.*¹⁵⁰³

*(2) Josephus suggested that Micaiah was the daughter of Uriel, while Abishalom was her grandfather.*¹⁵⁰⁴

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1 Kin 15:23 – “Now the rest of all the acts of Asa... are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah?”

2 Chr 16:11 – “Now, the acts of Asa from first to last, behold, they are written in the Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel.”

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<sup>1500</sup>Lasor W. S. Tarshish // Bromiley G. W. The international standard Bible encyclopedia. –Revised ed. – Eerdmans, 1979–1988. – V. 4. – P. 734; Cook E. M. Ophir // Bromiley G. W. The international standard Bible encyclopedia. –Revised ed. – Eerdmans, 1979–1988. – V. 3. – P. 607; Haley, p. 378.

<sup>1501</sup>Keil, The Books of the Kings, p. 149.

<sup>1502</sup>Turretin F. Institutes of elenctic theology / Trans. G. M. Giger. Ed. J. T. Dennison Jr. – In 2 vols. – Phillipsburg, NJ: R & R Publishing, 1992. – V. 1. – P. 80.

<sup>1503</sup>Harris R. L. Inspiration and canonicity of the Bible. – Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1957, 1969. – P. 105.

<sup>1504</sup>Haley, p. 317.

*(1) Possibly, the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah and the Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel are the same.*<sup>1505</sup>

*(2) Possibly, these events are recorded in both books.*<sup>1506</sup>

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1 Kin 15:33 – “In the third year of Asa king of Judah, Baasha the son of Ahijah became king over all Israel at Tirzah, {and reigned} twenty-four years.”

2 Chr 15:19-16:1 – “And there was no more war until the thirty-fifth year of Asa's reign. In the thirty-sixth year of Asa's reign Baasha king of Israel came up against Judah.”

*(1) The thirty-five years of 2 Chr 15:19-16 are dated from the time the kingdom of Israel was divided (895 BC). The name “Asa” was added later.*¹⁵⁰⁷

*(2) There was a confusion of the letters י (nine) and ל (thirty). We should read in 2 Chr 15:16, “...until the 15th year of Aca’s reign of,” and in 2 Chr 16:1, “In the 16th year of Asa’s reign.”*¹⁵⁰⁸

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1 Kin 15:33 – “In the third year of Asa king of Judah, Baasha the son of Ahijah became king over all Israel at Tirzah, {and reigned} twenty-four years.”

1 Kin 15:16 – “Now there was war between Asa and Baasha king of Israel all their days.”

2 Chr 15:19-16:1 – “And there was no more war until the thirty-fifth year of Asa's reign. In the thirty-sixth year of Asa's reign Baasha king of Israel came up against Judah.”

*There were constant skirmishes between Asa and Baasha, but no war until the 36th year (or the 16th year – see above).*<sup>1509</sup>

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2 Kin 8:26 – “Ahaziah {was} twenty-two years old when he became king.”

2 Chr. 22:2 (Masoretic Text) – Ahaziah {was} forty-two years old when he became king.”

2 Chr 21:20 – Jehoram, the father of Ahaziah, died at age forty.

*In the light of 2 Chronicles 21:20, 2 Kings 8:26 must be correct. The Syrian translation, the Septuagint, and other Hebrew texts have 22 years in 2 Chronicles 22:2*¹⁵¹⁰.

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<sup>1505</sup>ibid, p. 165.

<sup>1506</sup>ibid.

<sup>1507</sup>Thiele E. R. The mysterious numbers of the Hebrew kings. – Rev. ed. – Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1983. – P. 84.

<sup>1508</sup>Payne, p. 113; Keil, Delitzsch, Commentary on the Old Testament, v. 3, p. 623.

<sup>1509</sup>Blomberg, Legitimacy and limits, p. 163; Keil, Delitzsch, Commentary on the Old Testament, v. 3, p. 622.

<sup>1510</sup>Payne, p. 124; Harris, p. 114-115

2 Kin 9:27 – “When Ahaziah the king of Judah saw {this,} he fled by the way of the garden house. And Jehu pursued him and said, ‘Shoot him too, in the chariot.’ {So they shot him} at the ascent of Gur, which is at Ibleam. But he fled to Megiddo and died there.”

2 Chr 22:9 – “He also sought Ahaziah, and they caught him while he was hiding in Samaria; they brought him to Jehu, put him to death and buried him.”

*(1) Haley, along with others, proposes that 2 Chronicles 22:9 is simply a condensed version of the story.*<sup>1511</sup>

*(2) Keil and Delitzsch think that Ahaziah headed for Jerusalem via Samaria, where he was captured. House adds that Ahaziah was led to Jehu, while the latter was at Megiddo.*<sup>1512</sup>

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2 Kin 12:13-14 – “But there were not made for the house of the LORD silver cups, snuffers, bowls, trumpets, any vessels of gold, or vessels of silver from the money which was brought into the house of the LORD; for they gave that to those who did the work, and with it they repaired the house of the LORD.”

2 Chr 24:14 – “When they had finished, they brought the rest of the money before the king and Jehoiada; and it was made into utensils for the house of the LORD, utensils for the service and the burnt offering, and pans and utensils of gold and silver.”

*The utensils were made after the temple restoration was completed.*¹⁵¹³

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2 Kin 16:7-9 – Assyria supported Ahaz.

2 Chr 28:16, 21 – Assyria did not aid Ahaz.

*In 2 Chronicles 28:21 we read, “It did not help him.” The aid he received from Assyria was short-lived and provided no permanent solution.*<sup>1514</sup>

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2 Kin 23:30 – “Servants (of Josiah) drove his body in a chariot from Megiddo, and brought him to Jerusalem and buried him in his own tomb.”

2 Chr 35:24 – “So his servants took him out of the chariot and carried him in the second chariot which he had, and brought him to Jerusalem. And he died.”

2 Chronicles 35:24 generalizes the account. In that passage, it is not stated that Josiah died in Jerusalem.

¹⁵¹¹Haley, p. 364-365. Also see Thompson J. A. 1, 2 Chronicles // The New American commentary. – Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994. – P. 304.

¹⁵¹²Keil, Delitzsch, Commentary on the Old Testament, v. 3, p. 242-243; House P. R. 1, 2 Kings // The New American commentary. – Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995. – P. 290.

¹⁵¹³Haley, p. 378-379.

¹⁵¹⁴Blomberg, Legitimacy and limits, p. 163.

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2 Kin 24:6; Jer 22:19; 36:30 – Jehoiakim died in Jerusalem

2 Chr 36:6 – “Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up against (Jehoiakim) and bound him with bronze {chains} to take him to Babylon.”

*It is not stated that Jehoiakim went to Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar intended to “take him to Babylon.” Haley feels that Jehoiakim died before that.<sup>1515</sup>*

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2 Kin 24:8 – “Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he became king.”

2 Chr 36:9 (Masoretic Text) – “Jehoiachin was eight years old when he became king.”

(1) There is a copyist error in 2 Chronicles 36:9.¹⁵¹⁶ The Septuagint, Syrian translation and other Hebrew manuscripts of 2 Chronicles 36:9 say 18 years.¹⁵¹⁷

(2) Turretin suggests that at age 8, Jehoiachin began to reign with his father, while at age 18, he began his own reign.¹⁵¹⁸

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1 Chr 3:15 – Among the sons of Josiah, Johanan and Shallum are listed.

In 2 Kin 23:30-34; 24:17, they are not mentioned.

*Most likely, Johanan died at an early age, and Shallum is Jehoiakim (see Jer 22:11).*

## **B. Other Discrepancies within the Old Testament**

Gen. 1:11 – “Then God said, ‘Let the earth sprout vegetation...’”

Gen 2:4-5 – “This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made earth and heaven. Now no shrub of the field was yet in the earth, and no plant of the field had yet sprouted, for the LORD God had not sent rain upon the earth, and there was no man to cultivate the ground.”

Gen 2:8-9 – “The LORD God planted a garden toward the east, in Eden; and there He placed the man whom He had formed. Out of the ground the LORD God caused to grow every tree...”

*Genesis 2:4-5 refers to the time before the third day of creation.*

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<sup>1515</sup>Haley, p. 374-375.

<sup>1516</sup>Archer, Alleged errors, p. 60; Kaiser, p. 53.

<sup>1517</sup>Harris, p. 105; Payne, p. 124.

<sup>1518</sup>Turretin, v. 1, p. 78.



Genesis 2:8-9 refers to the planting of the Garden of Eden.<sup>1519</sup>

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Gen 6:19 – “And of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every {kind} into the ark, to keep {them} alive with you; they shall be male and female.”

Gen 7:2-3 – “You shall take with you of every clean animal by sevens, a male and his female; and of the animals that are not clean two, a male and his female; also of the birds of the sky, by sevens.”

*(1) In Genesis 7:2-3, God gave a more exact indication of both the number of animals and their type.*¹⁵²⁰

*(2) A greater number of animals were needed to make sacrifices.*¹⁵²¹

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Gen 15:13 – “[God] said to Abram, ‘Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years.’”

Ex 12:40 – “Now the time that the sons of Israel lived in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years.”

*(1) The oppression of Israel began after the death of Joseph (Exodus 1:8), that is, 30 years later.*

*(2) An example of round numbers.*<sup>1522</sup>

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Gen 15:16 – “Then in the fourth generation they will return here, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete.”

*Most likely, the word “generation” means “century,” since the descendants of Abraham returned to Palestine 400 years later.*¹⁵²³ *In Genesis 15:13, God foretold that the Israel “will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years.” Keil and Delitzsch note that since, during that time, a person’s life expectancy was about 100 years, that made the identification of a generation with a century understandable.*¹⁵²⁴

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Gen 17:17 – “Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, ‘Will a child be born to a man one hundred years old?’”

Heb 11:12 – “Therefore there was born even of one man, and him as good as dead at that, {as many descendants} as the stars of heaven in number.”

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<sup>1519</sup>Shedd, p. 122.

<sup>1520</sup>Kaiser, Hard sayings of the Bible, p. 111.

<sup>1521</sup>Archer G. L. Encyclopedia of Bible difficulties. – Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1982. – P. 81.

<sup>1522</sup>Turretin, v. 1, p. 80.

<sup>1523</sup>Haley, p. 416.

<sup>1524</sup>Keil, Delitzsch, Commentary on the Old Testament, v. 1, p. 138.

Gen 25:1-2 – “Now Abraham took another wife, whose name was Keturah. She bore to him Zimran and Jokshan and Medan and Midian and Ishbak and Shuah.”

*(1) Haley thinks that as a result of God’s miraculous dealings with Abraham, enabling him to bear Isaac, he retained that ability to bear other children after him.*<sup>1525</sup>

*(2) One must note that 13 years before the birth of Isaac, Abraham was able to bare Ishmael.*

*(3) Keil and Delitzsch hold to the theory that Abraham took Keturah before the death of Sarah. The passage is not in chronological order. In 1 Chronicles 1:32 and Genesis 25:6, Keturah is not called Abraham’s wife, but his concubine.*<sup>1526</sup>

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Gen 17:25 – “And Ishmael his son was thirteen years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin” (before the birth of Isaac).

Gen 21:15-19 – “(Hagar) left the boy under one of the bushes... God heard the lad crying... ‘Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him by the hand’... she went and filled the skin with water and gave the lad a drink.”

The description in Genesis 21 can apply to a thirteen-year-old boy.

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Gen 21:31 – “Therefore (Abraham) he called that place Beersheba (בְּאֵר שֶׁבַע), because there the two of them took an oath.”

Gen 26:33 – “So (Isaac) called it Shibah; therefore the name of the city is Beersheba (בְּאֵר שֶׁבַע) to this day.”

*Isaac gave the place the same name that Abraham did. Isaac did the same to the wells of his father, which the Philistines had seized (see Gen 26:18).*<sup>1527</sup>

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Gen 22:2 – “(God) said, ‘Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering’” (see Heb 11:17).

Abraham had seven sons (see Gen 16:4; 25:1-2)

*(1) Isaac was the only “beloved” son of Abraham.*¹⁵²⁸

(2) The “sacrifice” of Isaac was a type of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the only-Begotten Son of the Father (see Jn 3:16).

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<sup>1525</sup>Haley, p. 318.

<sup>1526</sup>Keil, Delitzsch, Commentary on the Old Testament, v. 1, p. 167.

<sup>1527</sup>Haley, p. 410.

<sup>1528</sup>Ibid, p. 380.

Gen 24:4 – Abraham: “But you will go to my country and to my relatives, and take a wife for my son Isaac.”

Gen 28:2 – Isaac to Jacob: “Arise, go to Paddan-aram (in Syria), to the house of Bethuel your mother's (Rebekkah's) father; and from there take to yourself a wife.”<sup>1529</sup>

Neh 9:7 – “You are the LORD God, Who chose Abram And brought him out from Ur of the Chaldees (in Babylon), and gave him the name Abraham.”

*The word מִלְּךָ (relatives) in Genesis 24:4 does not have to refer to Abraham's birthplace, but to his kindred.<sup>1530</sup> Abraham's kindred were located in Syria as well as Babylon. The important thing about Isaac's bride was not her geographical location, but her family connection with Abraham.*

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Gen 25:26 – “Afterward his brother came forth with his hand holding on to Esau's heel, so his name was called Jacob.”

Gen 27:36 – “Then (Esau) said, ‘Is he not rightly named Jacob, for he has supplanted me these two times?’”

The name “Jacob” can mean “grasp” or “supplant.”¹⁵³¹

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Gen 32:3 – “Then Jacob sent messengers before him to his brother Esau in the land of Seir, the country of Edom.”

Gen 36:6-8 – After Jacob's return, Esau “went to {another} land away from his brother Jacob... So Esau lived in the hill country of Seir; Esau is Edom.”

*Possibly, Esau temporarily resided in Edom at the time Jacob was returning to Canaan.<sup>1532</sup>*

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Gen 33:19 – “(Abraham) bought the piece of land where he had pitched his tent from the hand of the sons of Hamor, Shechem's father, for one hundred pieces of money.”

Josh 24:32 – “Now they buried the bones of Joseph, which the sons of Israel brought up from Egypt, at Shechem, in the piece of ground which Jacob had bought from the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for one hundred pieces of money; and they became the inheritance of Joseph's sons.”

¹⁵²⁹Madvig D. H. Paddan-Aram // Bromiley G. W. The international standard Bible encyclopedia. – Revised ed. – Eerdmans, 1979–1988. – V. 3. – P. 627.

¹⁵³⁰Harris, p. 116; Brown F., Driver S. R., Briggs C. A. Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English lexicon. – Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977. – P. 409.

¹⁵³¹Haley, p. 315.

¹⁵³²Ibid, p. 415-416.

- (1) *Jacob purchased for a second time the same property that Abraham had purchased, similar to how Isaac had to contend for the wells that Abraham had previously dug (see Gen 26:18-20).*¹⁵³³
- (2) *Jacob bought more land surrounding the parcel that Abraham had bought.*¹⁵³⁴
- (3) *Joshua 24:32 may contain a copyist error ("Jacob" instead of "Abraham").*

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Gen 35:23-26 – “The sons of Leah: Reuben, Jacob's firstborn, then Simeon and Levi and Judah and Issachar and Zebulun; the sons of Rachel: Joseph and Benjamin; and the sons of Bilhah, Rachel's maid: Dan and Naphtali; and the sons of Zilpah, Leah's maid: Gad and Asher. These are the sons of Jacob who were born to him in Paddan-aram.”

Gen 35:16-19 – Benjamin was born in Bethlehem.

*Gen 35:23-26 is a generalization.*<sup>1535</sup>

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Gen 37:28, 36 – Joseph was sold to Midianites

Gen 37:25, 38 – Joseph was sold to Ishmaelites

*Possibly, the caravan was made up of both groups.*¹⁵³⁶

~~~~~

Gen 46:4 – “I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also surely bring you up again; and Joseph will close your eyes.”

Acts 7:15 – “And Jacob went down to Egypt and {there} he and our fathers died.” (see Gen 49:33)

(1) *God brought up again to Canaan not Jacob, but his descendants.*<sup>1537</sup>

(2) *Jacob was buried in Canaan.*

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Ex 2:18 – “When they came to Reuel their father...” (the father of Moses' wife)

Ex 4:18; 18:5 – The father-in-law (יִתְרוֹ) of Moses was Jethro.

Num 10:29 – “Then Moses said to Hobab the son of Reuel the Midianite, Moses' father-in-law (יִתְרוֹ).”

Judg 4:11 – The father-in-law (יִתְרוֹ) of Moses was Hobab.

¹⁵³³Archer, Encyclopedia, p. 379-380.

¹⁵³⁴Ibid.

¹⁵³⁵Haley, p. 367.

¹⁵³⁶Ibid, p. 339.

¹⁵³⁷Haley, p. 345.

Possibly, Jethro and Hobab are the same person.¹⁵³⁸ Haley believes that Reuel is the grandfather of Moses' wife.¹⁵³⁹ So affirms the Aramaic Targums as well.¹⁵⁴⁰

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Ex 6:3 – “And I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as God Almighty, but {by} My name, Yahweh (יהוה), I did not make Myself known to them.”

Gen 14:22 – “Abram said to the king of Sodom, “I have sworn to the Yahweh (יהוה) God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth” (also see Gen 15:2, 8 and others)

(1) Haley proposes that: (a) either Abraham knew the name Yahweh, but did not understand its meaning, or (b) that Moses introduced the name into the text of Genesis 14:22 in anticipation of the revelation of that Name that was to come.<sup>1541</sup>

(2) In the opinion of Keil and Delitzsch, in Exodus 6:3, God was announcing that from that time forward He was going to reveal His nature as Yahweh by accomplishing deliverance for His covenant people.<sup>1542</sup>

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Ex 6:14-20 – “These are the heads of their fathers' households... These are the names of the sons of Levi according to their generations: Gershon and Kohath... The sons of Kohath: Amram and Izhar and Hebron and Uzziel... Amram married his father's sister Jochebed, and she bore him Aaron and Moses.”

According to Numbers 3:27-28, the number of Kohath's descendants at the time of the Exodus was already 8600.

The Exodus from Egypt occurred 400 years after Jacob and his sons went down to Egypt. Yet, at the time of the Exodus, Moses was only 80 years old, and before him, Amram lived a total of 137 years, and Kohath – 133 (Ex 6:16-20).

In 1 Chronicles 7:20-27, between Ephriam and Joshua were nine generations.

(1) In genealogies, names are sometimes omitted.¹⁵⁴³ The claim that someone “bore” someone does not always indicate an immediate direct descendant.¹⁵⁴⁴

(2) Keil and Delitzsch feel that in Exodus 6:14, the term “fathers' households” (בֵּית־אֲבוֹתָם) is a technical term for a family unit consisting of many generations and named after the patriarch of that family unit.¹⁵⁴⁵

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<sup>1538</sup>Haley, p. 452.

<sup>1539</sup>Ibid, p. 452.

<sup>1540</sup>Keil, Delitzsch, Commentary on the Old Testament, v. 1, p. 281-282.

<sup>1541</sup>Haley, p. 421.

<sup>1542</sup>Keil, Delitzsch, Commentary on the Old Testament, v. 1, p. 304.

<sup>1543</sup>See, for example, 1 Chronicles 2:31, where Ahlai is the son of Sheshan, yet he was really his grandson (cf. 1 Chr 2:34-35).

<sup>1544</sup>Archer, Encyclopedia, p. 111-112; Kaiser, p. 140.

<sup>1545</sup>Keil, Delitzsch, Commentary on the Old Testament, v. 1, p. 305.

Gen 15:18 – “To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates.”

Num 34:10-12; Josh. 13:9-12 – The territory of Israel did not extend to the River Euphrates.

*Israel received its full inheritance during the reigns of David and Solomon (see 1 Kin 4:24).*

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Ex 18:25; Num 32:8 – Moses appointed leaders and spies.

Deut 1:9-18; Deut 1:22 – The people asked Moses to appoint leaders, and proposed nominees for the spies.

*Moses allowed the people to participate in these events.*¹⁵⁴⁶

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Ex 19:11, 18 – The Law was given on Mt. Sinai.

Deut 4:10-15 – The Law was given “at Horeb.”

*Either those names are interchangeable, or Sinai is located in the region of Horeb.*<sup>1547</sup>

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Ex 20:24 – “You shall make an altar of earth for Me.”

Ex 27:1 – “And you shall make the altar of acacia wood.”

*The frame of the altar was made from wood and filled with earth.*¹⁵⁴⁸

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Ex 20 – the contents of the Ten Commandments differ from the Deuteronomy account, especially in numbers 5-10.

Deut 5 – the contents of the Ten Commandments differ from the Exodus account, especially in numbers 5-10.

*Deuteronomy 5 contains an inspired adaptation of the version in Exodus 20, made before the entrance into Canaan.*<sup>1549</sup>

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¹⁵⁴⁶Haley, p. 350-351.

¹⁵⁴⁷Ibid, p. 376.

¹⁵⁴⁸Ibid, p. 427.

¹⁵⁴⁹Archer, Encyclopedia, p. 146-147; Kaiser, p. 172.

Ex 37:1 – “Now Bezalel made the ark of acacia wood.”

Deut 10:3 – “(Moses) made an ark of acacia wood.”

(1) Moses made a temporary ark, but Bezalel made the permanent model.

(2) Moses “made” means that he commissioned Bezalel to make the ark.

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Num 2:2-3 – The camp of Israel surrounded the tent of meeting.

Num 12:4 – The tent of meeting was outside the camp, therefore the people needed to “come out to the tent of meeting.”

*There was a certain distance between the tent of meeting and the surrounding camp of Israel, so that it was necessary to “come out” of the camp to approach the tent of meeting.*<sup>1550</sup>

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Num 4:2-3 – “Take a census of the descendants of Kohath from among the sons of Levi, by their families, by their fathers' households, from thirty years and upward, even to fifty years old, all who enter the service to do the work in the tent of meeting.”

Num 8:24 – “This is what {applies} to the Levites: from twenty-five years old and upward they shall enter to perform service in the work of the tent of meeting.”

Ezra 3:8 – “...appointed the Levites from twenty years and older to oversee the work of the house of the LORD.”

(1) Numbers 8:24 includes a period of training.

*(2) At the time of Ezra, there was a lack of Levites, therefore they enrolled them at age 20.*¹⁵⁵¹

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Num 14:25 – “Now the Amalekites and the Canaanites live in the valleys...”

Num 14:45 – “Then the Amalekites and the Canaanites who lived in that hill country...”

*Between the hills were valleys (plateaus), where the Amalekites and Canaanites lived.*<sup>1552</sup>

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Num 20:18-21; Judg 11:17-18 – Edom made no provision for Israel and did not permit them to pass through their territory.

¹⁵⁵⁰Haley, p. 378-379.

¹⁵⁵¹Archer, Encyclopedia, p. 134-135.

¹⁵⁵²Haley, p. 365.

Deut 2:4, 28-29 – Edom provided Israel with food and water.

The official position of Edom was not to support Israel, yet people on the outskirts nonetheless sold them provisions. The narrative of Deuteronomy nonetheless corresponds to other passages declaring that Israel bypassed the territory of Edom (Deut 2:8).

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According to Numbers 20:28 and 33:38, Aaron died on Mt. Hor.

According to Deuteronomy 10:6, Aaron was buried in Moserah.

*Most likely, Mt. Hor is located in the territory of Moserah.*<sup>1553</sup>

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Num 24:7 – The prophecy of Balaam: “Water will flow from his buckets, and his seed {will be} by many waters, and his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted.”

1 Kin 15:2-8 – Agag is first mentioned here.

*(1) Balaam was predicting the future.*¹⁵⁵⁴

*(2) Some assume that Agag is not a name, but a title for the king of the Amalekites.*¹⁵⁵⁵

*(3) Maybe another individual by that name is meant.*¹⁵⁵⁶

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Num 26:65 – “For the LORD had said of them, ‘They shall surely die in the wilderness.’ And not a man was left of them, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun.”

Deut 1:6ff – Moses speaks to those who survived the forty-year journey in the wilderness.

*In Numbers 26:64 we read, “Among these there was not a man of those who were numbered by Moses and Aaron the priest, who numbered the sons of Israel in the wilderness of Sinai.” According to Numbers 1:2-3, Moses numbered “every male, head by head from twenty years old and upward.” Some of those not numbered may have survived.*<sup>1557</sup>

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The list of the encampments of the camp of Israel in Numbers 33:44-49 does not correspond to the list in Numbers 21:10-20.

¹⁵⁵³Archer, Encyclopedia, p. 147.

¹⁵⁵⁴Haley, p. 394.

¹⁵⁵⁵Ibid.

¹⁵⁵⁶Ibid.

¹⁵⁵⁷Ibid, p. 357-358.

*Haley suggests that: (1) different names were used for the same places, (2) since the camp of Israel was huge, it occupied more than one location, or (3) one list records the places where Moses camped with the tent of meeting.*¹⁵⁵⁸

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Deut 2:19 – “I will not give you any of the land of the sons of Ammon as a possession.”

Josh 13:24-25 – “Moses also gave {an inheritance} to the tribe of Gad, to the sons of Gad, according to their families. Their territory was Jazer, and all the cities of Gilead, and half the land of the sons of Ammon, as far as Aroer which is before Rabbah.”

*Israel inhabited that portion of Ammon that had previously been conquered by Sihon, king of the Amorites, and by Og, the king of Bashan (see Num 32:33).*<sup>1559</sup>

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Josh 10:15 – “Then Joshua and all Israel with him returned to the camp to Gilgal” (also v. 43).

Josh 10:21 – “All the people returned to the camp to Joshua at Makkedah in peace.”

*Some assume the existence of a temporary camp at Makkedah.*¹⁵⁶⁰

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Josh 10:40; 11:14-15 – Joshua annihilated the inhabitants of Canaan.

Judg 1:28-35 – Joshua subjugated the inhabitants of Canaan.

*The Book of Joshua is speaking in generalities. Those cities that Joshua conquered, he annihilated. Yet, he did not conquer all the cities of Canaan.*<sup>1561</sup>

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Josh 11:19 – The Hivites were living in Gibeon.

2 Sam 21:2 – “The Gibeonites were not of the sons of Israel but of the remnant of the Amorites.”

*It is assumed that “Amorites” was a wider classification, to which the Hivites belonged.*¹⁵⁶²

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<sup>1558</sup>Ibid, p. 371-373.

<sup>1559</sup>Thompson J. A. Ammon // Bromiley G. W., The international standard Bible encyclopedia. – Revised ed. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979–1988. – V. 1. – P. 111.

<sup>1560</sup>Haley, p. 374.

<sup>1561</sup>Ibid, p. 324.

<sup>1562</sup>Ibid, p. 338.

Josh 11:23 – “So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the LORD had spoken to Moses” (also 21:43).

Josh 13:1 – “Now Joshua was old {and} advanced in years when the LORD said to him, ‘You are old {and} advanced in years, and very much of the land remains to be possessed.’” (also Judg 2:23).

*Joshua 11:23 records that Joshua had defeated the main tribes of Canaan. What remained was to take possession of the territory.*<sup>1563</sup>

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Josh 14:6 – Caleb, son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite

1 Chr 2:18 – Caleb, son of Hezron

The genealogy of Caleb in 1 Chronicles 2:18 follows the genealogy of David. This, then, is not the Caleb of Joshua’s time, but another Caleb.

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Josh 15:8 – Jerusalem is in the territory of Judah.

Josh 18:28 – Jerusalem is in the territory of Benjamin

*Jerusalem is located on the border of these territories.*<sup>1564</sup>

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Josh 18:1 – The tent of meeting was in Shiloh.

Josh 24:1, 26 – The tent of meeting was in Shechem.

*Shechem housed not the tent of meeting, but “sanctuary of the LORD,” which was a memorial altar previously built at that place by Abraham.*¹⁵⁶⁵

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Judg 4 – Barak (בָּרַק) was the deliverer of Israel.

1 Sam 12:11 – “Then the LORD sent Jerubbaal and Bedan (בִּדְאָן) and Jephthah and Samuel, and delivered you from the hands of your enemies all around.”

*The Septuagint and the Syrian and Arabic translations have “Barak.”*<sup>1566</sup>

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<sup>1563</sup>ibid, p. 376.

<sup>1564</sup>ibid, p. 375.

<sup>1565</sup>ibid, p. 377-378.

<sup>1566</sup>Haley, p. 323.

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Some cities belonging to Dan (Josh 19:40-41; Judg 18:2, 8) are also included in the list of cities belonging to Judah (Josh 15:33; 1 Chr 2:53).

Some cities belonging to Dan (Josh 21:23-24) are also included in the list of cities belonging to Ephraim (1 Chr 6:69).

*(1) In the course of time, one tribe may have transferred cities to another.*¹⁵⁶⁷

*(2) Maybe this is a copyist error.*¹⁵⁶⁸

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1 Sam 7:13; 2 Kin 6:23-24 – We encounter the phrase “did not come anymore.”

*This expression does not mean that these tribes never attacked Israel again, but only during the time that the context indicates.*<sup>1569</sup>

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1 Sam 10:8 – Samuel said to Saul: “And you shall go down before me to Gilgal; and behold, I will come down to you to offer burnt offerings and sacrifice peace offerings. You shall wait seven days until I come to you and show you what you should do.”

1 Sam 13:8-9 – A few years later: “Now he waited seven days, according to the appointed time set by Samuel, but Samuel did not come to Gilgal; and the people were scattering from him. So Saul said, ‘Bring to me the burnt offering and the peace offerings.’ And he offered the burnt offering.”

*For grammatical and contextual reasons, Keil and Delitzsch see in the phrase, “You shall go down before me to Gilgal” a conditional clause. We should read, “If/when you go down before me to Gilgal...,” which can apply to any future time.*¹⁵⁷⁰

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1 Sam 15:7-8 – “So Saul defeated the Amalekites, from Havilah as you go to Shur, which is east of Egypt. He captured Agag the king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword.”

1 Sam 30:1 – “The Amalekites had made a raid on the Negev and on Ziklag.”

*It seems that some Amalekites survived the assault by Saul.*<sup>1571</sup>

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¹⁵⁶⁷Ibid, p. 368-369.

¹⁵⁶⁸Ibid.

¹⁵⁶⁹Ibid, p. 344.

¹⁵⁷⁰Keil, Delitzsch, Commentary on the Old Testament, v. 2, p. 431.

¹⁵⁷¹Haley, p. 403.

1 Sam 15:35 – “Samuel did not see Saul again until the day of his death.”

1 Sam 19:24 – “(Saul) also stripped off his clothes, and he too prophesied before Samuel.”

*“Samuel did not see Saul again” should be understood as “Samuel no longer went to see Saul.”*¹⁵⁷²

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In 1 Sam 16:14-23, Saul becomes acquainted with David.

In 1 Sam 17:55-56, Saul apparently does not know David and asks, “Abner, whose son is this young man?”

*(1) The events are not presented in chronological order.*<sup>1573</sup>

*(2) Saul already knew David, but wanted to know more about his status in Israel, which was defined by the social position of his father.*<sup>1574</sup>

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1 Sam 17:1 – David killed Goliath.

2 Sam 21:19 – “Elhanan the son of Jaare-oregim the Bethlehemite killed Goliath the Gittite.”

The copyist of 2 Samuel 21:19 incorrectly copied the text. The original version must have read as follows:

וַיַּךְ אֶלְחָנָן בֶּן־יֵעָרִי אֶרְגִּים אֶת הַלְחָמִי אֶחָד מִגִּלְיָת הַגִּתִּית

“Elhanan the son of Jaare-oregim killed Lahmi, brother of Goliath the Gittite.”

After the introduction of this error, the text became:

וַיַּךְ אֶלְחָנָן בֶּן־יֵעָרִי אֶרְגִּים בֵּית הַלְחָמִי אֶת גִּלְיָת הַגִּתִּית

*“Elhanan the son of Jaare-oregim the Bethlehemite killed Goliath the Gittite.”*¹⁵⁷⁵

*1 Chronicles 20:5 confirms this claim: “Elhanan the son of Jaare-oregim killed Lahmi, brother of Goliath the Gittite.”*¹⁵⁷⁶

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1 Sam 17:54 – “Then David took the Philistine's head and brought it to Jerusalem, but he put his weapons in his tent.”

2 Sam 5:6 – “Now the king (David) and his men went to Jerusalem against the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land, and they said to David, ‘You shall not come in here.’”

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<sup>1572</sup>Ibid, p. 358-359.

<sup>1573</sup>Weeks N. The sufficiency of Scripture. – Edinburg: Banner of Truth, 1988. – P. 63.

<sup>1574</sup>Keil, Delitzsch, Commentary on the Old Testament, v. 2, p. 489.

<sup>1575</sup>Kaiser, p. 212.

<sup>1576</sup>Weeks, p. 71.

*Joshua captured the city of Jerusalem (Josh 12:10), but the attached fortress was not taken until David's time: "Nevertheless, David captured the stronghold of Zion, that is the city of David" (2 Sam 5:7).<sup>1577</sup> Joshua 15:63 records, "Now as for the Jebusites, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the sons of Judah could not drive them out; so the Jebusites live with the sons of Judah at Jerusalem until this day."*

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According to 1 Samuel 31:4, "Saul took his sword and fell on it."

According to an Amalekite, he killed Saul (2 Sam 1).

*We have no assurance that the Amalekite was telling the truth. Possibly, he was seeking a reward from David.*¹⁵⁷⁸

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2 Sam 8:18 – "David's sons were chief ministers" (literally כְּהֹנִיִּים = "priests").

*We must understand this in the translated sense as "ministers." David's sons held a privileged position, but were not priests.*<sup>1579</sup>

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According to 2 Sam 14:27, Absalom had three sons.

According to 2 Sam 18:18, Absalom "set up for himself a pillar which is in the King's Valley, for he said, 'I have no son to preserve my name.'"

*Possibly, all of Absalom's sons died before that time.*¹⁵⁸⁰

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2 Sam 15:7 – "Now it came about at the end of forty years (of David's reign) that Absalom said to the king, 'Please let me go and pay my vow which I have vowed to the LORD, in Hebron'"

*We assume a copyist mistake here.*<sup>1581</sup>

*Other manuscripts have the variant "four years."*<sup>1582</sup>

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¹⁵⁷⁷Haley, p. 405.

¹⁵⁷⁸Kaiser, p. 218.

¹⁵⁷⁹Haley, p. 333.

¹⁵⁸⁰Archer, Encyclopedia, p. 184.

¹⁵⁸¹Ibid, p. 393.

¹⁵⁸²New American Standard Bible: 1995 update. – La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995.

1 Kin 15:2 – “(Abijam) reigned three years in Jerusalem; and his mother's name was Maacah the daughter of Abishalom.”

1 Kin 15:10 – “(Asa, son of Abijam) reigned forty-one years in Jerusalem; and his mother's name was Maacah the daughter of Abishalom.”

(1) Keil and Delitzsch suggest that Maacah was not Asa's literal mother, but filled the political position of the queen mother as described in 1 Kings 15:13: “(Asa) also removed Maacah his mother from {being} queen mother.” Possibly, Asa's natural mother had passed away, and so his grandmother filled that position.¹⁵⁸³
(2) The Septuagint of 1 Kings 15:10, 13 reads, “Ana, the daughter of Abishalom.”¹⁵⁸⁴

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1 Kin 6:1 – “Now it came about in the four hundred and eightieth year after the sons of Israel came out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel...”

Yet, in the period from the Exodus from Egypt (about 1440 BC) to the reign of Solomon (about 960 BC) we must account for the wilderness wanderings (40 years), the period of the judges, the reign of Saul (40 years), and the reign of David (40 years).

*The reigns of the judges could have overlapped. They may have simultaneously ruled in different parts of the country.<sup>1585</sup>*

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1 Kin 21:1, 19 – “In the place where the dogs licked up the blood of Naboth the dogs will lick up your blood, even yours.” (in Jezreel)

1 Kin 22:38 – “They washed the chariot by the pool of Samaria, and the dogs licked up his blood (now the harlots bathed themselves {there},) according to the word of the LORD which He spoke.”

“In the place” is not to be understood as the same city, but in like manner.

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2 Kin 15:27 – “In the fifty-second year of Azariah king of Judah, Pekah son of Remaliah became king over Israel in Samaria, {and reigned} twenty years” (suggested: 739-719).

2 Kin 17:1 – “In the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah, Hoshea the son of Elah became king over Israel in Samaria, {and reigned} nine years” (suggested: 719-710).

Yet, Assyria conquered the Northern Kingdom in 722.

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<sup>1583</sup>Keil, Delitzsch, Commentary on the Old Testament, v. 3, p. 153.

<sup>1584</sup>Haley, p. 323.

<sup>1585</sup>Ibid, p. 426.

*Pekah ruled simultaneously with Menahem (10 years) and with Pekahiah (2 years) in the Northern Kingdom. He began his co-rule in 752, but his sole rule in 739. This is confirmed by that fact that in the second year of Pekah's reign, in 750, Jotham began reigning with his father Uzziah in Judah (2 Kin 15:32). In addition, Ahaz ascended the throne in 735, that is, in the seventeenth year of Pekah (2 Kin 16:1).<sup>1586</sup> So then, Pekah reigned from 752 to 732, and Hosea – from 731-722.*

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1 Chr 3:17-19 – “The sons of Jeconiah, the prisoner, {were} Shealtiel his son, and Malchiram, Pedaiah, Shenazzar, Jekamiah, Hoshama and Nedabiah. The sons of Pedaiah {were} Zerubbabel and Shimei.”

Ezra 3:2 – “Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel”

Matt 1:12 – “Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel”

(1) The widow of Pedaiah married Shealtiel and bore a son by him for his departed brother Pedaiah (see Deut 25:5).¹⁵⁸⁷

(2) Pedaiah died and Shealtiel adopted Zerubbabel.¹⁵⁸⁸

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1 Chr 23:3-4 – “The Levites were numbered from thirty years old and upward, and their number by census of men was 38,000. Of these, 24,000 were to oversee the work of the house of the LORD; and 6,000 were officers and judges.”

1 Chr 23:27-28 – “For by the last words of David the sons of Levi were numbered from twenty years old and upward. For their office is to assist the sons of Aaron with the service of the house of the LORD.”

*During David's time, there was a greater need for ministers for the house of the Lord. Therefore, David lowered the age from 30 to 20.<sup>1589</sup>*

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2 Chr 4:2 – “Also he made the cast {metal} sea, ten cubits from brim to brim, circular in form, and its height {was} five cubits and its circumference thirty cubits.”

The diameter is ten cubits, which, when multiplied by π (3.14), yields not 30 cubits, but 31.4 cubits.

There is no need for that degree of precision.

If we take into consideration the thickness of the sea, the measurement is exact.¹⁵⁹⁰

¹⁵⁸⁶Beegle D. Scripture, tradition, and infallibility. – Grand Rapid, MI: Eerdmans, 1973. – P. 180-183; Lindsell H. The battle for the Bible. – Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976. – P. 173.

¹⁵⁸⁷Archer, Encyclopedia, p. 216.

¹⁵⁸⁸Ibid, p. 216.

¹⁵⁸⁹Merrill E. H. 1 Chronicles // Walvoord J. F., Zuck R. B. The Bible knowledge commentary. – Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985. – V. 1. – P. 612; Kaiser, p. 164.

¹⁵⁹⁰Lindsell, p. 165.

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2 Chr 21:16-17 (Masoretic Text) – “Then the LORD stirred up against Jehoram the spirit of the Philistines and the Arabs who... carried away all the possessions found in the king's house together with his sons and his wives, so that no son was left to him except Jehoahaz, the youngest of his sons.”

2 Chr 22:1 – “Then the inhabitants of Jerusalem made Ahaziah, his youngest son, king in his place, for the band of men who came with the Arabs to the camp had slain all the older {sons.} So Ahaziah the son of Jehoram king of Judah began to reign.”

*Jehoahaz (יְהוֹאָחָז) and Ahaziah (אֲחַזְיָהוּ) are the same person. The difference in the names is that the abbreviation for Yahweh (יה) is placed at the beginning of the name Jehoahaz, but at the end of the name Ahaziah.*<sup>1591</sup>

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Ezra 2:1-2 – “Now these are the people of the province who came up out of the captivity of the exiles whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away to Babylon, and returned to Jerusalem and Judah, each to his city. 2 These came with Zerubbabel...”

Neh 12:1 – “Now these are the priests and the Levites who came up with Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel...”

Ezra 5:14-16 – “Also the gold and silver utensils of the house of God... King Cyrus took from the temple of Babylon and they were given to one whose name was Sheshbazzar... Then that Sheshbazzar came {and} laid the foundations of the house of God in Jerusalem.”

*(1) Zerubbabel is another name for Sheshbazzar.*¹⁵⁹² *We recall that another pagan king renamed the Hebrews Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah (Dan 1:7).*

*(2) Sheshbazzar died, and Zerubbabel took his place.*¹⁵⁹³

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Much variation exists between the lists of those returning from Babylon to Palestine in Ezra 2 and Neh 7.

*(1) Nehemiah is relating the list he had available: “Then I found the book of the genealogy of those who came up first in which I found the following record” (Neh 7:5). Yet, we do not know how accurate that list was.*

*(2) Keil and Delitzsch claim that we find in these texts “such variations as involuntarily arise in transcribing long lists of names and figures.”*<sup>1594</sup>

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Ezra 2:69 – “According to their ability they gave to the treasury for the work 61,000 gold drachmas.”

¹⁵⁹¹Harris, p. 115.

¹⁵⁹²Archer, Encyclopedia, p. 216.

¹⁵⁹³Ibid.

¹⁵⁹⁴Keil, Delitzsch, Commentary on the Old Testament, v. 4, p. 20.

Neh 7:70-72 – The sum was 41,000 gold drachmas.

Some assume a copyist error occurred here.

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Neh 8:17 – “The sons of Israel had indeed not done so from the days of Joshua the son of Nun to that day” (concerning the Feast of Booths).

Ezra 3:4 – The Feast of Booth was observed in the days of Zerubbabel.

*It is possible that the feast was fully celebrated only in Nehemiah’s time. Ezra chp. 3 reveals that the people actually built booths at that time.*<sup>1595</sup>

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Jer 36:30 – “Therefore thus says the LORD concerning Jehoiakim king of Judah, ‘He shall have no one to sit on the throne of David.’”

2 Kin 24:6 – “So Jehoiakim slept with his fathers, and Jehoiachin his son became king in his place.”

*Jehoiachin reigned only 3 months, and was then replaced by his uncle Zedekiah.*¹⁵⁹⁶

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Hos 8:13 – “Now He will remember their iniquity, and punish {them} for their sins; they will return to Egypt.”

Hos 7:16 – “This {will be} their derision in the land of Egypt.”

Hos 11:5 – “They will not return to the land of Egypt; but Assyria – he will be their king, because they refused to return {to Me.}”

*In this book, “Egypt” is a symbol of the future exile to Assyria (cf. Hos 9:3).*<sup>1597</sup>

### **C. Discrepancies between the Old and New Testament Narratives**

According to Gen 11:26, “Terah lived seventy years, and became the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran.”

According to Gen 11:32, Terah died at the age of 205.

According to Acts 7:4, Abram left Haran after the death of his father Terah.

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<sup>1595</sup>Haley, p. 417.

<sup>1596</sup>*ibid*, p. 346.

<sup>1597</sup>Chisholm R. B. Hosea // Walvoord J. F., Zuck R. B. The Bible Knowledge commentary. – Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985. – V. 1. – P. 1396-1367, 1402.

According to Gen 12:4, Abram was 75 years old when he left Haran.

*(1) Abram may not have been the firstborn of Terah. Possibly, he is mentioned first because he is the most important of the three.*

*(2) Steven is not an inspired author and may have erred in historical details.*

*(3) The Samaritan Pentateuch states that Terah died at age 145.<sup>1598</sup> Philo agrees with Steven.<sup>1599</sup>*

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Gen 25:1-2 – “Now Abraham took another wife, whose name was Keturah. She bore to him Zimran and Jokshan and Medan and Midian and Ishbak and Shuah.”

Gal 4:22 – “For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the bondwoman and one by the free woman.”

Abraham had eight sons, but only two of them had significance in Paul’s argument.¹⁶⁰⁰

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Gen 33:19 – “(Abraham) bought the piece of land where he had pitched his tent from the hand of the sons of Hamor, Shechem’s father, for one hundred pieces of money.”

Gen 49:30 – Jacob charged his sons to bury him “in the cave that is in the field of Machpelah, which is before Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought along with the field from Ephron the Hittite for a burial site.”

Gen 50:13 – “His sons carried (Jacob) to the land of Canaan and buried him in the cave of the field of Machpelah before Mamre (that is, Hebron), which Abraham had bought along with the field for a burial site from Ephron the Hittite.”

Acts 7:15-16 – “And Jacob went down to Egypt and {there} he and our fathers died. {From there} they were removed to Shechem and laid in the tomb which Abraham had purchased for a sum of money from the sons of Hamor in Shechem.”

According to Josephus, the sons of Jacob were buried not in Shechem, but in Hebron (i.e., Mamre) (*Jewish antiquities*, 2.8.2).

*(1) Steven meant that Abraham purchased from sons of Hamor a parcel, which later became a gravesite.<sup>1601</sup> The phrase “they were removed to Shechem and laid in the tomb” refers not to Jacob, but to “our fathers,” that is, the sons of Jacob. Jacob was buried in the cave in the field of Machpelah. Joseph was buried in Shechem*

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<sup>1598</sup>Wenham J. W. *Christ and the Bible*. – Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1972. – P. 168. Fuller notes other parallels between Steven and the Samaritan Pentateuch (Fuller D. P. *The nature of Biblical inerrancy* // *Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation*. 1972. 24. P. 48).

<sup>1599</sup>Beegle, p. 188.

<sup>1600</sup>George T. *Galatians* // *The New American commentary*, electronic ed. Logos Library System. – Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001. – P. 336

<sup>1601</sup>Archer, *Encyclopedia*, p. 379-380.

*(Josh 24:32), therefore his brothers may have been buried there as well. Jerome testifies that he saw the tomb of Jacob in Shechem.*<sup>1602</sup>

*(2) Steven is not an inspired author and may have erred in historical details.*

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Gen 46:26-27 – “All the persons belonging to Jacob, who came to Egypt, his direct descendants, not including the wives of Jacob's sons, {were} sixty-six persons in all, and the sons of Joseph, who were born to him in Egypt were two; all the persons of the house of Jacob, who came to Egypt, {were} seventy.”

Ex 1:5 – “All the persons who came from the loins of Jacob were seventy in number, but Joseph was {already} in Egypt.”

Acts 7:14 – “Then Joseph sent {word} and invited Jacob his father and all his relatives to come to him, seventy-five persons {in all}.”

*(1) Steven based his version on the Septuagint, which, in Exodus 1:5, speaks of 75 people (also noted in the Qumran manuscript 4QExEd). In addition, the Septuagint of Genesis 46:26 speaks not of two sons of Joseph, but nine.*¹⁶⁰³

*(2) The sum 75 includes the nine wives of Jacob's sons, but excludes Jacob, Joseph, and Joseph's two sons.*¹⁶⁰⁴

*(3) Steven is speaking of those that Joseph “invited” to Egypt. This excludes Joseph, his two sons, and the two sons of Judah, who were born in Egypt, but includes Diana and the nine wives of Jacob's sons, that is 75 people.*¹⁶⁰⁵

(4) Steven is not an inspired author and may have erred in historical details.

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Gen 47:31 – “Then Israel bowed {in worship} at the head of the bed.”

Heb 11:21 – Israel “blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, {leaning} on the top of his staff.”

*(1) The words “bed” and “staff” are made up of the same consonants (מטה). The vowels were added to the Hebrew text later.*<sup>1606</sup>

*(2) In the Septuagint of Genesis 47:31, we read “staff.”*<sup>1607</sup>

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Ex 12:40 – “Now the time that the sons of Israel lived in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years.”

Gal 3:17 – “What I am saying is this: the Law, which came four hundred and thirty years later, does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise.”

¹⁶⁰²Turretin, v. 1, p. 84.

¹⁶⁰³Archer, Encyclopedia, p. 378-379; Kaiser, Hard sayings of the Bible, p. 521; Harris, Inspiration and canonicity, p. 114.

¹⁶⁰⁴Haley, p. 389.

¹⁶⁰⁵Turretin, v. 1, p. 83.

¹⁶⁰⁶Archer, Encyclopedia, p. 421.

¹⁶⁰⁷Ibid.

(1) The term “promise” in Galatians 3:17 refers not to God’s promise to Abraham, given more than 430 years before the Law, but the final repetition of that promise to Jacob (see Gen 46:3-4).¹⁶⁰⁸

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Num 25:9 – “Those who died by the plague were 24,000.”

1 Cor 10:8 – “Twenty-three thousand fell in one day.”

- (1) The sum of those who perished was 23,500. This number could be rounded to either 23,000, or 24,000.*  
*(2) In 1 Corinthians 10:8, Paul is not referring to Numbers 25:9, but Exodus 32:28-35, where many people perished in connection with the golden calf. In Exodus 32:28, it is written that the Levites slew 3000 people, and in Exodus 32:25 that God struck down still others (supposedly another 20,000).*  
*(3) In Paul’s words, 23,000 perished in “one day.” Possibly, another 1000 perished later.<sup>1609</sup>*  
*(4) Paul excluded the leaders, who perished in Numbers 25:4.<sup>1610</sup>*

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1 Sam 13:1 (Masoretic Text) – Saul... reigned two years over Israel.

Acts 13:21 – “Then they asked for a king, and God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years.”

- (1) In the Masoretic Text of 1 Samuel 13:1, the word “forty” was omitted.*
(2) Saul reigned two years before he “chose for himself, men of Israel” (1 Sam 13:2).¹⁶¹¹

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1 Sam 21:1-6 – “Then David came to Nob to Ahimelech the priest... So the priest gave him consecrated {bread}.”

According to 1 Sam 22:20; 23:6; 30:7, etc., Abiathar is the son of Ahimelech, and the former served in David’s administration as a priest.

According to 2 Sam 8:17 and 1 Chr 18:16; 24:6, Ahimelech is the son of Abiathar, and the former served in David’s administration as a priest.

Mk 2:26 – “...how he entered the house of God in the time of Abiathar {the} high priest, and ate the consecrated bread.”

- (1) Abiathar is the son of Ahimelech and he served David on behalf of his father, the high priest Ahimelech.<sup>1612</sup>*

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<sup>1608</sup>Archer, Alleged errors, p. 76-77.

<sup>1609</sup>Lowery D. K. 1 Corinthians // Walvoord J. F., Zuck R. B. The Bible knowledge commentary. – Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985. – V. 2. – P. 526-527; Archer, Encyclopedia, p. 401.

<sup>1610</sup>Lowery, p. 526-527.

<sup>1611</sup>Archer, Encyclopedia, p. 171-172; Turretin, v. 1, p. 85.

<sup>1612</sup>Lindsell, c. 166-167.

(2) Bowman thinks that the original text of 2 Sam 8:17 was altered, and that the author of Chronicles worked off of this errant copy.<sup>1613</sup>

(3) Haley believes that, since Abiathar became better known than his father Ahimelech, Mark 2:6 already speaks of him as the high priest in anticipation of his future appointment.<sup>1614</sup>

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2 Chr 24:20-21 – “Then the Spirit of God came on Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest; and he stood above the people and said to them, ‘Thus God has said, ‘Why do you transgress the commandments of the LORD and do not prosper? Because you have forsaken the LORD, He has also forsaken you.’ So they conspired against him and at the command of the king they stoned him to death in the court of the house of the LORD.”

Zech 1:1 – “The word of the LORD came to Zechariah the prophet, the son of Berechiah.”

Matt 23:35 – “So that upon you may fall {the guilt of} all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.”

(1) There occurred a copyist error in Matthew 23:25, who confused the names of the fathers of the two Zechariahs.¹⁶¹⁵

(2) The prophet, of whom Jesus spoke, really was Zechariah, one of the minor prophets.¹⁶¹⁶

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In the genealogy of Matt 1:8, the names Ahaziah, Joash, and Amaziah are omitted

In the genealogy of Matt 1:11 the name Jehoiakim is omitted.

(1) In genealogies, names are often omitted. The term “bore” does not always refer to an immediate direct descendant. Matthew’s goal was to abbreviate the genealogy and form three groups of fourteen names, since the letters making up the name “David” numerically add up to fourteen.<sup>1617</sup>

(2) Turretin feels that in Matthew 1:8, the names Ahaziah, Joash, and Amaziah are omitted because they were descendants of Joram, who married the daughter of Ahab (2 Kin 8:18) and therefore partook of the curse on Ahab (see 1 Kin 21:29).<sup>1618</sup> He adds that in Matthew 1:11, the name Jehoiakim is omitted because in Jeremiah 22:19 it is written of him, “He will be buried with a donkey’s burial, dragged off and thrown out beyond the gates of Jerusalem.”

(3) Possibly, Matthew named Jehoiakim “Jeconiah,” since Matthew speaks of “Jeconiah and his brothers,” but the brothers not of Jeconiah, but of Jehoiakim became kings.<sup>1619</sup>

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<sup>1613</sup>Bowman J. Abiathar // Bromiley G. W. The international standard Bible encyclopedia. – Revised ed. – Eerdmans, 1979 –1988. – V. 1. – P. 7.

<sup>1614</sup>Haley, p. 320.

<sup>1615</sup>Barbieri L. A. Matthew //Walvoord J. F., Zuck R. B.The Bible knowledge commentary. – Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985. – V. 2. – P. 75.

<sup>1616</sup>Blomberg C. Matthew // The New American commentary. – Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992. – P. 349.

<sup>1617</sup>Kaiser, p. 49.

<sup>1618</sup>Turretin, v. 1, p. 75

<sup>1619</sup>Ibid, v. 1, p. 76.

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Jer 22:30 – Of Coniah (Jeconiah) it was written: “Thus says the LORD, ‘Write this man down childless, a man who will not prosper in his days; for no man of his descendants will prosper sitting on the throne of David or ruling again in Judah.’”

Matt 1:12 – “After the deportation to Babylon: Jeconiah became the father of Shealtiel, and Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel.”

Lk 3:27 – “...the son of Joanan, the son of Rhesa, the son of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, the son of Neri...”

*Luke writes of different individuals named Zerubbabel and Shealtiel. In Jeremiah 22:30, it is written that no descendant of Jeconiah would sit on David’s throne. Therefore, Jesus cannot be a physical descendant of Shealtiel, the son of Jeconiah, but he can be the descendant of Shealtiel, the son of Neri. Unlike Matthew who records Joseph’s genealogy, Luke records the actual physical ancestors of Jesus through Mary.*¹⁶²⁰

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Ex 2:14-15 – Moses was afraid of Pharaoh, when he fled from Egypt.

Heb 11:27 – Moses was not afraid of Pharaoh, when he fled from Egypt.

*(1) Haley suggests that Moses overcame his fear.*<sup>1621</sup>

*(2) O’Brian, together with others, feels that the author of Hebrews was speaking of the time Moses led Israel out of Egypt.*<sup>1622</sup>

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Ex 19:9, 18 – God Himself appeared on Mt. Sinai

Acts 7:38, 53; Gal 3:19; Heb 2:2 – God gave the Law through an angel.

(1) The New Testament gives the more precise account. We see a similar instance in Moses’ life, when “the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush,” who later identified himself as God (Ex 3:4). Similarly, in Ex 13:21 we read, “The LORD was going before them in a pillar of cloud by day... and in a pillar of fire by night,” yet in 14:19, “The angel of God, who had been going before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them.” As a rule, God employs intermediates as His representatives.

(2) The “Angel of the Lord” is most likely a pre-incarnate appearance of the Son of God. Thus, the “Angel,” who appeared on Sinai and gave the Law, could have been the Son of God.

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<sup>1620</sup>Barbieri, p. 18.

<sup>1621</sup>Haley, p. 424.

<sup>1622</sup>O’Brien P. T. The Letter to the Hebrews // The Pillar New Testament commentary. – Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: Eerdmans, 2010. – P. 433.

2 Chr 5:10 – There was nothing in the ark of the covenant except the two tablets, which Moses placed in them at Horeb.

According to Exodus 16:32-34, the vessel with manna was set “before” the ark of the covenant, and according to Numbers 17:10-11, Aaron’s staff was placed “before” it as well.

Heb 9:3-4 – “Behind the second veil there was a tabernacle which is called the Holy of Holies, having a golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which (ἐν ᾗ) was a golden jar holding the manna, and Aaron's rod which budded, and the tables of the covenant.”

*(1) The relative pronoun ἐν ᾗ (“in which”) could refer either to the ark of the covenant (κιβωτὸν), or to the tabernacle (σκηνὴ).*<sup>1623</sup>

*(2) The preposition ἐν can mean “in” or “near.”*<sup>1624</sup>

*(3) Some non-canonical books claim that there were other items in the ark of the covenant.*<sup>1625</sup>

*(4) By the time of 2 Chronicles, these additional items may have been lost or disintegrated. The tables, however, were made of stone.*

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Gen 11:12-14 – “Arpachshad lived thirty-five years, and became the father of Shelah... Shelah lived thirty years, and became the father of Eber” (the same in Genesis 10:24).

Lk 3:35-36 – “...the son of Shelah, the son of Cainan, the son of Arphaxad...”

*(1) A copyist error occurred.*¹⁶²⁶

(2) Luke follows the Septuagint, where Cainan is mentioned (both in Genesis 11:12-14, and in Genesis 10:24).

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1 Chr 3:19 – Abihud is not mentioned among the sons of Zerubbabel.

Matt 1:13 – “Zerubbabel was the father of Abihud.”

*Omission during copying?*

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Jer 22:30 – “Thus says the LORD, ‘Write this man (Jeconiah) down childless, a man who will not prosper in his days; for no man of his descendants will prosper sitting on the throne of David or ruling again in Judah.’”

Matt 1:12 – “Jeconiah became the father of Shealtiel, and Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel.”

*Jeconiah had no children in the sense of an heir to the throne of David.*¹⁶²⁷

¹⁶²³Turretin, v. 1, p. 84-85.

¹⁶²⁴Ibid.

¹⁶²⁵See *Lives of the Prophets* 2.11; Pseudo-Philo, *Biblical Antiquities* 26.12–15. Noted in O'Brien, p. 309-310.

¹⁶²⁶Turretin, v. 1, p. 73.

¹⁶²⁷Haley, p. 346.

D. Discrepancies between the Gospel Accounts

Matt 1:1-16 – The genealogy of Jesus differs from Luke 3:23-38 and follows the royal line of David.

Luke 3:23-38 – The genealogy of Jesus differs from Matthew 1:1-16 and does not follow the royal line of David.

*(1) According to the principle of levirate marriage (Deut 25:5-6), Eli, presumably the half brother of Jacob, married the widow of the deceased Jacob, who bore him Joseph. Therefore, even though Eli is the biological father of Joseph, Joseph's name is also included in the genealogy of Jacob. This theory was proposed by a certain Africanus, who claimed as his source the descendants of James, the half-brother of Jesus (see Eusebius, Church History, 1.7).*¹⁶²⁸

*(2) Luke's genealogy follows the natural line of Joseph, while Matthew lists the heirs to David's throne. Assuming Mary's father Jacob died without a son, Joseph, her husband, might become the heir of David's throne and thus enter Matthew's genealogy.*¹⁶²⁹

*(3) Matthew's genealogy belongs to Joseph, and Luke's – Mary. Consequently, we must understand the phrase "Jesus... being, as was supposed, the son of Joseph, the son of Eli" (Lk 3:23) in the sense "Jesus... being, as was supposed, the son of Joseph, but in fact the grandson of Eli (through Mary).*¹⁶³⁰

*(4) Mary had no brothers and so became the heiress of her father Eli. So that the heir would be a man, her father adopted Joseph, Mary's husband. As a result, Joseph entered into the genealogy of Luke instead of Mary.*¹⁶³¹

*Note: One must remember that Jesus "was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh" (Rom 1:3) and must "come forth from" David (2 Sam 7:12). If Luke's genealogy is Mary's, then Jesus would truly be a descendant of David. Several Fathers hold the view that Luke chp. 3 relates to Mary: Origen, Justin Martyr, Tertullian, and Athanasius. The Talmud also teaches that Mary is the daughter of Eli.*¹⁶³²

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Matt 3:14 – John the Baptism requests that Jesus baptizes him, showing he recognized Him as Messiah (See Matt 3:11).

Jn 1:31-33 – John did not know that Jesus was the Messiah until the Spirit descended on Him after His baptism.

*By means of the descent of the Spirit, God gave John the Baptist a supernatural confirmation of the messiahship of Jesus. John's conviction before that time was based on information gathered from others (Elizabeth, Mary).*

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According to Matthew and Mark, Jesus called His first disciples after they had been fishing and were mending their nets along the sea (Matt 4, Mk 1).

¹⁶²⁸Marshall I. H. The Gospel of Luke: A commentary on the Greek Text // New international Greek Testament Commentary. – Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1978. – P. 158-159.

¹⁶²⁹Ibid.

¹⁶³⁰Nolland J. Luke 1:1–9:20 // Word Biblical commentary. – Dallas, TX: Word, 2002. – P. 169-170

¹⁶³¹Ibid.

¹⁶³²Haley, p. 326

According to Luke, Jesus called His first disciples after the miraculous catch of fish (Lk 5).

According to John, Jesus became acquainted with His first disciples in Judea at the baptism of John the Baptist (Jn 1).

We can harmonize these accounts. Matthew and Mark omit the miraculous catch of fish. Before that time, Jesus had already become acquainted with His disciples in Judea. It is highly unlikely that the first disciples immediately abandoned everything and followed a stranger, as might be implied in Matthew and Mark.

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Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount on a mountain (Matt 5:1).

Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount on a level place (πεδινος) (Lk 6:17).

*(1) This could be a case of two separate incidents. The contents of the two sermons differ.*

*(2) In Isaiah 13:2, the word πεδινος ("level place") is used in the phrase "bare hill." So then, Jesus descended to a level place on the mountain.<sup>1633</sup>*

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Matt 7:11 – "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!"

Lk 11:13 – "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will {your} heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?"

(1) Possibly, these are two different instances.

(2) A textual variant in Luke 11:13, "good Spirit," was abbreviated to "good" in Matthew's Gospel, and became "Holy Spirit" in later copies of Luke.¹⁶³⁴

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Matt 8:5-6 – "And when Jesus entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, imploring Him, and saying, 'Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, fearfully tormented.'"

Luke 7:2-3 – "And a centurion's slave, who was highly regarded by him, was sick and about to die. When he heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders asking Him to come and save the life of his slave."

*The centurion did, in fact, send Jewish elders to Jesus. Matthew, however, presents the episode as if the centurion himself came. This is justifiable since the elders were the centurion's representatives.<sup>1635</sup>*

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¹⁶³³Blomberg, Legitimacy and limits, p. 147.

¹⁶³⁴Ibid, p. 146.

¹⁶³⁵Kaiser, p. 458.

Matt 9:18 – “A {synagogue} official came and bowed down before Him, and said, ‘My daughter has just died; but come and lay Your hand on her, and she will live.’”

Lk 8:41-42 – “And there came a man named Jairus, and he was an official of the synagogue; and he fell at Jesus' feet, and {began} to implore Him to come to his house; for he had an only daughter, about twelve years old, and she was dying” (cf. Mark 5:23).

*Matthew abbreviates the story.*¹⁶³⁶

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According to Mark 9:2, Jesus' transfiguration occurred six days after He predicted His sufferings.

According to Luke 9:28, Jesus' transfiguration occurred eight days after He predicted His sufferings.

*Luke wrote ὥσεί η̅μέραι ὀκτώ (about 8 days).*<sup>1637</sup>

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The Twelve disciples:

Matt 10:3 and Mk 3:18 – Thaddeus

Lk 6:16 – Judas, {son of} James

Acts 1:13 – Judas, son of James

*This is the same person. It is possible that Matthew and Mark use his alternative name to avoid associating him with Judas Iscariot. John, also wanting to avoid the confusion of names, wrote, “Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him” (Jn 14:22).*¹⁶³⁸

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Matt 10:9-10 – “Do not acquire... a staff.”

Mark 6:8-9 – “He instructed them that they should take nothing for {their} journey, except a mere staff.”

*What Jesus meant here is that the disciples could take a staff, but not a spare one. This would coincide with other instructions in Matthew's list, like “two coats, or sandals.” Of course, they would wear clothes and sandals, but they were not to take extra. Similarly, they were allowed one staff.*

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¹⁶³⁶Barbieri, p. 40; Marshall I. H. Biblical inspiration. – Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 1982. – P. 61.

¹⁶³⁷Blomberg, Legitimacy and limits, p. 159.

¹⁶³⁸Thaddaeus // Pfeiffer C. F., Vos H. F., Rea J. // The Wycliffe Bible encyclopedia. – Chicago: Moody Press, 1975.

After the feeding of the 5000 in Bethsaida (Lk 9:10), which is located on the northeastern bank of the Sea of Galilee, the disciples departed from there to “cross the sea to Capernaum” (Jn 6:17), i.e. on the northwestern bank.

According to Mark, they departed “to the other side to Bethsaida” (Mk 6:45) “at Gennesaret” (Mk 6:53; Matt 14:34), where Capernaum is located.

One may assume the existence of two cities by that name, one on the northeastern bank, and the other on the northwestern bank. We know that Phillip, Peter, and Andrew were from “Bethsaida of Galilee” (Jn 1:44; 12:21), and Galilee is located on the northwestern bank. This Bethsaida is associated with Chorazin and Capernaum (Matt 11:20-24), which are also located on the northwestern bank.

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Matt 16:28 – “Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.”

All the disciples died before Christ’s Second Coming.

- (1) Jesus was referring to His transfiguration, which occurs immediately after this.*
- (2) Jesus was referring to the day of Pentecost, when the power of the kingdom came.*
- (3) Jesus was referring to His resurrection from the dead.<sup>1639</sup>*

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Matt 20:20 – “Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to Jesus with her sons, bowing down and making a request of Him.”

Mk 10:35 – “James and John, the two sons of Zebedee, came up to Jesus, saying, ‘Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask of You.’”

James and John came together with their mother. Matthew and Mark record different details of the same story.¹⁶⁴⁰

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Matt 20:29-30 – “As they were leaving Jericho, a large crowd followed Him. And two blind men sitting by the road, hearing that Jesus was passing by, cried out, ‘Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!’”

Mk 10:46-47 – “Then they came to Jericho. And as He was leaving Jericho with His disciples and a large crowd, a blind beggar {named} Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, was sitting by the road. When he heard that it was Jesus the Nazarene, he began to cry out and say, ‘Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!’”

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<sup>1639</sup>Kaiser, p. 428-429.

<sup>1640</sup>Harris, p. 111; Archer, Encyclopedia, p. 332.

Lk 18:35-38 – “As Jesus was approaching Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the road begging. Now hearing a crowd going by, he {began} to inquire what this was. They told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. And he called out, saying, ‘Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!’”

*Matthew gives a more detailed account. Luke and Mark abbreviate the history and speak of only one blind man. Mark provides his name. At that time, there were two cities of Jericho: new Jericho (constructed by Herod) and Old Testament Jericho. Possibly, Jesus was passing between them.*<sup>1641</sup>

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Matt 21:2 – “Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied {there} and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to Me.”

Mk 11:2 – “Go into the village opposite you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find a colt tied {there,} on which no one yet has ever sat; untie it and bring it {here.}”

*It was necessary to bring the mother donkey along with her young colt, so that the colt would accompany her. Matthew and Mark record different details of the same story.*¹⁶⁴²

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According to Matthew and Luke, Jesus cleansed the temple immediately after His triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Matt 21; Lk 19).

According to Mark, Jesus cleansed the temple the day after His triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Mk 10).

According to John, Jesus cleansed the temple at the beginning of His ministry (Jn 2).

*(1) Mark gives a more precise account. Matthew abbreviates his version. Luke follows Matthew. John records an earlier incident.*<sup>1643</sup>

*(2) The Gospels are not always in chronological order.*

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Matt 24:34 – “Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.”

The people, who were alive at that time, all died without seeing the fulfillment of this prophecy.

(1) Jesus meant the Jewish people of any generation.

*(2) Jesus meant the people who would witness the beginning of these signs, that is, these signs would occur in the course of one generation.*¹⁶⁴⁴

¹⁶⁴¹Barbieri, p. 67; <http://www.apologeticspress.org/apcontent.aspx?category=6&article=666>; Coughenour R. A. Jericho // Bromiley G. W. The international standard Bible encyclopedia, Revised. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988. – V. 2. – P. 995-996.

¹⁶⁴²Harris, p. 113; Archer, Encyclopedia, p. 333-334.

¹⁶⁴³Archer, Encyclopedia, p. 334-335.

¹⁶⁴⁴Archer, Encyclopedia, p. 338-339; Torrey R. A. Difficulties in the Bible: Alleged errors and contradictions. – London: James Nisbet & Co. – P. 115.

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According to Matthew and Mark, at the Last Supper, the disciples partook of the cup after the bread.

According to Luke 22:14-22, the disciples partook of the cup both before, and after the bread.

*In the typical Jewish celebration of Passover, the cup is taken a total of four times.*<sup>1645</sup>

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Matt 26:34 – “Jesus said to him, ‘Truly I say to you that this {very} night, before a rooster crows, you will deny Me three times’” (also, see Jn 18:27).

Mk 14:30 – “And Jesus said to him, ‘Truly I say to you, that this very night, before a rooster crows twice, you yourself will deny Me three times.’”

This is a case of generalization. Mark gives the more precise account, while Matthew and John generalize it. Mark is more exact, because he wrote his Gospel at Peter’s direction.

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Mk 14:55ff – Jesus’ trial was at night.

Lk 22:66ff – Jesus’ trial was in the morning.

*The time is simply not precisely defined. The trial was likely about dawn.*

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Concerning the crucifixion, Matthew, Mark, and Luke say that He was crucified on the day of Passover.

Concerning the crucifixion, John writes, “It was the day of preparation (παρασκευή) for the Passover” (Jn 19:14).

*The term παρασκευή (paraskeuo), i.e., “day of preparation,” is used in all the Gospels to describe the day of preparation for the Sabbath. The phrase “the day of preparation for the Passover” could refer to the day of preparation for the Sabbath in Passover week. Thus, the day of Passover could coincide with the day of preparation for the Sabbath in Passover week.*¹⁶⁴⁶

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Matt 26:69-74 - “(1) Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard, and a servant-girl came to him and said, ‘You too were with Jesus the Galilean.’ But he denied {it} before them all, saying, ‘I do not know what you are talking about.’ (2) When he had gone out to the gateway, another {servant-girl} saw him and said to those who were there, ‘This man was with Jesus of Nazareth.’ And again he denied {it} with an oath, ‘I do not know the

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<sup>1645</sup>Blomberg, Legitimacy and limits, p. 160.

<sup>1646</sup>Harris, p. 109.

man.’ (3) A little later the bystanders came up and said to Peter, ‘Surely you too are {one} of them; for even the way you talk gives you away.’ Then he began to curse and swear, ‘I do not know the man!’”

Mk 14:66-71 - “(1) As Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant-girls of the high priest came, and seeing Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, ‘You also were with Jesus the Nazarene.’ But he denied {it,} saying, ‘I neither know nor understand what you are talking about.’ (2) And he went out onto the porch. The servant-girl saw him, and began once more to say to the bystanders, ‘This is {one} of them!’ But again he denied it. (3) And after a little while the bystanders were again saying to Peter, ‘Surely you are {one} of them, for you are a Galilean too.’ But he began to curse and swear, ‘I do not know this man you are talking about!’”

Lk 22:55-60 - “(1) After they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and had sat down together, Peter was sitting among them. And a servant-girl, seeing him as he sat in the firelight and looking intently at him, said, ‘This man was with Him too.’ But he denied {it,} saying, ‘Woman, I do not know Him.’ (2) A little later, another saw him and said, ‘You are {one} of them too!’ But Peter said, ‘Man, I am not!’ (3) After about an hour had passed, another man {began} to insist, saying, ‘Certainly this man also was with Him, for he is a Galilean too.’ But Peter said, ‘Man, I do not know what you are talking about.’”

Jn 18:16-18, 25-27 - “(1) Peter was standing at the door outside. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to the doorkeeper, and brought Peter in. Then the slave-girl who kept the door said to Peter, ‘You are not also {one} of this man's disciples, are you?’ He said, ‘I am not.’ (2) Now the slaves and the officers were standing {there,} having made a charcoal fire, for it was cold and they were warming themselves; and Peter was also with them, standing and warming himself... Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. So they said to him, ‘You are not also {one} of His disciples, are you?’ He denied {it,} and said, ‘I am not.’ (3) One of the slaves of the high priest, being a relative of the one whose ear Peter cut off, said, ‘Did I not see you in the garden with Him?’ Peter then denied {it} again.”

*Here we must assume that in each instance of Peter's denial, more than one person joined in accusing Peter, but different Gospel writers record only one of the accusers. One must also assume either that Peter returned to the campfire after his first denial, or that John is not writing in chronological order, transposing the first and second denials.*<sup>1647</sup>

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Mk 15:25 – “It was the third hour when they crucified Him.”

Jn 19:14 – “Now it was the day of preparation for the Passover; it was about the sixth hour. And (Pilate) said to the Jews, ‘Behold, your King!’”

*Mark employs Hebrew time, where the day begins at sunrise (6 AM). John, however, used Roman time, where the day began at midnight. Thus, three hours passed from the time of Jesus trial until His crucifixion.*¹⁶⁴⁸

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The inscription of the cross:

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<sup>1647</sup>Archer, Encyclopedia, p. 340.

<sup>1648</sup>Ibid, p. 363-364.

This is Jesus, the king of the Jews (Matt 27:37).

The king of the Jews (Mk 15:26).

This is the king of the Jews (Lk 23:38).

Jesus the Nazarene, the king of the Jews (Jn 19:19).

*(1) The full inscription is abbreviated. The entire inscription would read, "This is Jesus the Nazarene, the king of the Jews."*

*(2) The inscription was written differently in the three languages: "It was written in Hebrew, Latin {and} in Greek" (Jn 19:20).<sup>1649</sup>*

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According to Mark 15:39 (Matt 27:54), the centurion said: "Truly this man was the Son of God."

According to Luke 23:47, the centurion said: "Certainly this man was innocent."

We cannot exclude that he said both.

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Matt 24:15-18 – "Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains. Whoever is on the housetop must not go down to get the things out that are in his house. Whoever is in the field must not turn back to get his cloak" (also Mk 13:14-16).

Lk 21:20-21 – "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near. Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those who are in the midst of the city must leave, and those who are in the country must not enter the city."

Both sections occur in the same position in the same context.

*Because of their prophetic nature, one must conclude that both sections are the genuine words of Jesus. Luke was not a prophet and wrote his Gospel before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. Luke places Jesus' prediction of Jerusalem's destruction in the place of Daniel's prediction of the abomination of desolation to draw the parallel between three events: Antiochus Epiphanes' desecration of the temple (predicted in Dan 11:31), the Roman destruction of Jerusalem (predicted by Jesus in Luke), and Antichrist's desecration of the temple (predicted by Jesus in Matthew/Mark). The details of Luke's account differ from that of Mark and Matthew, since he is relating a different event.*

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¹⁶⁴⁹Ibid, p. 346.

Matt 27:5 – How Judas Iscariot died: “And he threw the pieces of silver into the temple sanctuary and departed; and he went away and hanged himself.”

Acts 1:18 – How Judas Iscariot died: “Now this man acquired a field with the price of his wickedness, and falling headlong (πρηνής γενόμενος), he burst open in the middle and all his intestines gushed out.”

*(1) Possibly, the expression “falling headlong” is a synonym for “hanged himself.” This would mean that when Judas hanged himself, he fell headlong. As a result of the trauma associated with his leap, his intestines gushed out, or possibly the tree branch overhanging a cliff broke, leading to a traumatic fall.*¹⁶⁵⁰

*(2) Some hold the opinion that the expression πρηνής γενόμενος does not mean “falling headlong,” but “swelling up.” Possibly, Judas stayed hanging for some time, resulting in abdominal swelling and rupture.*¹⁶⁵¹
*Not all agree, though, with that definition.*¹⁶⁵²

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Matt 27:6-8 – “The chief priests took the pieces of silver... and with the money bought the Potter's Field as a burial place for strangers. For this reason that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day.”

Acts 1:18-19 – “Now this man acquired a field with the price of his wickedness, and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his intestines gushed out.... so that in their own language that field was called Hakeldama, that is, Field of Blood.”

*(1) Judas had already agreed to the purchase of the parcel of land before his death, and the priests finished the deal.*

*(2) Peter is speaking sarcastically. The word “acquired” does not mean “purchased,” but simply that Judas died on that parcel of land and it became, so to speak, his tomb.*<sup>1653</sup>

*(3) The priests purchased the parcel of land where Judas perished with his money. It was named the “Field of Blood” because it was acquired with betrayal money, or because Judas died there.*<sup>1654</sup>

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Matt 12:40 – “For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”

Jesus died on a Friday, but rose on a Sunday.

*The phrase “day and night” is a figure of speech for any part of a day. Jesus was in the tomb parts of three days. It is impossible to take the phrase literally, since it would require Jesus to rise at the same time (in the afternoon) as when He died.*¹⁶⁵⁵

¹⁶⁵⁰Kaiser, p. 511; Archer, Encyclopedia, p. 344.

¹⁶⁵¹Erickson M. J. Introducing Christian doctrine. – 2nd ed. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001. – P. 74.

¹⁶⁵²See Arndt W., Danker F. W., Bauer W. A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature. – 3rd ed. – Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000. – P. 863.

¹⁶⁵³Archer, Encyclopedia, p. 344.

¹⁶⁵⁴Gempf C. Acts // Carson D., Guthrie D. New Bible commentary. – 4th ed. – Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1994. – P. 1070-1071

¹⁶⁵⁵Archer, Encyclopedia, p. 327-328. Ramm relates that the Jews used this expression in this manner (Ramm B. Protestant Biblical interpretation. – 3rd ed. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1970. – P. 202).


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Lk 23:26 – “When they led Him away, they seized a man, Simon of Cyrene, coming in from the country, and placed on him the cross to carry behind Jesus.”

Jn 19:17 – “They took Jesus, therefore, and He went out, bearing His own cross, to the place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha.”

*(1) John speaks in generalizations.*

*(2) Jesus bore the cross initially, then Simon took over.*<sup>1656</sup>

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Matt 27:34 – “They gave Him wine to drink mixed with gall.”

Mk 15:23 – “They tried to give Him wine mixed with myrrh.”

*The word “gall” simply means something bitter, like myrrh.*¹⁶⁵⁷

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Matt 27:44 (Mk 15:32) – “Those who were crucified with Him were also insulting Him.”

Lk 23:39-43 – Only one of those crucified reviled Him, while the other asked for mercy.

*(1) Matthew and Mark generalize the event, while Luke speaks more specifically.*

*(2) At the start, both men reviled Him, but then one of them repented and asked for mercy.*

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The resurrection of Jesus (Matt 28:1-8; Mk 16:1-8; Lk 24:1-10; Jn 20:1-8)

Time:

Matthew: Mary Magdalene and another Mary came to the tomb at dawn.

Mark: Mary Magdalene, Mary the {mother} of James, and Salome came to the tomb at dawn.

Luke: Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the {mother} of James, and other women came to the tomb very early.

John: Mary Magdalene came to the tomb, when it was still dark.

Number of angels:

Matthew: One angel sat on the stone: “His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow.”

Mark: The women saw an angel “sitting at the right, wearing a white robe; and they were amazed.”

Luke: Two angels suddenly appeared to the women in the tomb.

John: Mary Magdalene saw no angel, but told the disciples that someone had carried away the body.

The announcement of the angels:

Matthew: The angel announced the resurrection and directed that the disciples should go to Galilee.

¹⁶⁵⁶Haley, p. 324-325.

¹⁶⁵⁷Arndt, p. 1085.

Mark: The angel announced the resurrection.

Luke: Two angels announced the resurrection.

The reaction of the women:

Matthew: The women fled and told the disciples everything they saw.

Mark: The women fled and told nothing to anyone.

Luke: The women fled and told the disciples everything they saw.

John: Mary Magdalene fled and reported to Peter and John about the empty tomb. Peter and John ran to the tomb, but saw no one.

The appearance of Jesus:

Matthew: Jesus appeared to two women, while they were in route to the disciples, and then later appeared to the disciples in Galilee.

Mark: Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene, then two others, and then to all the disciples.

Luke: Jesus appeared to two men going to Emmaus and to Peter, then to all the disciples in Jerusalem.

John: Mary Magdalene returned to the grave and saw two angels inside. Jesus then appeared to her at the tomb. He then showed Himself to the disciples in Jerusalem, and later in Galilee.

The following harmonization is suggested.¹⁶⁵⁸ We must allow:

- (a) not all the Gospel writers list all the women who went to the tomb,*
- (b) the women went to the tomb while it was still dark, at dawn,*
- (c) Mary Magdalene saw the stone rolled away and immediately ran alone to tell the disciples,*
- (d) the other women remained at the tomb and saw the angels,*
- (e) the women did not see the angel when he was sitting on the stone, only after he had entered the tomb,*
- (f) either the angel on the stone joined another angel, already in the tomb (Kaiser, Torrey), or a second angel appeared in the tomb a little later (Archer). The first angel rose to speak to the women.*
- (g) we must join the angels' comments into a unified message,*
- (h) while the other women were running to the disciples, Mary Magdalene returned with Peter and John, and after they left, she remained at the tomb and saw the angels and Jesus,*
- (i) on the way to the disciples, the other women also met Jesus,¹⁶⁵⁹*
- (j) the fact that Jesus appointed a meeting with His disciples in Galilee does not require that He could not have appeared to them earlier in Jerusalem before that,*
- (k) The variety that exists in the resurrection accounts demonstrates the existence of four independent testimonies to that event. If the account was fraudulent, we would expect four identical accounts (Torrey).*

E. Other Discrepancies within the New Testament

Acts 9:7 – “The men who traveled with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one.”

Acts 22:9 – “And those who were with me saw the light, to be sure, but did not understand the voice of the One who was speaking to me.”

¹⁶⁵⁸Kaiser, p. 507; Archer, Encyclopedia, p. 347-356; Torrey, p. 85-89, Haley, p. 327-330, 386.

¹⁶⁵⁹If the other women had seen Jesus before Mary Magdalene did, then that would contradict Mark 16:9, where it is claimed that Mary was the first to see the Risen Lord. However, one must keep in mind that on text-critical grounds, many commentators question whether Mark 16:9-20 was part of the original Gospel of Mark. This passage also claims that the women told no one, which contradicts the other Gospels as well. At the same time, one may explain this second discrepancy by saying that the women simply did not speak to anyone *while on the way* to see the disciples.

First, we must keep in mind that in Acts 9, Luke is the one recounting the event, while in Acts 22, he is simply recording Paul's testimony. Therefore, Luke is not contradicting himself. It is possible that Paul's companions heard the sound, but did not understand what was said. They may also have seen the light, but no figure in it.

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The voice from heaven at Jesus' Transfiguration:

Matt 17:5 – "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!"

Mk 9:7 – "This is My beloved Son, listen to Him!"

Lk 9:35 – "This is My Son, {My} Chosen One; listen to Him!"

2 Pet 1:17 – "This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased."

*We cannot rule out that each version contains the heavenly announcement in part.*

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Lk 24:50-51 – "And He led them out as far as Bethany... He parted from them and was carried up into heaven"

Acts 1:9-12 – "He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight... Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem."

*Bethany is located on the southeastern slope of Mount Olivet.*¹⁶⁶⁰

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¹⁶⁶⁰Earle R. Bethany // Bromiley G. W. The international standard Bible encyclopedia. – Revised ed. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979–1988. – V. 1. – P. 463.

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Appendix E. *Ipsissima vox* or *ipsissima verba*?

The term *ipsissima verba* translates “true (exact) words” of the speaker in a narrative, while *ipsissima vox* means “true voice” of the speaker. In other words, according to the principle of *ipsissima vox*, the sense of the speaker’s words are expressed in the narrative, but they may not be his/her exact words. Do we have in the Gospels Jesus’ exact words or only an approximation? In other words, do we possess the *ipsissima vox* or the *ipsissima verba* of the Lord?¹⁶⁶¹

Although in many cases, all the Gospel agree concerning the contents of Jesus’ speech,¹⁶⁶² the following passages demonstrate some of the discrepancies that also exist between them. These examples are hard to explain away as simply omission of material or recording of different events.¹⁶⁶³

One must also note, however, that for some of these examples variant readings exist that harmonize the accounts. On the other hand, one may view these harmonizations as simply attempts by later scribes to “correct” the text they were copying.

Matthew 11:8

ἀλλὰ τί ἐξήλθατε ἰδεῖν; ἄνθρωπον ἐν μαλακοῖς ἡμφιεσμένον; ἰδοὺ οἱ τὰ μαλακὰ φοροῦντες ἐν τοῖς οἴκοις τῶν βασιλέων εἰσὶν

“But what did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft {clothing?} Those who wear soft {clothing} are in kings’ palaces!”

Luke 7:25

ἀλλὰ τί ἐξήλθατε ἰδεῖν; ἄνθρωπον ἐν μαλακοῖς ἱματίοις ἡμφιεσμένον; ἰδοὺ οἱ ἐν ἱματισμῷ ἐνδόξῳ καὶ τρυφῇ ὑπάρχοντες ἐν τοῖς βασιλείοις εἰσὶν.

“But what did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Those who are splendidly clothed and live in luxury are {found} in royal palaces!”

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Matthew 8:26

τί δειλοί ἐστε, ὀλιγόπιστοι

“Why are you afraid, you men of little faith?”

Mark 4:40

τί δειλοί ἐστε; οὐπω ἔχετε πίστιν

“Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?”

Luke 8:25

ποῦ ἡ πίστις ὑμῶν

“Where is your faith?”

~~~~~

¹⁶⁶¹Among those accepting the theory *ipsissima vox* we may list: Grant Osborne, Donald Carson, Darrell Bock, Paul Feinberg, and I. Howard Marshall. Donald Green in opposed.

¹⁶⁶²Matt 4:4 = Lk 4:4; Matt 4:7 = Lk 4:12; Matt 4:10 = Lk 4:8; Matt 4:19 = Mk 1:17; Mk 1:25 = Lk 4:35; Mk 1:41 = Lk 5:13 = Matt 8:3; Matt 9:5-6 = Mk 1:9-11 = Lk 5:23-24; Matt 9:12-13 = Mk 2:17 = Lk 5:31-32; Matt 9:9 = Mk 2:14 = Lk 5:27; Matt 12:3-4 = Mk 2:25-26 = Lk 6:3-4; Matt 12:8 = Mk 2:28 = Lk 6:5; Matt 12:13 = Mk 3:5 = Lk 6:10; Mk 3:4 = Lk 6:9; Mk 3:3 = Lk 6:8.

¹⁶⁶³Marshall I. H. Biblical inspiration. – Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 1982. – P. 61-62.

Matthew 11:19

ἐδικαιώθη ἡ σοφία ἀπὸ τῶν ἔργων αὐτῆς
“Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.”

Luke 7:35

ἐδικαιώθη ἡ σοφία ἀπὸ πάντων τῶν τέκνων αὐτῆς.
“Yet wisdom is vindicated by all her children.”

~~~~~

Matthew 12:50

ὅστις γὰρ ἂν ποιήσῃ τὸ θέλημα τοῦ πατρὸς μου τοῦ ἐν οὐρανοῖς αὐτός μου ἀδελφός καὶ ἀδελφή καὶ μήτηρ ἐστίν  
“For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother.”

Mark 3:35

ὃς [γὰρ] ἂν ποιήσῃ τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ, οὗτος ἀδελφός μου καὶ ἀδελφή καὶ μήτηρ ἐστίν.  
“For whoever does the will of God, he is My brother and sister and mother.”

Luke 8:21

ὁ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτούς· μήτηρ μου καὶ ἀδελφοί μου οὗτοί εἰσιν οἱ τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ ἀκούοντες καὶ ποιῶντες.  
But He answered and said to them, “My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it.”

~~~~~

Mark 10:18-19

ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν αὐτῷ, Τί με λέγεις ἀγαθόν; οὐδεὶς ἀγαθὸς εἰ μὴ εἷς ὁ θεός. τὰς ἐντολάς οἶδας...
And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone. You know the commandments...”

Matthew 19:17

ὁ δὲ εἶπεν αὐτῷ, Τί με ἐρωτᾷς περὶ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ; εἷς ἐστὶν ὁ ἀγαθός· εἰ δὲ θέλεις εἰς τὴν ζωὴν εἰσελθεῖν, τήρησον τὰς ἐντολάς
And He said to him, “Why are you asking Me about what is good? There is {only} One who is good; but if you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments.”

~~~~~

Mark 6:4

καὶ ἔλεγεν αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς ὅτι Οὐκ ἔστιν προφήτης ἄτιμος εἰ μὴ ἐν τῇ πατρίδι αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐν τοῖς συγγενεῦσιν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ αὐτοῦ.  
Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and among his {own} relatives and in his {own} household.”

Luke 4:24



εἶπεν δέ, Ἀμήν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι οὐδεὶς προφήτης δεκτός ἐστιν ἐν τῇ πατρίδι αὐτοῦ  
And He said, "Truly I say to you, no prophet is welcome in his hometown."

~~~~~

Mark 1:38

καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς, Ἄγωμεν ἀλλαχοῦ εἰς τὰς ἐχομένας κωμοπόλεις, ἵνα καὶ ἐκεῖ κηρύξω· εἰς τοῦτο γὰρ ἐξῆλθον.

He said to them, "Let us go somewhere else to the towns nearby, so that I may preach there also; for that is what I came for."

Luke 4:43

ὁ δὲ εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτοὺς ὅτι Καὶ ταῖς ἐτέραις πόλεσιν εὐαγγελίσασθαί με δεῖ τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ, ὅτι ἐπὶ τοῦτο ἀπεστάλην.

But He said to them, "I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose."

~~~~~

Matthew 9:4

Ἰνατί ἐνθυμεῖσθε πονηρὰ ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν;

"Why are you thinking evil in your hearts?"

Mark 2:8

οὕτως διαλογίζονται ἐν ἑαυτοῖς

Why are you reasoning about these things in your hearts?

## Appendix F: Old Testament Quotations in the New Testament

We devote this appendix to examining Old Testament quotations in the New Testament. We will indicate the likely literary source for the New Testament writer employing the following abbreviations: LXX = Septuagint, and MT = Masoretic (Hebrew) Text. We will also point out how the content of the Old Testament quotations varies from the New Testament version, including comments on contextual questions as well. The quotations are arranged according to the following categories, reflecting the correlation of the Old Testament context with the New Testament usage.

- (1) references to Old Testament history (38 occurrences)
- (2) cases of direct fulfillment (or repetition) of an Old Testament prophecy in the New Testament (13 occurrences)
- (3) cases of fulfillment of messianic prophecy (45 occurrences)
- (4) cases of direct application of Old Testament principles in the New Testament (48 occurrences)
- (5) cases of new application of an Old Testament principle, prophecy or example (99 occurrences)
- (6) cases of typological fulfillment of an Old Testament type in the New Testament (18 occurrences)
- (7) quotation of an Old Testament text by an incidental individual or unbeliever in the biblical narrative (5 occurrences)
- (8) cases where the source of the quotation is unknown (5 occurrences)

When we state that the source of the quotation was the Septuagint, this does not exclude that the quotation may also agree with the Masoretic Text. Yet, when a New Testament writer follows the Septuagint verbatim, we can likely regard the latter as the source. At the same time, we will indicate when the Septuagint differs greatly from the Masoretic Text.

It is interesting to note that most Old Testament quotations are located in certain New Testament books and are practically absent from others. Longenecker notes that most of the books that abound in Old Testament quotations (with the exception of the Gospel of John) were addressed to Jews, or to churches where a large percentage of the attendees were Jewish.<sup>1664</sup>

### A. References to Old Testament History

**Matt 5:21 = Ex 20:13**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: exact

**Matt 5:27 = Ex 20:14**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: exact

**Matt 5:31 = Deut 24:1**

Source: Does not correspond to either LXX, or MT (paraphrase)

**Matt 5:33 = Lev 19:12, Num 30:2, Deut 23:21**

Source: Does not correspond to either LXX, or MT (paraphrase)

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<sup>1664</sup>Longenecker, Biblical exegesis, p. 191.

**Matt 5:38 = Ex 21:24**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: exact

**Matt 5:43 = Lev 19:18**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: exact

**Matt 15:4a (Mk 7:10) = Ex 20:12**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: exact

**Matt 15:4b (Mk 7:10) = Ex 21:17**

Source: LXX

Correspondence:

- (1) In Matthew, the word αὐτοῦ (his) is omitted twice, but Mark has them.
- (2) In Matthew and Mark, we have the imperative τελευτάτω (let him to be put to death) instead of the future τελευτήσει (he shall die).
- (3) In Matthew and Mark, we see a different order of words than in the LXX: τελευτήσει θανάτῳ (he shall surely die)

**Matt 19:4 (Mk 10:6) = Gen 1:27**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: exact

**Matt 19:5 (Mk 10:7-8) = Gen 2:24**

Source: LXX

Correspondence:

- (1) In Matthew, the word αὐτοῦ (his) is omitted twice. Mark has it, but only after the word πατέρα - father.
- (2) In Matthew, the prefix of the verb προσκολληθήσεται (shall cleave) is missing, but Mark has it.
- (3) In Matthew, the construction πρὸς τὴν γυναῖκα (to his wife) differs from the LXX τῇ γυναικὶ αὐτοῦ (to his wife), but Mark has the LXX version.

**Matt 19:18-19 (Mk 10:19; Lk 18:20) = Ex 20:12-16 and Lev 19:18**

Source: LXX

Correspondence:

- (1) In Matthew, the word σου (your) is missing after πατέρα (father).
- (2) In Mark, the phrase μὴ ἀποστερήσης (do not defraud) is added.
- (3) In Luke and Mark, we have subjunctive mood instead of the future tense.
- (4) In Luke, the order of commandments differs.

**Lk 2:23 = Ex 13:2 and Ex 13:12**

Source: Does not correspond to either LXX, or MT (paraphrase)

**Lk 2:24 = Lev 12:8**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: In Luke, we have the word ζεύγος (pair) instead of δύο (two).

Comments: Luke's quotation exactly corresponds to Lev 5:11, but the context there does not match.<sup>1665</sup>

### **Acts 7:3 = Gen 12:1**

Source: LXX or MT

Correspondence:

- (1) In Acts, the phrase καὶ ἐκ τοῦ οἴκου τοῦ πατρὸς σου (and from your father's house) is missing.
- (2) In Acts, the phrase καὶ δεῦρο (and go) is added.

Comments:

- (1) Stephen claimed that God spoke these words to Abraham in Mesopotamia, while according to Genesis 12, God called him in Haran.
- (2) Toy comments: "Stephen seems to follow a traditional interpretation of his day, which desired to represent Abraham's movements as controlled from the beginning by divine guidance," which corresponds to the Lord's words in Gen 15:7: "I am the LORD who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans."<sup>1666</sup>
- (3) Stephen is not an inspired biblical author.

### **Acts 7:6-7 = Gen 15:13-14 and Ex 3:12**

Source: LXX

Correspondence:

- (1) Acts 7:6-7a differs from Gen 15:13-14:
  - order of words differ
  - replacement of δὲ with καὶ
  - replacement of the 2nd person pronoun with 3rd person.
  - replacement of the phrase πάροικον ἐν γῇ οὐκ ἰδίᾳ (strangers in a land not their own) with the phrase πάροικον ἐν γῇ ἀλλοτρίᾳ (aliens in a foreign land).
  - the phrase αὐτοὺς καὶ ταπεινώσουσιν αὐτοὺς (them, and will humble them) is missing.
  - the future tense δουλεύουσιν (be enslaved) instead of the subjunctive mood δουλεύωσιν (be enslaved).
- (2) Acts 7:7b differs from Ex 3:12
  - substitution of the phrase τῷ θεῷ ἐν τῷ ὄρει τούτῳ (God on this mountain) with the phrase μοι ἐν τῷ τόπῳ τούτῳ (Me in this place).

Comments: Stephen quotes this verse from memory.

### **Acts 7:18 = Ex 1:8**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: exact

### **Acts 7:27-28 = Ex 2:14**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: exact

### **Acts 7:32 = Ex 3:6**

Source: LXX

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<sup>1665</sup>Pao D. W., Schnable E. J. Luke // Beale G. K., Carson D. A. Commentary on the New Testament use of the Old Testament. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2007. – P. 270.

<sup>1666</sup>Toy C. H. Quotations in the New Testament. – New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Son, 1884. – P. 108. Also see Peterson D. G. The Acts of the Apostles // Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: Eerdmans, 2009. – P. 248.

Correspondence:

- (1) In Acts – θεός (God) before Ισαακ and Ιακωβ (Isaac and Jacob) is missing.
- (2) In Acts – plural τῶν πατέρων σου (your fathers) instead of the singular τοῦ πατρός σου (your father) (maybe because of the influence of Ex 3:15).

Comments: Stephen quotes this verse from memory.

**Acts 7:33-34 = Ex 3:5, 7-8, 10**

Source: LXX

Correspondence:

- (1) Stephen has an abbreviated version.
- (2) In Acts – the imperative λῦσον (take off) instead of the infinitive λῦσαι (to take off).
- (3) In Acts – καὶ τοῦ στεναγμοῦ αὐτῶν ἤκουσα (and heard his groanings) instead of τῆς κραυγῆς αὐτῶν ἀκήκοα (and heard his cry). Both variants faithfully translate the Hebrew מְקַרְקַר.<sup>1667</sup>
- (4) In Acts – λῦσον (deliver) instead of ἐξελεῖσθαι (deliver). Both variants faithfully translate the Hebrew לָצַד.<sup>1668</sup>
- (5) In Acts – εἰς Αἴγυπτον (to Egypt) instead of πρὸς Φαραῶν (to Pharaoh).

Comments: Stephen quotes this verse from memory.

**Acts 7:35 = Ex 2:14**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: exact

**Acts 7:37 = Deut 18:15**

Source: MT or LXX

Correspondence:

- (1) Word order in Acts 7:37 differs from MT and LXX, yet it agrees with Acts 3:22 except for omission of word κύριος (Lord).
- (2) The singular pronouns in MT and LXX (yours, you) in Acts 7:37 and 3:22 are plural (yours, you) for the sake of the audience.<sup>1669</sup>

Comments: Stephen quotes this verse from memory.

**Acts 7:40 = Ex 32:1**

Source: LXX

Correspondence:

- (1) In Acts, ὁ ἄνθρωπος (man) is missing, but present in LXX and MT.
- (2) In Acts, we see not the LXX ἐξ Αἰγύπτου (from Egypt), but ἐκ γῆς Αἰγύπτου (from the land of Egypt), yet Acts agrees with MT.

Comments: Stephen quotes this verse from memory.

**Acts 7:42-43 = Amos 5:25-27**

Source: LXX (differs from MT)

Correspondence and Comments:

- (1) In Acts – different word order: ἔτη τεσσαράκοντα ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ (40 years in the wilderness) instead of ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ τεσσαράκοντα ἔτη (in the wilderness 40 years).

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<sup>1667</sup>Archer, Encyclopedia, p. 14.

<sup>1668</sup>Ibid.

<sup>1669</sup>Peterson, p. 183.

- (2) In Acts – missing the pronouns ὑμῶν Ραίφαν, τοὺς τύπους αὐτῶν (your Rompha, their images)
- (3) In Acts – ἐπέκεινα Βαβυλῶνος (beyond Babylon) instead of ἐπέκεινα Δαμασκοῦ (beyond Damascus). Peterson thinks that Stephen said “Babylon” instead of “Damascus” because the Southern Kingdom (Judah) was exiled to there, while Amos was speaking of the exile of the Northern Kingdom (Israel).<sup>1670</sup>
- (4) In Acts – οὓς ἐποιήσατε προσκυνεῖν αὐτοῖς (you made, to worship them) instead of οὓς ἐποιήσατε ἑαυτοῖς (you made for yourself).
- (5) The phrase in MT “Sikkuth your king” is translated in the LXX as “the tabernacle of Moloch.” Archer feels that the difference is due to variance in vowel pointing.<sup>1671</sup> The name Sikkuth is found only here in the Old Testament. The translations of Aquila, Symmachus and the Vulgate also have “tabernacle.”<sup>1672</sup>
- (6) In LXX, the name “Kiyyun” (MT) is translated “Remphan.” Archer thinks that the change occurred because of similar Hebrew letters in these words.<sup>1673</sup> The name “Kiyyun” appears only here in the Old Testament.<sup>1674</sup>
- (7) Archer suggests that Stephen used the Septuagint for apologetic purposes, even if it differed from the MT.<sup>1675</sup>
- (8) We also recall that Stephen quotes this verse from memory.

### **Acts 7:49-50 = Isa 66:1-2**

Source: LXX

Correspondence:

- (1) In Acts 7:49, the phrase λέγει κύριος (says the Lord) appears later.
- (2) Acts 7:50 reads οὐχὶ ἡ χεὶρ μου ἐποίησεν ταῦτα πάντα (Did not My hand create all this?) instead of πάντα γὰρ ταῦτα ἐποίησεν ἡ χεὶρ μου (My hand created all this).

Comments: Stephen quotes this verse from memory.

### **Acts 13:22 = combination of Ps 89:20 and 1 Sam 13:14**

Source: LXX or MT (paraphrase)

Comments:

- (1) The final words exactly correspond to Isa 44:28 (LXX), yet that context speaks of Cyrus.<sup>1676</sup>
- (2) Paul quotes this verse from memory.

### **Acts 14:15 = Ex 20:11**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: exact

### **Rom 4:3 (cf. 4:9, 18, 22) = Gen 15:6**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: Unlike LXX (Abram), Paul has “Abraham.”

### **Rom 4:18 = Gen 15:5**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: exact

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<sup>1670</sup>Ibid, p. 261. Also Marshall, Biblical inspiration, p. 565.

<sup>1671</sup>Archer, Encyclopedia, p. 151.

<sup>1672</sup>Toy, p. 114

<sup>1673</sup>Archer, Encyclopedia, p. 151. Toy also thinks so (Toy, p. 114)

<sup>1674</sup>Toy, p. 114

<sup>1675</sup>Archer, Encyclopedia, p. 153.

<sup>1676</sup>Ibid, p. 51.

### **Rom 9:9 = Gen 18:10**

Source: Does not correspond to either LXX, or MT.

Correspondence: Seifrid considers this a paraphrase.<sup>1677</sup>

### **Heb 4:4 = Gen 2:2**

Source: MT

Correspondence: exact

### **Heb 6:14 = Gen 22:17**

Source: LXX

Correspondence:

- (1) In Hebrews, εἰ (truly) replaces ἦ (truly), which reflects the word usage of that time.<sup>1678</sup>
- (2) In Hebrews, we read not τὸ σπέρμα σου (your seed), but σε (you) in order to focus attention on Abraham.<sup>1679</sup>

### **Heb 8:5 = Ex 25:40**

Source: LXX

Correspondence:

- (1) In Hebrews, the word πάντα (vce) is added.
- (2) In Hebrews, we see the participle δειχθέντα (shown) instead of the participle δεδειγμένον (shown).

### **Heb 9:20 = Ex 24:8**

Source: Does not correspond to either LXX, or MT.

Correspondence:

- (1) In MT and LXX, it says that God “cut” (כָּרַךְ) or “established” (διέθετο) a covenant with Israel, but the author of Hebrews uses the verb ἐνετείλατο (commanded).
- (2) Instead of the names יהוה (Yahweh) or κύριος (Lord), in Hebrews we read ὁ θεός (God).

Comments:

- (1) O’Brien thinks that by the term “commanded” the author of Hebrews was stressing God’s initiative in establishing the covenant.<sup>1680</sup>
- (2) Unlike the Old Testament narrative, in Hebrews 9:19, we read that Moses sprinkled the Book of the Law as well.<sup>1681</sup>

### **Heb 11:5 = Gen 5:24**

Source: LXX

Correspondence:

- (1) In Hebrews – διότι (because) instead of ὅτι (because)
- (2) In Hebrews – the perfect tense εὐαρεστηκέναι (was pleasing) instead of the aorist tense εὐηρέστησεν (was pleasing).

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<sup>1677</sup>Seifrid M. A. Romans // Beale G. K., Carson D. A. Commentary on the New Testament use of the Old Testament. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2007. – P. 640.

<sup>1678</sup>Guthrie G. H. Hebrews // Beale G. K., Carson D. A. Commentary on the New Testament use of the Old Testament. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2007. – P. 965.

<sup>1679</sup>Ibid.

<sup>1680</sup>O’Brien, Hebrews, p. 333-334.

<sup>1681</sup>Toy, p. 225.

**Heb 11:12 = Gen 22:17**

Source: LXX or MT

Correspondence:

- (1) In Hebrews, the word ἡ ἀναρίθμητος (innumerable) is added.
- (2) In Hebrews, we have ἄστρον (star), while the LXX reads ἀστήρ (star).

**Heb 11:18 = Gen 21:12**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: exact

**Heb 11:21 = Gen 47:31**

Source: LXX (differs from MT)

Correspondence: exact

Comments: MT speaks of a “bed” (הַטָּה), while LXX speaks of a “staff” (הַטֵּה). The consonants are identical.<sup>1682</sup> We assume that the translator of the LXX used a different vocalization.<sup>1683</sup>

**Heb 12:20 = Ex 19:12**

Source: Does not correspond to either LXX, or MT (paraphrase)

**B. Cases of Direct Fulfillment (or Repetition) of an Old Testament Prophecy in the New Testament****Matt 24:29 = Isa 13:10**

Source: Does not correspond to either LXX, or MT (paraphrase)

Comments: Isaiah predicted that in the “Day of the Lord,” God will punish the world for sin, and Jesus repeats that warning.

**Jn 6:45 = Isa 54:13**

Source: closer to MT

Correspondence: In John 6:45, the words “your sons” are missing.

Comments:

- (1) This eschatological prediction is fulfilled in part in the ministry of Jesus.
- (2) Possibly, “your sons” is omitted in order to include believing Gentiles.<sup>1684</sup>

**Acts 2:17-21 = Joel 2:28-32 (LXX and MT = 3:1-5)**

Source: LXX or MT

Correspondence<sup>1685</sup>:

- (1) In Acts – inversion of word order: οἱ πρεσβύτεροι (old men) and οἱ νεανίσκοι (young men).
- (2) In Acts – ἐν τις ἐσχάταις ἡμέραις (in the last days) instead of μετὰ ταῦτα (after these things).
- (3) Acts has the following additional words: ἄνω (above), σημεῖα (signs), κάτω (beneath) and καὶ προφητεύσουσιν (and they will prophecy).
- (4) Acts adds the word μου (“My” bondservants) in order to emphasize that these are not ordinary bondservants, but God’s servants.<sup>1686</sup>

<sup>1682</sup>Silva, The New Testament use of the Old Testament, p. 150.

<sup>1683</sup>Toy thinks the opposite is true (Toy, p. 229).

<sup>1684</sup>Köstenberger A. J. John // Beale G. K., Carson D. A. Commentary on the New Testament use of the Old Testament. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2007. – P. 450.

<sup>1685</sup>Peterson, p. 140-143.

<sup>1686</sup>Marshall, Acts, p. 534.



(5) Acts and LXX have ἐκχεῶ ἀπὸ τοῦ πνεύματός (pour out of My Spirit), while in MT – “pour out My Spirit.”

(6) In Acts, the word γε is added (see v. 18)

(7) Instead of the MT **אִיָּוִד** (fearful), the LXX has ἐπιφανῆ (glorious), which also is in Acts.

Comments:

(1) A partial fulfillment. Verses 19-20 are not yet fulfilled.

(2) Marshall comments that it is not necessarily true that only “your sons and your daughters” will prophecy, since this is poetic style.<sup>1687</sup>

(3) Peter omits the words “for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem” (Joel 2:32) in order not to exclude Gentiles.<sup>1688</sup>

(4) Likely, we may expect a future outpouring of the Spirit on Israel.

(5) We must recall that Peter quotes this passage from memory.

**Acts 3:25 = Gen 22:18**

Source: LXX or MT

Correspondence:

(1) In Acts, we see a different word order.

(2) Acts has the word πατριαὶ (families), while MT reads **עַמִּים** (nations) and LXX has ἔθνη (nations). Geneses 12:3 has **הַתּוֹכְחָת** (families) (LXX = φυλαὶ), which is likely the source for Peter’s version in Acts.<sup>1689</sup>

Comments:

(1) Possibly, Peter used πατριαὶ (families) instead of **עַמִּים** (nations) or ἔθνη (nations) in order to avoid the misunderstanding that he meant “Gentiles,” since he is preaching to Jews.<sup>1690</sup>

(2) Like Galatians 3:8, Peter equates the “seed” of Abraham with Jesus Christ.<sup>1691</sup>

(3) We must recall that Peter quotes this verse from memory.

**Rom 10:13 = Joel 2:32**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: exact

Comments: God’s future deliverance of Israel has already taken place among His New Testament people.<sup>1692</sup>

**Rom 10:20-21 = Isa 65:1-2**

Source: LXX.

Correspondence:

(1) In v. 20, the order of words ἐμφανῆς (was found) and εὐρέθην ἐγενόμην (became manifest) are interchanged.

(2) In v. 21, there is a different word order in the phrase: ἐξεπέτασα τὰς χεῖράς μου ὅλην τὴν ἡμέραν (all day I stretched out My hand)

Comments: It is very likely that this is a direct prediction of the future inclusion of the Gentiles. This passage is located in an eschatological context.

**Rom 11:26-27 = combination of Isa 59:20-21 and Isa 27:9**

Source: LXX (differs from MT)

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<sup>1687</sup>ibid, p. 535.

<sup>1688</sup>ibid, p. 536.

<sup>1689</sup>Toy, p. 106.

<sup>1690</sup>Marshall, Acts, p. 549.

<sup>1691</sup>Archer, Encyclopedia, p. 550.

<sup>1692</sup>Seifrid, p. 660.

### Correspondence:

- (1) LXX has ἔνεκεν Σιών (for Zion), MT = לְיִצְחָק (to Zion), Paul = ἐκ Σιών (from Zion).
- (2) MT reads: “A Redeemer will come to Zion, and to those who turn from transgression in Jacob.” Following the LXX, Paul writes, “The deliverer will come from Zion, he will remove ungodliness from Jacob.” Seifrid writes, “Israel’s acts of repentance appear not as a condition for the atonement of its guilt, but rather as contemporaneous effects of the forgiveness that the Lord grants.”<sup>1693</sup>
- (3) It has been suggested that, when changing the vowel pointing of the term וְלִשְׁבִי, the translation results: “When he removes (לְשִׁיב) ungodliness from Jacob,” which agrees with LXX and Paul.
- (4) The concluding words ὅταν ἀφέλωμαι τὰς ἀμαρτίας αὐτῶν (when I take away their sins) are taken from Isaiah 27:9, except that Paul has τὰς ἀμαρτίας αὐτῶν (their sins) instead of αὐτοῦ τὴν ἀμαρτίαν (his sin).
- (5) Isaiah 27:9 differs from Paul’s version in that Isaiah has the passive voice: “Jacob’s iniquity will be forgiven.”

### Comments:

- (1) Isaiah 59:20-21 is a prophecy of the future eschatological salvation of Israel. Although Isaiah 27:9 speaks of forgiveness of sins through repentance from idolatry, there exists in this context an indication of an eschatological fulfillment as well: “In the days to come Jacob will take root, Israel will blossom and sprout, and they will fill the whole world with fruit” (Isa 27:6). Dunn states that in Hebrew thought, it was common to associate the forgiveness of sins with the restoration of Israel.<sup>1694</sup>
- (2) Concerning the alteration ἐκ Σιών (from Zion), Dunn explains that here we either have a problem in transcription of the text (εἰς from the translation of the Hebrew became ἐκ), or that Paul changed the preposition in order to avoid the misunderstanding that the Deliverer would come only “to Zion.” The mission of Messiah is universal.<sup>1695</sup> Psalm 14:7 confirms that salvation comes “from Zion.”<sup>1696</sup>

### **Rom 14:11 = Isa 45:23**

Source: LXX

### Correspondence:

- (1) In Romans, we see a different introduction: ζῶ ἐγώ, λέγει κύριος (as I live, says the Lord).
- (2) Romans has a different word order: πᾶσα γλῶσσα ἐξομολογήσεται (every tongue will confess)

Comments: Like Romans 14, Isaiah 45 also speaks of eschatological salvation and God’s judgment.

### **1 Cor 15:54 = Isa 25:8**

Source: MT

### Correspondence and Comments:

- (1) The MT says, “He will swallow up death for all time,” but Paul has, “Death is swallowed up in victory.” Possibly, Paul paraphrases MT and then adds the word “victory” to unite this verse with the following one.<sup>1697</sup>
- (2) Paul’s version, κατεπόθη ὁ θάνατος εἰς νίκος (death is swallowed up in victory), differs from LXX, “Death, being strong, swallows them up.” However, the translations of Aquila, Symmachus, and

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<sup>1693</sup>Ibid, p. 676.

<sup>1694</sup>Dunn J. D. G. Romans 9–16 // Word Biblical commentary. – Dallas, TX: Word, 1998. – P. 684.

<sup>1695</sup>Ibid, p. 682.

<sup>1696</sup>Seifrid, p. 674.

<sup>1697</sup>Ciampa R. E., Rosner B. S. The First Letter to the Corinthians // The Pillar New Testament commentary. – Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: Eerdmans, 2010. – P. 832-833.

Theodotion are similar to Paul's version. The rabbis often cited this verse to indicate the elimination of death in the age to come.<sup>1698</sup>

- (3) Toy believes that the LXX translators rendered the Hebrew נצנץ not "forever," but "being strong" because that word can mean both permanence and preeminence.<sup>1699</sup> As a result of this association, "strength" might have become "victory."<sup>1700</sup>

### **Gal 3:8 = Gen 18:18 or Gen 12:3**

Source: LXX

Correspondence

- (1) In Genesis 18:18 = ἐν αὐτῷ (in him), but Paul and Genesis 12:3 have = ἐν σοὶ (in you).  
(2) In Genesis 18:18 and Paul = τὰ ἔθνη (nations), but in Genesis 12:3 = αἱ φυλαὶ (families).

### **Heb 8:8-12 = Jer 31:31-34**

Source: LXX or MT

Correspondence:

- (1) In some details, Hebrews differs from LXX, especially in its use of different verbs.  
(2) The version in Hebrews corresponds well to MT, except it has ἐγὼ ἡμέλησα αὐτῶν (I did not care for them) instead of בָּרַחְתִּי לָהֶם (I was a husband to them).

### **Heb 10:16-17 = Jer 31:33-34**

Source: Does not correspond to either LXX, or MT (paraphrase)

### **Heb 12:26 = Hag 2:6**

Source: Does not correspond to either LXX, or MT (paraphrase)

Comments: The author of Hebrews changes the word order from "heaven and earth" to "earth and heaven" to correspond to his argument.<sup>1701</sup>

## **C. Cases of Fulfillment of Messianic Prophecy**

*\*Note: Some of the following examples may also qualify as "typological fulfillment" (see section F below). It is sometimes difficult to differentiate a direct messianic prophecy from indirect messianic typology.*

### **Matt 2:6 = Mic 5:2**

Source: Does not correspond to either LXX, or MT

Correspondence:<sup>1702</sup>

- (1) In Matthew = "Bethlehem, land of Judah," MT = "Bethlehem Ephrathah," LXX = "house of Ephrathah."  
(2) In Matthew = "leaders," MT and LXX = "thousands."<sup>1703</sup>  
(3) In Matthew, the phrase ὅστις ποιμανεῖ τὸν λαόν μου, "Who will shepherd My people" is added after the word "ruler," possible taken from 2 Sam 5:2 (LXX).<sup>1704</sup>

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<sup>1698</sup>Ibid. See *Mo'ed Qatan* 3.9; *Exodus Rabbah* 15.21; 30.3; *Deuteronomy Rabbah* 2.30; *Lamentations Rabbah* 1.41; *Ecclesiastes Rabbah* 1.7; *b. Pesahim* 68a; *b. Ketubbot* 30b.

<sup>1699</sup>Brown, p. 663.

<sup>1700</sup>Toy, p. 180.

<sup>1701</sup>Guthrie, p. 990.

<sup>1702</sup>Morris L. The Gospel according to Matthew // The Pillar New Testament commentary. – Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: Eerdmans; Intervarsity Press, 1992. – P. 39.

<sup>1703</sup>Archer, Encyclopedia, p. 318-319.

<sup>1704</sup>Ibid.

(4) In Matthew = “by no means least,” MT and LXX = “little to be.”

(5) In Matthew, “for Me” is missing.

#### Comments:

- (1) Goldingay assumes that in the light of Christ’s birth there, Matthew could speak of Bethlehem more positively: “...by no means least among the leaders of Judah.”<sup>1705</sup>
- (2) The replacement of “thousands” with “leaders” may have occurred because: (a) a city is represented by its leaders, or (b) the consonants in the words ἑλῶν (thousand) and ἑλῶν (leader) are the same.<sup>1706</sup>
- (3) Longenecker informs us that the rabbis considered this passage messianic.<sup>1707</sup>
- (4) Matthew speaks of “Bethlehem, land of Judah” to distinguish it from a city of the same name in the territory of Zebulun.<sup>1708</sup>

#### **Matt 3:3 (Mk 1:3; Lk 3:4-6; Jn 1:23) = Isa 40:3 (Luke quotes Isa 40:3-5)**

Source: LXX (differs from MT)

#### Correspondence:

- (1) In MT, the highway is prepared in the wilderness, whereas in LXX and the Gospels, the voice is crying in the wilderness.
- (2) In Luke, the word πάντα (all) is absent before the term τὰ σκολιὰ (rough ground), yet it is missing in MT and some LXX manuscripts as well.<sup>1709</sup>
- (3) Luke abbreviates Isaiah 40:5.
- (4) Luke has the plural αἱ τραχεῖαι (rough roads) instead of the singular ἡ τραχεῖα (rough road), and εἰς ὁδοὺς λείας (smooth roads) instead of εἰς πεδία (plain), which also differs from MT.
- (5) John has the verb εὐθύνετε (make straight) instead of ἐτοιμάσατε (prepare), which better corresponds with MT.
- (6) In Matthew, Mark, and Luke = τὰς τρίβους αὐτοῦ (His paths), but in LXX = τὰς τρίβους τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν (paths for our God). Watts proposes that this change occurred so that “His” would refer to “Lord,” i.e., Jesus.<sup>1710</sup>

#### Comments:

- (1) Isaiah was predicting the return of Israel from Babylon. Blomberg feels, though, that since Isaiah’s prophecy exceeds in magnitude its historical fulfillment, we can expect yet a greater fulfillment in Christ.<sup>1711</sup>
- (2) It is possible that the Gospel writers preferred the LXX to the MT because John the Baptist did not make straight paths for the Lord *in the desert*.<sup>1712</sup>
- (3) We must keep in mind that this passage is found in a messianic context, i.e. Isa 40-53.

#### **Matt 3:17 (Mk 1:11; Lk 3:22) = Ps 2:7; Isa 42:1.**

Source: Does not correspond to either LXX, or MT (allusion).<sup>1713</sup>

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<sup>1705</sup>Goldingay J. Models for interpretation of Scripture. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995. – P. 148; Archer, Encyclopedia, p. 157.

<sup>1706</sup>Archer, Encyclopedia, p. 318-319.

<sup>1707</sup>Longenecker, Biblical exegesis, p. 73.

<sup>1708</sup>Archer, Encyclopedia, p. 157.

<sup>1709</sup>Pao, p. 277.

<sup>1710</sup>Watts R. E. Mark // Beale G. K., Carson D. A. Commentary on the New Testament use of the Old Testament. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2007. – P. 113.

<sup>1711</sup>Blomberg C. L. Matthew // Beale G. K., Carson D. A. Commentary on the New Testament use of the Old Testament. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2007. – P. 13.

<sup>1712</sup>Watts, p. 113.

<sup>1713</sup>Wheaton D. 2 Peter // Carson D. A. New Bible commentary. – 4th ed. – Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1994. – P. 1319; Bratcher R. G. Old Testament quotations in the New Testament. – 3rd ed. – London: United Bible Society, 1987. – P. 2.

**Matt 4:15-16 (Lk 1:79) = Isa 9:1-2 (LXX = 8:23-9:1)**

Source: Does not correspond to either LXX, or MT

Correspondence: Luke has a condensed version that differs both from Matthew, and from LXX-MT.

Comments:

- (1) Blomberg proposes that this prophecy was preliminarily fulfilled during the return from exile, but fully fulfilled in the coming of Messiah.<sup>1714</sup> Toy associates the prophecy's preliminarily fulfillment with the Assyrian attack on the Northern Kingdom of Israel.<sup>1715</sup>
- (2) The messianic significance of this prophecy is unmistakable in the light of the following context and the ministry of Jesus in Galilee.

**Matt 8:17 = Isa 53:4**

Source: MT

Correspondence:

- (1) Matthew has the word ἔλαβεν (take) instead of נָשָׂא (bear).
- (2) In Matthew, the suffix in מַכְאֲבֵינוּ ("our" diseases) is absent.

**Matt 11:5 = Isa 61:1**

Source: Does not correspond to either LXX, or MT (paraphrase)

**Matt 11:10 (Mk 1:2; Lk 7:27) = Mal 3:1**

Source: Does not correspond to either LXX, or MT

Correspondence:

- (1) The versions in the Gospels are nearly identical, yet they differ from LXX and MT. Possibly, we are dealing here with an unknown source.<sup>1716</sup>
- (2) The first part exactly corresponds to Ex 23:20 (LXX), but the second part is closer to Mal 3:1 (MT).

Comments:

- (1) In Mark, the prophecy of Malachi (Mk 1:2) and Isaiah (Mk 1:3) are both attributed to Isaiah. It seems that Mark is following the rabbinic practice of mentioning only the main prophet.<sup>1717</sup>
- (2) Kaiser feels that two fulfillments might apply here: one for John the Baptist, and another for the end times. The "spirit" on Elijah, in fact, had once before been given to another, namely Elisha.<sup>1718</sup>
- (3) The prophecy is applied to Jesus: "...prepare *Your* way before *You*," instead of, "...clear the way before *Me*."

**Matt 12:18-21 = Isa 42:1-4**

Source: Does not correspond to either LXX, or MT

Correspondence:

- (1) Unlike MT, "and the coastlands will wait expectantly for His law," Matthew follows the LXX: "And in his name the Gentiles will hope."<sup>1719</sup>
- (2) Some feel Matthew uses the Aramaic Targum here.<sup>1720</sup>

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<sup>1714</sup>Blomberg, Matthew // Commentary on the New Testament use of the Old Testament, p. 19.

<sup>1715</sup>Toy, p. 24-25.

<sup>1716</sup>Ibid, p. 32.

<sup>1717</sup>Watts, p. 114; Ramm, p. 203.

<sup>1718</sup>Kaiser, Hard sayings of the Bible, p. 82, 88.

<sup>1719</sup>Bruce, Canon, p. 285; Bratcher, p. 5.

<sup>1720</sup>Blomberg, Matthew // Commentary on the New Testament use of the Old Testament, p. 43; Toy, p. 36.

**Matt 17:5 (Mk 9:7; Lk 9:35) = Ps 2:7; Isa 42:1; Deut 18:15**

Source: Does not correspond to either LXX, or MT (allusion).<sup>1721</sup>

**Matt 21:5 (Jn 12:15) = Zech 9:9**

Source: Does not correspond to either LXX, or MT, but closer to MT

Correspondence:

- (1) In Matthew, the verse is condensed. The words *עַל־יְדֵי קִיּוּן* (just and endowed with salvation) are missing.
- (2) Matthew has a different beginning: *εἰπατε τῇ θυγατρὶ Σιών* (say to the daughter of Zion), possibly taken from Isa 62:11.
- (3) John has yet another introduction: *μὴ φοβοῦ, θυγάτηρ Σιών* (fear not, daughter of Zion), possibly taken from Isa 40:9.<sup>1722</sup>

Comments:

- (1) Longenecker says that the rabbis considered this passage messianic.<sup>1723</sup>
- (2) Matthew speaks of two animals, since the young colt had to be accompanied by its mother.<sup>1724</sup>

**Matt 21:42 (Mk 12:10-11; Lk 20:17) = Ps 118:22-23**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: exact

- (1) In Luke, *παρὰ κυρίου ἐγένετο αὕτη καὶ ἔστιν θαυμαστή ἐν ὀφθαλμοῖς ἡμῶν* (this is the LORD's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes) is missing, but it is present in Matthew and Mark.

Comments:

- (1) Greer thinks that when Jesus spoke of Himself as the stone, this gave the apostles the freedom to do the same (cf. 1 Pet 2:7; Rom 9:33).<sup>1725</sup>
- (2) In the next verse, Jesus continues speaking about the "stone": "He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust," which may be an indirect allusion to Isaiah 8:14-15 and Daniel 2:44-45, which are considered messianic prophecies.<sup>1726</sup>
- (3) Toy suggests that in the original context, the "stone" was Israel, who was surrounded by Gentiles, but chosen by God. In the New Testament, this image is applied to Christ.<sup>1727</sup>

**Matt 22:44 (Mk 12:36; Lk 20:42-43) = Ps 110:1**

Source: LXX

Correspondence:

- (1) In the Gospels, there is no article before *κύριος* (Lord)(but MT = *יהוה*)
- (2) MT and LXX have "a footstool (*ὑποπόδιον*) for Your feet," repeated in Luke. Matthew and Mark have "under his feet," which corresponds to Psalm 8:6.<sup>1728</sup>

Comments: The rabbis considered the psalm messianic.<sup>1729</sup>

**Matt 23:39 (Lk 13:35) = Ps 118:26**

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<sup>1721</sup>Wheaton, p. 1319; Bratcher, p. 7.

<sup>1722</sup>Bratcher, p. 7.

<sup>1723</sup>Longenecker, Biblical exegesis, p. 73.

<sup>1724</sup>Blomberg, Matthew // Commentary on the New Testament use of the Old Testament, p. 64.

<sup>1725</sup>Greer, p. 132-133.

<sup>1726</sup>Pao, p. 363.

<sup>1727</sup>Toy, p. 57.

<sup>1728</sup>Ibid, p. 62.

<sup>1729</sup>Ibid, p. 63.

Source: LXX

Correspondence: exact

Comments: On the one hand, this passage has eschatological implications. On the other hand, Jesus was received into Jerusalem with these words.<sup>1730</sup>

**Matt 24:30 (Matt 26:64) = Dan 7:13**

Source: LXX

Correspondence:

- (1) Matthew has a different word order. The LXX reads, “On the clouds of the sky came one as the Son of Man.”
- (2) In Matthew, the word ὥς (as) is absent.
- (3) Several LXX manuscripts have the preposition μετὰ (with) instead of ἐπὶ (on).

**Matt 26:31 (Mk 14:27) = Zech 13:7**

Source: MT

Correspondence:

- (1) Both Gospels have the first person “I will strike” instead of the second person imperative “strike” of Zechariah 13:7. Here, the final part of Zechariah 13:7 may have influenced the Gospel writers, where the Lord Himself says, “I will turn My hand against the little ones.”<sup>1731</sup>
- (2) Mark has a different word order than Matthew.
- (3) Matthew alone has the words τῆς ποιμνῆς (of the flock).

Comments: Blomberg notes that this passage is located in a messianic context.<sup>1732</sup>

**Matt 26:64 (Mk 14:62) = Ps 110:1; Dan 7:13**

Source: Does not correspond to either LXX, or MT (paraphrase)

**Lk 4:18-19 = Isa 61:1-2**

Source: LXX (differs from MT)

Correspondence:

- (1) Luke lacks the phrase ἰάσασθαι τοὺς συντετριμμένους τῇ καρδίᾳ (bind up the brokenhearted).
- (2) Luke adds the phrase ἀποστεῖλαι τεθραυσμένους ἐν ἀφέσει (set free those who are oppressed) from Isaiah 58:6.
- (3) Luke has the verb κηρύξαι (preach) instead of καλέσαι (call).
- (4) Luke ends his quote with “to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord,” omitting “and the day of vengeance of our God.”
- (5) MT has “freedom to prisoners,” absent in Luke and LXX.
- (6) Luke preserves the general sense of MT

**Lk 22:37 = Isa 53:12**

Source: MT

Correspondence: exact. LXX gives a similar version: ἐν τοῖς ἀνόμοις ἐλογίσθη (cf. Luke’s version: μετὰ ἀνόμων ἐλογίσθη)

**Jn 12:38 = Isa 53:1**

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<sup>1730</sup>Pao, p. 338.

<sup>1731</sup>Archer, Encyclopedia, p. 163.

<sup>1732</sup>Blomberg, Matthew // Commentary on the New Testament use of the Old Testament, p. 92.

Source: LXX

Correspondence: exact

Comments: Concerning correspondence to the original context, the contemporaries of Isaiah rejected his message also.<sup>1733</sup>

### **Jn 19:37 = Zech 12:10**

Source: MT

Correspondence: The pronoun is changed to refer to Jesus.

Comments: Toy informs us that some rabbis considered this verse messianic.<sup>1734</sup>

### **Acts 2:25-28, 31 (Acts 13:35) = Ps 16:9-11**

Source: LXX (differs from MT)

Correspondence: exact

Comments:

- (1) Peter speaks of this as a messianic prophecy, and that David was aware of that (v. 30).
- (2) The term תַּחַי (pit) in Psalm 16:10 (MT) can imply salvation from death itself, while the word διαφθοράν (LXX) more specifically speaks of “decay.”<sup>1735</sup>
- (3) David did indeed die, so the verse must relate to another.<sup>1736</sup>
- (4) MT has נַחֲלֵי (in safety) instead of ἐπ’ ἐλπίδι (in hope) as LXX and Acts 2.

### **Acts 2:34-35 = Ps 110:1**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: exact

### **Acts 3:22 = Deut 18:15-19**

Source: Does not correspond to either LXX, or MT (paraphrase)

Correspondence:

- (1) The word order in Acts 3:22 differs from MT and LXX, but agrees with Acts 7:37 except for omitting the word κύριος (Lord) from 7:37.
- (2) Singular pronouns in MT and LXX (yours, you) become plural in Acts 3:22 and 7:37 (yours, you) for the sake of the intended audience.<sup>1737</sup>

Comments:

- (1) According to Longenecker, the rabbis considered this passage messianic.<sup>1738</sup>
- (2) Peter quotes from memory.

### **Acts 3:23 = Combination of Deut 18:19 and Lev 23:29**

Source: Does not correspond to either LXX, or MT (paraphrase)

Comments:

- (1) This is a combination of a messianic prophecy of the coming great prophet with the oft-occurring verdict for a blatant violation of the Law: “He shall be cut off from his people.”
- (2) Peter quotes the verse from memory.

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<sup>1733</sup>Köstenberger, p. 478.

<sup>1734</sup>Toy, p. 93.

<sup>1735</sup>Marshall, Acts, p. 538; Toy, p. 100-101.

<sup>1736</sup>Marshall, Acts, p. 538-539; Kaiser, Hard sayings of the Bible, p. 33.

<sup>1737</sup>Peterson, p. 183.

<sup>1738</sup>Longenecker, Biblical exegesis, p. 73.



**Acts 4:11 = Ps 118:22**

Source: Does not correspond to either LXX, or MT (paraphrase)

Comments:

- (1) Psalm 118 already contains another messianic prophecy (118:26).<sup>1739</sup>
- (2) Jesus applied Psalm 118:22 to Himself in Mark 12:10-11.<sup>1740</sup>
- (3) Peter quotes the verse from memory.

**Acts 4:25-26 = Ps 2:1-2**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: exact

Comments:

- (1) Psalm 2 speaks of the rebellion of the nations against God and His Messiah. The prayer of Acts 4, however, is directed against other enemies of Messiah – the Jewish leaders. Their rejection of the gospel allows one to speak of them as Gentiles.
- (2) Toy notes that early Jewish commentators considered this psalm messianic.<sup>1741</sup>

**Acts 8:32-33 = Isa 53:7-8**

Source: LXX (differs from MT)

Correspondence: exact

Comments:

- (1) LXX and Acts differ significantly from MT. Nonetheless, LXX and Acts reflect the general thrust of the version in MT.
- (2) The eunuch read the version of the Old Testament (i.e. LXX) that was available to him. It does not necessarily follow that this was the best text.<sup>1742</sup>

**Acts 13:33 = Ps 2:7**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: exact

Comments: Unlike the use of this verse in Hebrews 1:5 and 5:5, Paul relates it to the resurrection of Jesus.

**Acts 13:35 = Ps 16:10**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: exact

**Rom 10:15 = Isa 52:7 (cf. Nah 1:15)**

Source: closer to MT

Correspondence: In Romans 10:15, the phrase “on the mountains” is absent.

Comments:

- (1) Morris writes that the rabbis acknowledged Isaiah 52:7 as a messianic prophecy.<sup>1743</sup>

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<sup>1739</sup>Marshall, Acts, p. 551.

<sup>1740</sup>Ibid.

<sup>1741</sup>Toy, p. 107.

<sup>1742</sup>Archer, Encyclopedia, p. 123.

<sup>1743</sup>Morris L. The Epistle to the Romans // The Pillar New Testament commentary. – Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: Eerdmans; Intersociety Press, 1988. – P. 390; also Toy, p. 150.

(2) In Isaiah, the good news was preached to Israel, while in Romans 10:15, it is for all people. Yet, we also take into consideration the eschatological sense of Isaiah 52:6 and the appeal to Gentiles in Isaiah 52:10.<sup>1744</sup>

**Rom 10:16 = Isa 53:1**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: exact

Comments: Concerning correspondence to the original context, the contemporaries of Isaiah rejected his message also.<sup>1745</sup>

**Rom 15:12 = Isa 11:10**

Source: LXX (differs from MT)

Correspondence:

(1) Romans omits ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ (in that day) because for Paul that day has already come.<sup>1746</sup>

(2) MT reads, "Who will stand as a signal for the peoples," but LXX and Romans 15 have, "Who arises to rule over the Gentiles."

Comments: According to Longenecker, the rabbis considered this passage messianic.<sup>1747</sup>

**Rom 15:21 = Isa 52:15**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: exact

Comments: Paul fulfills the messianic mission predicted in Isaiah 52:15.

**2 Cor 6:2 = Isa 49:8**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: exact

Comments: The context of Isaiah 49 speaks of the saving mission of God's Servant. Paul emphasizes that today is the "acceptable time" and the "day of salvation." Therefore, one must take advantage of the grace of Christ now and actively spread the good news about Him.<sup>1748</sup>

**Heb 1:5a = Ps 2:7**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: exact

Comments: The goal of the author here is to show the preeminence of Christ over the angels.<sup>1749</sup>

**Heb 1:5b = 2 Sam 7:14**

Source: LXX (or MT)

Correspondence: exact

Comments: According to Longenecker, the rabbis considered this passage messianic.<sup>1750</sup>

**Heb 1:13 = Ps 110:1**

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<sup>1744</sup>Seifrid, p. 662.

<sup>1745</sup>Ibid.

<sup>1746</sup>Ibid, p. 690.

<sup>1747</sup>Longenecker, Biblical exegesis, p. 73.

<sup>1748</sup>Toy, p. 184.

<sup>1749</sup>Guthrie, p. 927.

<sup>1750</sup>Longenecker, Biblical exegesis, p. 81. Guthrie agrees (Guthrie, p. 929).

Source: LXX

Correspondence: exact

Comments: The goal of the author here is to show the preeminence of Christ over the angels.

### **Heb 5:5 = Ps 2:7**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: exact

Comments:

- (1) According to Longenecker, the rabbis considered this passage messianic.<sup>1751</sup>
- (2) The goal of the author here is to show Christ's appointment as a priest.<sup>1752</sup>

### **Heb 5:6 (Heb 7:17, 21) = Ps 110:4**

Source: LXX or MT

Correspondence: Hebrews omits εἶ (also absent in MT)

Comments: We note several indications of a messianic fulfillment of this verse:<sup>1753</sup> (1) Israel never had a king that also served as a priest; (2) the priesthood is eternal; (3) in Psalm 110, we find other messianic prophecies; (4) the rabbis considered it messianic.

### **1 Pet 2:7 = Ps 118:22**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: exact

Comments: In Psalm 118, we find other messianic prophecies (118:26), and Jesus applies Psalm 118:22 to Himself (see Mk 12:10-11).<sup>1754</sup>

### **1 Pet 2:22 = Isa 53:9**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: LXX reads ἀνομίαν (lawlessness), but Peter has ἀμαρτίαν (sin). Yet, notice that Peter used the term ἀμαρτίαν (ῥπεx) twice before in this context (v. 20, 24).

### **1 Pet 2:23-25 = allusion to Isa 53:4-7**

### **2 Pet 1:17 = allusion to Ps 2:7; Isa 42:1**

### **Rev 2:26-27 = Ps 2:8-9**

Source: Does not correspond to either LXX, or MT

Comments:

- (1) Jesus, having received authority in Psalm 2, gives authority to His faithful in Revelation 2.
- (2) The verb שָׁרַף (break) with different vocalization would read "shepherd," which may explain the use of the verb ποιμαίνει (shepherd) in Revelation and LXX.<sup>1755</sup>

### **Rev 3:7 = Isa 22:22**

Source: MT

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<sup>1751</sup>Ibid.

<sup>1752</sup>Guthrie, p. 962.

<sup>1753</sup>Ibid, p. 961; Toy, p. 220.

<sup>1754</sup>Marshall, Acts, p. 551.

<sup>1755</sup>Beale G. K., McDonough S. M. Revelation // Beale G. K., Carson D. A. Commentary on the New Testament use of the Old Testament. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2007. – P. 1095.

Correspondence: In Revelation, instead of, “then I will set the key of the house of David on his shoulder,” Revelation has: “Who has the key of David,” because Jesus speaks not of others, but of Himself.<sup>1756</sup>

Comments: There are several indications of a messianic application of Isaiah 22:22: (1) Eliakim receives authority over the house of David; (2) in Isaiah 22:20 he is called “God’s servant”; (3) Isaiah 9:6 speaks of Messiah that “the government will rest on His shoulders.”<sup>1757</sup>

#### **D. Cases of Direct Application of Old Testament Principles in the New Testament**

##### **Matt 4:10 (Lk 4:8) = Deut 6:13**

Source: LXX

Correspondence:

- (1) In Matthew and Luke, the word μόνω (only) is added.
- (2) In Matthew and Luke, we have the word προσκυνήσεις (worship) instead of φοβηθήση (fear), which is found in MT and LXX. Possibly, the word “worship” is used due to Satan’s request from Jesus to worship him.<sup>1758</sup>

##### **Matt 5:5 = allusion to Ps 37:11**

##### **Matt 9:13 = Hos 6:6**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: exact

##### **Matt 12:7 = Hos 6:6**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: exact

##### **Matt 18:16 = Deut 19:15**

Source: LXX

Correspondence:

- (1) Matthew condenses the phrase: ἐπὶ στόματος δύο μαρτύρων καὶ ἐπὶ στόματος τριῶν μαρτύρων (by the mouth of two witnesses or by the mouth of witnesses) to ἐπὶ στόματος δύο μαρτύρων ἢ τριῶν (by the mouth of two or three witnesses).
- (2) In Matthew, we find the subjunctive mood σταθῇ (confirmed) instead of the future tense σταθήσεται (confirmed) for the sake of grammatical agreement.

##### **Matt 22:37 (Mk 12:29-30) = Deut 6:5**

Source: MT or LXX

Correspondence:

- (1) In Matthew, we have “all your mind” instead of “all your strength.”
- (2) In Matthew, the preposition ἐν is used instead of ἐξ.
- (3) Mark adds ἐξ ὅλης τῆς διανοίας σου (all your mind) as well as “all your strength.”
- (4) In Mark, we have ἰσχύος (strength) instead of δυνάμεως (strength).

Comments:

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<sup>1756</sup>Bratcher, p. 79.

<sup>1757</sup>Beale, McDonough, Revelation, p. 1096-1097; Beale, Handbook, p. 136-144.

<sup>1758</sup>Blomberg, Matthew // Commentary on the New Testament use of the Old Testament, p. 17.

- (1) Edwards feels that Mark added the phrase “and all your mind.”<sup>1759</sup> Yet, in Luke 10:27, the rich man quotes Deut 6:5 the same as Mark (but with a different word order).
- (2) Longenecker thinks that Mark may have added “and all your mind” due to the use of the *Shema* in Jewish liturgy, which took on various forms.<sup>1760</sup>
- (3) Toy notes that in various copies of LXX, the Hebrew term לֵב (heart) is sometimes translated with καρδία (heart), and sometimes with διανοία (mind). Possibly, both translations were used resulting in four elements: heart (καρδία), soul, mind (διανοία), and strength.<sup>1761</sup>

### **Matt 22:39 (Mk 12:31) = Lev 19:18**

Source: LXX or MT

Correspondence: exact

### **Mk 9:48 = Isa 66:24**

Source: MT

Correspondence:

- (1) The Hebrew imperfect tense (תִּמְוֶה and תִּכְבֶּה) is translated in LXX by the future tense, but in Mark by the present tense.
- (2) In Mark, the pronoun “their” after the word “fire” is missing.

### **Acts 23:5 = Ex 22:28**

Source: LXX or MT

Correspondence:

- (1) In Acts, the word order differs slightly.
- (2) LXX has the plural ἄρχοντας (rulers), while Acts has the singular.

Comments: Paul quotes this verse from memory.

### **Rom 2:6 = Ps 62:12**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: Paul has the third person (He) instead of the second person (You).

Comments: Paul employs a general biblical principle in his argument here.

### **Rom 3:4 = Ps 51:5**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: Paul has the future tense νικήσεις (prevail) instead of the subjunctive mood νικήσης (prevail).

Comments: In Psalm 51, David speaks of God’s righteousness, when He rebuked Him for sin. Paul has the same sense.

### **Rom 3:10-12 = Ps 53:3-4**

Source: LXX or MT

Correspondence:

- (1) V. 11 – paraphrased and abbreviated
- (2) V. 12 – χρηστότητα (good) instead of ἀγαθόν (good)

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<sup>1759</sup>Edwards J. R. The Gospel according to Mark // The Pillar New Testament commentary. – Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: Eerdmans, 2002. – P. 371.

<sup>1760</sup>Longenecker, Biblical exegesis, p. 51.

<sup>1761</sup>Toy, p. 60-61.

**Rom 4:7-8 = Ps 32:1-2**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: exact

**Rom 7:7 = Ex 20:17**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: exact

**Rom 9:15 = Ex 33:19**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: exact

**Rom 11:34 (1 Cor 2:16) = Isa 40:13**

Source: LXX

Correspondence:

- (1) Romans has a different word order: σύμβουλος αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο.
- (2) In Romans, we have ἢ (or) instead of καὶ (and).
- (3) In 1 Corinthians 2:16, the phrase καὶ τίς αὐτοῦ σύμβουλος ἐγένετο (or as His counselor has informed Him) is absent. Also, the word συμβιβᾷ (instruct) replaces the word συμβιβάσει (instruct).
- (4) Romans lacks the final part of the quotation: ὃς συμβιβᾷ αὐτόν (who will instruct him).

**Rom 11:35 = Job 41:3**

Source: Closer to MT. Also similar to the Aramaic Targum.<sup>1762</sup>

Correspondence: Romans adds the word αὐτῷ (him) after ἀνταποδοθήσεται (paid back).

**Rom 12:19 (Heb 10:30) = Deut 32:35**

Source: Closer to MT: "Vengeance is Mine, and retribution." Corresponds well to the Aramaic Targum.<sup>1763</sup> The same version in Romans is found in Hebrews 10:30, which may indicate the existence of an unknown source.

Comments: In the Old Testament context, the topic is God's judgment on Israel's enemies. The author of Hebrews sees in this a general principle.<sup>1764</sup>

**Rom 12:20 = Prov 25:21-22**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: Romans has ψώμιζε (feed) instead of τρέφε (feed).

**Rom 13:9 = Isa 20:13-17 and Lev 19:18**

Source: A paraphrase of Isaiah 20:13-17, but Leviticus 19:18 is taken verbatim from LXX.

**1 Cor 1:31 = Jer 9:24 (paraphrase)**

Source: The same version is found in 2 Corinthians 10:17, which may indicate the existence of an unknown source.

**1 Cor 2:16 = Isa 40:13**

Source: LXX

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<sup>1762</sup>Seifrid, p. 679.

<sup>1763</sup>Bruce, Canon, p. 285

<sup>1764</sup>Guthrie, p. 981.

Correspondence: An abbreviation. The phrase τίς αὐτοῦ σύμβουλος ἐγένετο (or has become His counselor) is absent.

**1 Cor 3:19 = Job 5:13**

Source: MT

Correspondence: exact

Comments: Interestingly, Paul cites the words of Eliphaz, of whom God said that he had “not spoken of Me what is right as My servant Job has” (Job 42:7).<sup>1765</sup>

**1 Cor 10:26 = Ps 24:1**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: exact

**2 Cor 9:9 = Ps 112:9**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: exact

**2 Cor 10:17 = Jer 9:24 (paraphrase)**

Source: The same version is found in 1 Corinthians 1:31, which may indicate the existence of an unknown source.

**Gal 3:10 = Deut 27:26**

Source: Does not correspond to either LXX, or MT, but closer to LXX.

**Gal 3:12 = Lev 18:5**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: In Galatians, the word ἄνθρωπος (man) is absent.

**Gal 5:14 = Lev 19:18**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: exact

**Eph 4:25 = Zech 8:16**

Source: MT

Correspondence: exact, except that Paul has the preposition μετὰ (with) instead of πρὸς (to).

**Eph 6:2-3 = Ex 20:12**

Source: LXX (differs from MT)

Correspondence:

(1) Ephesians has the verb ἔσῃ (will be) instead of γένη (will become).

(2) Unlike MT, in the LXX and Ephesians, the phrase ἵνα εὖ σοι γένηται (in order that it might be well with you) is added.

Comments: Paul relates this verse to life “on the earth,” while Exodus speaks of the “land which the Lord your God will give you.”

**2 Tim 4:14 = Ps 61:13**

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<sup>1765</sup>Beegle, p. 193-194.

Source: LXX

Correspondence: Paul has the second person pronoun (You) instead of the third person (He).

**Heb 10:30 = Deut 32:35-36**

Source:

(1) The version in Hebrews is closer to MT than to LXX. MT = “Vengeance is Mine, and retribution,” while Hebrews has “Vengeance is mine, I will repay”. Yet, Hebrews 10:30 also corresponds to the Aramaic Targum.<sup>1766</sup> The same version in Hebrews is found in Rom 12:19, which may indicate the existence of an unknown source.

(2) The second quote in Hebrews 10:30 corresponds exactly to Deuteronomy 32:36 in LXX.

Comments: In the Old Testament context, the topic is God’s judgement on Israel’s enemies. The author of Hebrews sees in this a general principle.<sup>1767</sup>

**Heb 12:5-6 = Prov 3:11-12**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: Unlike LXX, Hebrews has the word μου (my), which also is in MT.

**Heb 12:29 = Deut 4:24**

Source: LXX

Correspondence:

(1) In Hebrews, κύριος ὁ θεός (Lord God) is shortened to ὁ θεός (God).

(2) Hebrews has the pronoun ἡμῶν (our) instead of σου (your).

**Heb 13:6 = Ps 117:6**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: exact

**Jam 2:8 = Lev 19:18**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: exact

**Jam 2:11 = Ex 20:13-14**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: exact

**Jam 4:6 (1 Pet 5:5) = Prov 3:34**

Source: LXX (differs from MT)

Correspondence:

(1) Exact, except James and Peter have θεός (God) instead of κύριος (Lord). Peter prefers to use κύριος only for Jesus.

(2) MT reads: “Though He scoffs at the scoffers, yet He gives grace to the afflicted.” The sense is similar.

**1 Pet 1:16 = Lev 11:44**

Source: MT or LXX

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<sup>1766</sup>Bruce, Canon, p. 285

<sup>1767</sup>Guthrie, p. 981.



Correspondence: Peter has a different word order (ἐγὼ ἅγιος εἰμι). Some LXX manuscripts, though, have Peter's word order.

### **1 Pet 2:3 = Ps 34:8**

Source: MT or LXX

Correspondence and Comments:

- (1) LXX has the imperative γεύσασθε (taste), but Peter has a conditional clause εἰ ἐγεύσασθε... (if you have tasted). Peter is confident that his readers are already believers – they have already “tasted.”
- (2) In Peter, the phrase καὶ ἴδετε (and see) is omitted. It is thought that the command “to see” did not fit with the “milk” metaphor in verse 2. Therefore, Peter omitted it.
- (3) Peter relates this verse to the Lord Jesus (see 2:4), but in the Old Testament context, יהוה (Yahweh) is in view.<sup>1768</sup>

### **1 Pet 3:10-12 = Ps 34:12-16**

Source: LXX

Correspondence:

- (1) Peter uses the third person instead of the second person from LXX. Consequently, Peter omits all the personal pronouns in the second person. This better corresponds to Peter's context (v. 8-9), where he gave a series of exhortations in the third person.
- (2) In Peter, instead of ὁ θέλων ζωὴν ἀγαπῶν ἡμέρας ἰδεῖν ἀγαθὰς (the man who desires life and loves {length of} days), we have ὁ γὰρ θέλων ζωὴν ἀγαπᾶν καὶ ἰδεῖν ἡμέρας ἀγαθὰς (the one who desires life, to love and see good days).
- (3) Peter omits the introductory question.
- (4) Peter introduces the conjunctions δὲ and οὗτοι to clarify the relationships between the sentences.

### **1 Pet 4:8 = Prov 10:12**

Source: closer to MT

Correspondence: Peter speaks of a “multitude of sins,” while the MT has “all transgressions.”

### **1 Pet 4:18 = Prov 11:31**

Source: LXX (differs from MT)

Correspondence:

- (1) Peter does not have the word μέν.
- (2) Unlike LXX and Peter, MT reads, “If the righteous will be rewarded in the earth...”

Comments: Archer asserts that the sense of MT is preserved.<sup>1769</sup>

### **1 Pet 5:5 (Jam 4:6) = Prov 3:34**

Source: LXX (differs from MT)

Correspondence:

- (1) exact, except James and Peter have θεός (God) instead of κύριος (Lord). Peter prefers to use κύριος only for Jesus.
- (2) MT reads: “Though He scoffs at the scoffers, yet He gives grace to the afflicted.” The sense is similar.

### **1 Pet 5:7 = Ps 55:22**

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<sup>1768</sup>Carson D. A. 1 Peter // Beale G. K., Carson D. A. Commentary on the New Testament use of the Old Testament. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2007. – P. 1023.

<sup>1769</sup>Archer, Encyclopedia, p. xxix.

Source: = LXX

Correspondence and Comments:

- (1) LXX has the imperative ἐπίρριψον (cast), while Peter has the participle ἐπιρίψαντες (yet, a participle can carry the sense of a command, and this allows Peter to connect this sentence with the previous one).
- (2) Peter has the plural pronoun ὑμῶν (your), but LXX has the singular σου (your) (yet, Peter is adapting the verse to his audience).
- (3) Peter adds the word πᾶσαν (all), making clear what is implied here.
- (4) Peter has ἐπ' αὐτόν (on Him), while LXX has ἐπὶ κύριον (on the Lord). Peter already mentioned God in the previous verse and, therefore, used the pronoun.
- (5) Different word order, but Peter paraphrased.
- (6) Different ending to the verse: ὅτι αὐτῷ μέλει περὶ ὑμῶν (for He cares for you). Possibly, this is not meant as a part of the quote, but the words of Peter.

## **2 Pet 2:22 = Prov 26:11**

Source: = MT

Correspondence: exact

## **Rev 3:19 = Prov 3:12**

Source: closer to MT

### **E. Cases of New Application of an Old Testament Principle, Prophecy or Example**

#### **Matt 4:4 (Lk 4:4) = Deut 8:3**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: In Matthew, the article (τῷ) before the participle ἐκπορευομένῳ (proceeds from) is missing.

Comments: The principle of dependence on God applies both to Israel, who ate manna in the wilderness, and to the incarnate Son of God, who fasted in the wilderness.

#### **Matt 4:7 (Lk 4:12) = Deut 6:16**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: exact

Comments: Israel tempted God by their grumbling in the wilderness, but Jesus would not tempt God by leaping off the temple.

#### **Matt 7:23 (Lk 13:27) = Ps 6:8**

Source: LXX

Correspondence:

- (1) The Gospels have a different verb: not ἀπόστητε (depart), but ἀποχωρεῖτε (depart).
- (2) In Matthew, the word πάντες (all) is absent.
- (3) Luke has a different ending: not οἱ ἐργαζόμενοι τὴν ἀνομίαν (who practice lawlessness), ἀ ἐργάται ἀδικίας (who practice unrighteousness)

Comments:

- (1) In the original context, the psalmist is speaking to his enemies after his deliverance from them. Jesus, though, speaks of God's judgement. Possibly, Jesus is not so much quoting Psalm 6:9 as using words familiar to His audience to express His own thought.

#### **Matt 10:35-36 (Lk 12:53) = Mic 7:6**

Source: Does not correspond to either LXX, or MT (paraphrase)

Comments:

- (1) Micah speaks of betrayal within families in his time, which also applies in principle to divisions in families because of Christ.
- (2) Blomberg feels that here Jesus simply uses biblical terminology to express His own thought.<sup>1770</sup>
- (3) In Luke 12:53, Jesus expands the idea, speaking of conflict in both directions: father against son, and son against father, etc.<sup>1771</sup>

### **Matt 11:29 = Jer 6:16**

Source: MT

Correspondence: Matthew has ἀνάπαυσιν (rest), like the MT, whereas the LXX reads ἀγνισμόν (purity).

Comments: Through Jeremiah, God invites His people to find rest by the “ancient paths,” whereas Jesus invites them to find rest in Himself.

### **Matt 12:40 = Jonah 1:17**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: exact

Comments:

- (1) Jesus compares the period of His stay in the tomb with the period Jonah was in the great fish.
- (2) The LXX term κῆτος means “sea monster”<sup>1772</sup>, but the MT reads לִיִּשׁ, i.e. “fish.”<sup>1773</sup>

### **Matt 13:14-15 (Mk 4:12 [8:18]; Lk 8:10; Jn 12:40; Acts 28:26-27) = Isa 6:9-10**

Source: LXX (differs from MT)

Correspondence:

- (1) In Matthew and Acts, the qualifier αὐτῶν (their) after ὠσὶν (ears) is absent.
- (2) Acts has a different word order in the beginning: Πορεύθητι πρὸς τὸν λαὸν τοῦτον καὶ εἰπόν (go to this people and say).
- (3) In Luke, the passages is condensed, and the subjunctive mood and third person are used for grammatical harmony.
- (4) The version in Matthew differs greatly from LXX, but in many ways agrees with the Aramaic Targum.<sup>1774</sup>
- (5) MT states that the spiritual insensitivity of Israel resulted from God hardening their hearts. Only John 12:40, which greatly differs from LXX, reflects this. In the other New Testament versions, in general, the hardened condition of the disobedient is simply stated.

Comments: Jesus and Paul’s situations echo Isaiah’s – people do not attend to God’s Word.

### **Matt 13:35 = Ps 78:2**

Source: closer to MT

Correspondence: Instead of ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς (of old), Matthew has ἀπὸ καταβολῆς [κόσμου] (from the foundation of the world). Toy comments, “It is not the foundation of the world that the psalmist has in mind, but the early times of Israelitish history.”<sup>1775</sup>

Comments:

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<sup>1770</sup>Blomberg, Matthew // Commentary on the New Testament use of the Old Testament, p. 37.

<sup>1771</sup>Pao, p. 333.

<sup>1772</sup>Arndt, p. 544.

<sup>1773</sup>Brown, p. 185.

<sup>1774</sup>Edwards, p. 133.

<sup>1775</sup>Toy, p. 40.

- (1) Similar to how Asaph informed Israel about God's saving works (Ps 78:5ff) through his "parable" (Ps 78:2), Jesus revealed the God's plan of salvation in parables.<sup>1776</sup>
- (2) Toy notes that Asaph does not really speak in parables, but simply relates the history of God's people.<sup>1777</sup>

### **Matt 15:8-9 (Mk 7:6-7) = Isa 29:13**

Source: LXX (differs from MT)

Correspondence:

- (1) The Gospels omit αὐτῶν after χεῖλεσιν ("their" tongue) and the phrase ἐγγίζει μοι (draw near to Me).
- (2) The Gospels have the singular τιμᾷ (it honors) instead of the plural τιμῶσιν (they honor). Also, the pronoun με (Me) comes before τιμᾷ (it honors).
- (3) In Mark, the pronoun οὗτος (this) is placed at the beginning of the sentence.
- (4) In the Gospels, ἐντάλματα ἀνθρώπων (traditions of men) is placed at the end of the sentence.
- (5) The Gospels omit καὶ between the words διδασκαλίας and ἐντάλματα ἀνθρώπων. The following translation results: "Teaching as doctrines the precepts of men" instead of LXX: "Teaching the precepts of men and doctrines (LXX).
- (6) The sense of the MT is nonetheless preserved.

Comments: Jesus equates Israel's relationship with God at His time with that of Isaiah's time. Both groups paid God only formal worship instead of heartfelt devotion.<sup>1778</sup>

### **Matt 16:27 = Ps 62:12**

Source: MT

Correspondence:

- (1) Matthew has the second person (You) instead of the third person (He).
- (2) LXX has ἔργα (works), while Matthew has πρᾶξιν (work)

Comments: Psalm 62 states that God gives recompense, while Jesus applied this role to Himself.

### **Matt 21:13 (Mk 11:17; Lk 19:46) = Isa 56:7 and Jer 7:11**

Source: LXX

Correspondence:

- (1) Isaiah 56:7 (direct quote), Jeremiah 7:11 (paraphrase, in order to apply it to the Jews of Jesus' time<sup>1779</sup>).
- (2) Mark continues the quotation from Isaiah 56:7 with the words πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν (for all the nations).
- (3) Luke has the verb ἔσται (will be) instead of κληθήσεται (will be called).

Comments: Isaiah 56:7 expresses a universal principle concerning the purpose of the temple. Jeremiah 7:11 describes a situation similar to Matthew 21:13, where Israel violated the temple order.

### **Matt 21:16 = Ps 8:2**

Source: LXX (differs from MT)

Correspondence: exact

Comments:

- (1) MT has תִּי (strenght) instead of the LXX αἶνον (praise). In Psalm 29:1 (LXX), the word תִּי is translated τιμήν (honor), and in Isaiah 12:2 – by the word δόξα (glory). Yet, the context of Psalm 8 requires the translation "strength."<sup>1780</sup>

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<sup>1776</sup>Morris, Matthew, p. 355

<sup>1777</sup>Toy, p. 40.

<sup>1778</sup>Ibid, p. 40-41.

<sup>1779</sup>Ibid, p. 54.

<sup>1780</sup>Ibid, p. 55.

(2) Working off the LXX translation, Matthew 21:12 applies this verse to the children's' praise.

**Matt 22:32 (Mk 12:26; Lk 20:37) = Ex 3:6**

Source: LXX

Correspondence:

- (1) The Gospels omit τοῦ πατρός σου (your father)
- (2) In Matthew, the article ὁ is placed before every occurrence of θεὸς (God).
- (3) In Mark, the verb εἰμι (I am) is absent.
- (4) Luke changes the case for grammatical harmony.

Comments:

- (1) In the original context, Yahweh mentions the patriarchs as a confirmation of Moses' mission to their descendants. Jesus, though, employs this expression to prove the resurrection of the dead.<sup>1781</sup>
- (2) Pao relates that the words of Jesus are confirmed by the fact that God spoke of the living patriarchs *after* their death.<sup>1782</sup>

**Matt 27:9-10 = Zech 11:12-13 (cf. Jer 18:2; 32:6-9)**

Source: Does not correspond to either LXX, or MT.

Comments:

- (1) The term יוצר (potter) is similar in form to the word אוצר (treasury). Some assume that the word אוצר (treasury) was in the original text.<sup>1783</sup> This latter variant is found in the Syrian and Aramaic translations, and in one Hebrew manuscript.<sup>1784</sup>
- (2) Matthew's uses the third person instead of the first person (I took the 30 pieces of silver) to show what the priests did with the money.<sup>1785</sup>
- (3) The prophecy of Zechariah is ascribed to Jeremiah. Toy thinks this was a copyist error during transcription.<sup>1786</sup> Others feel that Zechariah wrote "in the spirit of Jeremiah"<sup>1787</sup>, or that Matthew is indirectly alluding to Jeremiah's experience with a potter (Jer 18:2) or with the purchase of land (Jer 32:6-9).<sup>1788</sup> Only Jeremiah is mentioned because he is greater than Zechariah.<sup>1789</sup>
- (4) Toy defends the view that all that these passages have in common is that they both speak of rejection of God and of 30 pieces of silver.<sup>1790</sup>

**Matt 27:46 (Mk 15:34) = Ps 22:1**

Source: Aramaic citation with translation.<sup>1791</sup>

Comments:

- (1) Jesus' experience on the cross parallels David's experience. Jesus echoes the cry of David in Psalm 22:1. Both experienced feelings of abandonment. Von Rad views the psalmist of Psalm 22 as a type of Christ.<sup>1792</sup>
- (2) Psalm 22 contains other prophetic (messianic) elements.

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<sup>1781</sup>Ibid, p. 59-60.

<sup>1782</sup>Pao, p. 370.

<sup>1783</sup>Longenecker, Biblical exegesis, p. 133.

<sup>1784</sup>Toy, p. 68.

<sup>1785</sup>Archer, Encyclopedia, p. 161; Toy, p. 70.

<sup>1786</sup>Toy, p. 71.

<sup>1787</sup>Ramm, p. 203.

<sup>1788</sup>Archer, Encyclopedia, p. 161.

<sup>1789</sup>Ibid, p. xxxii.

<sup>1790</sup>Toy, p. 71-72.

<sup>1791</sup>Edwards, p. 476.

<sup>1792</sup>Von Rad, p. 31.

**Mk 4:29 = Joel 3:13**

Source: MT

Correspondence: Joel has the imperative: “Put in the sickle,” while Jesus speaks of a concrete action: “He immediately puts in the sickle.”

Comments: Joel speaks of God’s eschatological judgment as a harvest. Jesus, though, applies the image of a harvest to the gathering of His saints at the end times.

**Mk 8:18 = Jer 5:21 or Ezek 12:2 (paraphrase)**

Comments: Both in the Old Testament, and in Jesus’ teaching, the issue is the spiritual blindness of those who should know better.

**Lk 1:17 = Mal 4:6 (MT = 3:24)**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: exact

Comments: Zechariah speaks of Malachi’s prophecy being fulfilled in John the Baptist.

**Lk 1:50 = Ps 103:17 (MT = 103:17)**

Source: MT

Correspondence: Luke uses the pronoun “His” instead of the personal name of God, Yahwah (יהוה).

Comments:

- (1) Mary applies the general principle of God’s compassion for people to the kindness He has shown her and her people.
- (2) Toy sees in Mary’s praise an echo of Hanna’s praise in 1 Sam 2:1-10.<sup>1793</sup>

**Lk 1:53 = Ps 107:9 (paraphrase)**

Comments:

- (1) Mary applies the general principle of God’s compassion for people to the kindness He has shown her and her people.
- (2) Toy sees in Mary’s praise an echo of Hanna’s praise in 1 Sam 2:1-10.<sup>1794</sup>

**Lk 23:30 (Rev 6:16) = Hos 10:8**

Source: Does not correspond to either LXX, or MT.

Correspondence: The quotation in Luke also differs from the one in Revelation.

Comments: Hosea speaks of God executing His judgment on Israel by means of Assyria. Jesus, however, speaks of the Roman assault, and the Book of Revelation – judgement on unbelievers. The principle is the same – God’s punishment of those rejecting Him.

**Lk 23:46 = Ps 31:5**

Source: LXX or MT

Correspondence: Luke’s version differs from LXX only in that he uses the present tense παρατίθεμαι (commit) instead of the future tense παραθήσομαι (will commit). In MT, we see the imperfect tense יִקְרָא, which can translate both ways.

Comments: Jesus repeats an expression of trust in God, first uttered by the psalmist.

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<sup>1793</sup>Toy, p. 76.

<sup>1794</sup>Ibid.

**Jn 2:17 = Ps 69:9a**

Source: LXX or MT

Correspondence: John has the future καταφάγεται (will consume) instead of the aorist κατέφαγέν (has consumed) supposedly “in order to bring out the supposed predictive character of the passage.”<sup>1795</sup>

Comments:

- (1) Jesus shares with the psalmist zeal for God’s house.
- (2) Romans 15:13 relates the second part of this verse (Ps 69:9b) to Jesus.
- (3) Psalm 69 contains many examples of messianic prophecy (see Ps 69:4, 9, 15, 19-23, 25).

**Jn 10:34 = Ps 82:6**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: exact

Comments: Jesus appeals to the Old Testament calling judges “gods” to justify His claim to be God’s Son.

**Jn 12:40 (see Matt 13:14-15)**

**Acts 1:20a = Ps 69:25**

Source: Does not correspond to either LXX, or MT (maybe an abbreviation of MT or LXX).

Comments:

- (1) Peter uses the singular instead of the plural in order to relate this verse to his situation.<sup>1796</sup>
- (2) The psalmist rebukes and brings curses on his opponents. Peter applies this to Judas, the opponent of Jesus.
- (3) Psalm 69 contains many examples of messianic prophecies (see Ps 69:4, 9, 15, 19-23, 25).

**Acts 1:20b = Ps 109:8**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: Acts has the imperative λαβέτω (receive) instead of the optative λάβοι, possibly to coordinate this verse with the previous quotation.<sup>1797</sup>

Comments: Psalm 109 is a rebuke of a personal enemy of the psalmist. Peter applies it to Judas Iscariot.

**Acts 4:24 = Ps 146:6**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: exact

Comments: The disciples of Jesus apply the principle of God’s universal rule to their situation in dealing with their opponents. In the words of Marshall, “The psalm contrasts the inability of human rulers with the power of God as creator of the universe.”<sup>1798</sup>

**Acts 13:34 = Isa 55:3**

Source: LXX

Correspondence:

- (1) Acts has the verb διαθήσεται (I will give) instead of the verb δώσω (I will give).
- (2) Acts omits διαθήκην αἰώνιον (eternal covenant).

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<sup>1795</sup>Ibid, p. 83.

<sup>1796</sup>Peterson, p. 125.

<sup>1797</sup>Marshall, Acts, p. 530.

<sup>1798</sup>Ibid, p. 552.

Comments: In Isaiah 55, we read of an eternal covenant established with Israel in connection with “the faithful mercies shown to David.” Paul, however, relates this promise to Jesus Christ in spite of the fact that the promise is addressed to the plural “you” (ὁμῖν). In the strength of this connection with David, Paul can apply Psalm 16:10 to the resurrection of Jesus.

#### **Acts 13:41 = Hab 1:5**

Source: LXX (differs from MT)

Correspondence:

- (1) Abbreviated. Acts omits the words ἐπιβλέψατε (look) and θαυμάσια (wonder).
- (2) Acts adds the words ἔργον (work) and ὁμῖν (to you).
- (3) In Acts, we have διότι (for) instead of ὅτι (for).
- (4) The word נַגְיִם (“nations,” in the vocative case) could have been mistakenly introduced during transcription of the MT from the original word נִגְדִּים (scoffers), the word we see in LXX and Acts.<sup>1799</sup> Toy thinks the opposite – that the LXX translators committed the error.<sup>1800</sup>

Comments:

- (1) In the case of Hosea, the “astonishing” act of God would be Babylon’s assault as His punishment for Israel’s covenant unfaithfulness. Similarly, if hearers of the gospel reject the word of salvation, there will be tragic consequences as well.
- (2) Paul quotes the verse by memory.

#### **Acts 13:47 = Isa 49:6**

Source: MT

Correspondence: Unlike Acts, Isaiah speaks of “My” salvation.

Comments: Paul applies this messianic prophecy to the apostles, to whom Jesus entrusted the preaching of His gospel. Jesus Himself did not preach “until the ends of the earth.” He commissioned His disciples to do so.

#### **Acts 15:16-17 = Amos 9:11-12**

Source: LXX (differs from MT)

Correspondence: Verse 16 greatly differs from LXX, but verse 17 is nearly verbatim.

Comments:

- (1) Amos speaks of the restoration of Judah and expansion of its territory.<sup>1801</sup> James, however, relates the restoration of David’s tabernacle to the exaltation of Jesus and His appointment as Messiah. As a result of His exaltation, the Gentiles will seek God.<sup>1802</sup>
- (2) Amos 9:12 (MT) reads: “...that they may possess the remnant of Edom,” while LXX and Acts reads, “...that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord”. Archer suggests emending the MT: not לְמַעַן יִרְשׁוּ אֶת־ לְמַעַן יִדְרְשׁוּ אֶת־ שְׂאֲרֵית אֲדָם, but שְׂאֲרֵית אֲדָם, and that the LXX preserved the correct reading.<sup>1803</sup>
- (3) James quotes the verse from memory, as Toy comments, “The deviations of the New Testament text from the Septuagint may thus be explained from the freedom which James (or his reporter) would use in quoting.”<sup>1804</sup>

#### **Acts 28:26-27 (see Matt 13:14-15)**

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<sup>1799</sup>Archer, Encyclopedia, p. 159.

<sup>1800</sup>Toy, p. 119.

<sup>1801</sup>Ibid, p. 122.

<sup>1802</sup>Peterson, p. 431.

<sup>1803</sup>Archer, Encyclopedia, p. 155.

<sup>1804</sup>Toy, p. 122.



### **Rom 1:17 (Gal 3:11) = Hab 2:4**

Source: closer to MT

Correspondence: MT has “his faith,” while LXX has “My faith.” Paul lacks the pronoun. Seifrid proposes that the LXX translators mistakenly took the pronominal suffix ם (his) for ם (My).<sup>1805</sup>

Comments:

- (1) In Habakkuk 2:4, the Hebrew term אֱמוּנָה (*amuna*) literally means “faith” in the sense of “faithfulness.” The verbal form אָמַן (*aman*), from which the noun אֱמוּנָה (*amuna*) derives, has two meanings: in the *Niphal* form – “faithfulness,” and in the *Hiphil* form – “trust.”
- (2) In the context of Habakkuk 2:4, the righteous person “waits” with perseverance for a vision from the Lord (2:3). This contrasts with the proud person (2:4-5), who, in greed, gathers all for himself. Therefore, in this context, we can assign to the word אָמַן (*amun*) the meaning “trust.”
- (3) Seifrid notes that similarly to how people in Habakkuk’s day needed to trust God in the face of adversity, people today need to trust Christ in the light of God’s coming wrath.<sup>1806</sup>

### **Rom 2:24 = Isa 52:5 (cf. Ezek 36:20, 23)**

Source: LXX (differs from MT)

Correspondence:

- (1) In Romans, we have a different word order, where the phrase “name of God” is stressed.<sup>1807</sup>
- (2) In Romans, the phrase διὰ παντός (continually) is absent.
- (3) In Romans, we see not τὸ ὄνομά μου (My name), but ὄνομα τοῦ θεοῦ (the name of God)

Comments: In MT, God rebukes other nations for degrading his innocent people. In LXX, however, Israel suffers for its own sins. Archer postulates that Israel was indeed guilty, since they went into exile for their own misdeeds.<sup>1808</sup>

### **Rom 3:13 = Ps 5:9 and Ps 140:3**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: exact

Comments: Paul assigns the characteristics of personal enemies of the psalmist (Ps 5) and evil persons in general (Ps 140) to the entire human race.

### **Rom 3:14 = Ps 10:7**

Source: LXX

Correspondence:

- (1) Romans has a different word order.
- (2) In Romans, the word δόλου (lie) is absent.
- (3) Romans has the plural pronoun ὧν (whose) instead of the singular αὐτοῦ (his).

Comments: Paul assigns the characteristics of evil persons in general to the entire human race.

### **Rom 3:15-17 = Isa 59:7-8**

Source: LXX

Correspondence:

- (1) Verse 15 is abbreviated and paraphrased.
- (2) Verse 17 has ἔγνωσαν (know) instead of οἶδασιν (know)

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<sup>1805</sup>Seifrid, p. 609.

<sup>1806</sup>Ibid, p. 611.

<sup>1807</sup>Seifrid, p. 613.

<sup>1808</sup>Archer, Encyclopedia, p. 118-119. James Dunn shares this opinion (Dunn J. D. G. Romans 1–8 // Word Biblical commentary. – Dallas, TX: Word, 1998. – P. 118).

Comments: That which was once addressed to God's Old Testament people is now applied to all people.

**Rom 3:18 = Ps 36:1**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: exact

Comments: Paul assigns the characteristics of evil persons in general to the entire human race.

**Rom 4:17 = Gen 17:5**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: exact

Comments: Paul assigns the phrase "many nations" to those who imitate the faith of Abraham.<sup>1809</sup>

**Rom 8:36 = Ps 44.22**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: exact

Comments: The psalmist suffers for God. Believers in Jesus do the same.

**Rom 9:7 = Gen 21:12**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: exact

Comments: Paul associates Isaac, the son of the promise, with those who believe in God's promise in Jesus.

**Rom 9:12-13 = Gen 25:23 and Mal 1:2-3**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: Verse 12 is exact. Verse 13 has a different word order, putting the phrase τὸν Ἰακώβ ἠγάπησα (Jacob I loved) first.

Comments: Paul appeals to God's sovereignty in choosing Jacob over Esau to underscore His right to choose His elect independent of ethnicity, which runs contrary to conventional Jewish expectations.<sup>1810</sup>

**Rom 9:17 = Ex 9:16**

Source: MT

Correspondence: The final part exactly corresponds to LXX. The first part, however, greatly differs from it.

Comments: Paul applies Pharaoh's experience with God to the general principle of God's election.

**Rom 9:25 = Hos 2:23 (LXX = 2:25)**

Source: Does not correspond to either LXX, or MT

Comments:

- (1) Hosea is referring not to Gentiles, but to Israel.
- (2) Seifrid feels that Paul is applying this promise made to Israel to God's new people, which consists of both Jewish and Gentile believers in Jesus.<sup>1811</sup>
- (3) Morris comments that the sinfulness of Israel reached a point where they ceased being God's people, yet God will restore Israel. If hope exists for those excluded from the covenant as punishment for sin,

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<sup>1809</sup>Seifrid, p. 626.

<sup>1810</sup>Ibid, p. 640.

<sup>1811</sup>Ibid, p. 648.

then how much more can those who have not been excluded by their own demerit (i.e., Gentiles) have hope?<sup>1812</sup>

**Rom 9:26 = Hos 1:10 (LXX = 2:1)**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: exact

Comments: See Romans 9:25 above.<sup>1813</sup>

**Rom 9:27-28 = Isa 10:22-23**

Source: Does not correspond to either LXX, or MT

Comments:

- (1) Just as only a remnant of Israel remained after Assyria's invasion, only a remnant of Israel will believe in Messiah Jesus.
- (2) In Isaiah 10:20-23, there are elements that better correspond to eschatological than historical salvation. At that time, people will "rely on the Lord" and "overflow with righteousness."

**Rom 9:29 = Isa 1:9**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: exact

Comments: Just as God preserved a remnant of Israel from annihilation at the time of Isaiah, He will preserve a remnant of Jewish believers in Messiah.

**Rom 9:33 (Rom 10:11; 1 Pet 2:6-8) = combination of Isa 8:14 and 28:16**

Source: Does not correspond to either LXX, or MT (paraphrase)

Comments:

- (1) In 1 Peter 2:6-8 and Romans 9:33, we encounter exact verbatim expressions that are absent in both LXX and MT: ἰδοὺ τίθημι ἐν Σιών λίθον (behold, I lay in Zion a stone), λίθον προσκόμματος καὶ πέτραν σκανδάλου (stone of stumbling and a rock of offense), and ὁ πιστεύων ἐπ' αὐτῷ (he who believes in Him). This may indicate the existence of another source not known to us.<sup>1814</sup> Some believe that the Early Church employed a collection of messianic prophecies, which were sometimes connected by a common word, like "stone."<sup>1815</sup>
- (2) At the same time, Romans 9:33 and 1 Peter 2:6 have different endings: ὁ πιστεύων ἐπ' αὐτῷ οὐ κατασυνθῆσεται (Rom 9:33), ὁ πιστεύων ἐπ' αὐτῷ οὐ μὴ κατασυνθῇ (1 Pet 2:6; Isa 28:16 LXX). Some assume that Peter used the common source with Paul, yet corrected the ending to correspond it to Isaiah 28:16 in LXX.
- (3) In LXX, it states that if Israel would sanctify the Lord, He would not become for it a stone of stumbling. This idea is absent from MT, Peter, and Paul.<sup>1816</sup>
- (4) Toy points out that in the original context of both Isaiah passages, trust in God's power over what people can do is emphasized. Peter and Paul, however, apply this principle to faith in Jesus for salvation.<sup>1817</sup>

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<sup>1812</sup>Morris, Romans, p. 369-370. Also see Carson, 1 Peter, p. 1032.

<sup>1813</sup>Ibid, p. 370-371.

<sup>1814</sup>Toy, p. 146.

<sup>1815</sup>Koch, p. 232.

<sup>1816</sup>Ibid, p. 233-235. Koch also notes that this idea is absent in the translations of Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion.

<sup>1817</sup>Toy, p. 146.

(5) Seifrid notes that in Isaiah 28:16, God lays the stone, whereas in Isaiah 8:14, He Himself is the stone.<sup>1818</sup>

### **Rom 10:6-8 = Deut 30:12-14**

Source: LXX

Correspondence:

- (1) Verse 6: term ἡμῖν (for us) is missing.
- (2) Verse 6: introduction is taken from Deuteronomy 9:4.
- (3) Verse 7: Does not correspond to either LXX, or MT. Some assume that the words “who will descend into the abyss?” are taken from Ps 107:26.<sup>1819</sup>
- (4) Verse 8: different word order for σου ἐγγύς (near you).
- (5) Verse 8: the word σφόδρα (very) is absent.

Comments: It appears that in these verses, Moses is claiming that it is possible to keep the Law. Paul, however, uses these verses to teach salvation by faith apart from the Law. Several attempts are made to reconcile this discrepancy:

- (1) Some feel that Paul is not quoting Deuteronomy, but only uses words and expressions familiar to his audience. We note that he does not introduce the passage with the formulas “Scripture says,” or “Moses says.”<sup>1820</sup> On the other hand, this passage reads like a direct quote.<sup>1821</sup>
- (2) Mounce claims that what is meant is that one need not go up to heaven or descend to Hades to learn God’s will. It is made clear in the gospel.<sup>1822</sup> Yet, in Deuteronomy 30, Moses speaks specifically not of discovering God’s will, but of keeping the Law.
- (3) According to Dunn, Paul is following the example of other writers of his time, namely Philo and the author of *Baruch*, who attribute this passage not to the Torah, but to either “wisdom” or “goodness.” Paul, in his turn, applies it to the gospel.<sup>1823</sup> Yet, recall our discussion on borrowing rabbinic methodology.
- (4) Seifrid holds that the Law is fulfilled in Christ (Rom 10:4). Therefore, what is written in Deuteronomy 30:12-14 about the Law may apply to Christ.<sup>1824</sup>
- (5) Deuteronomy 30 is located in an eschatological context, which speaks of the circumcision of the heart (v. 6), an obedient people (v. 6 and 8), and future prosperity (v. 7). Yet, these eschatological realities are accomplished only in Christ, which gives Paul reason to relate this verse to the gospel. In other words, one need not go up to heaven in order to bring Christ down (He is already incarnate), and one need not go down to the pit to bring Christ up (He has already risen). One needs only to accept the good news with a receptive heart and confess Him as Savior and Lord.
- (6) Strickland reminds us that the passage is located in a context predicting the future apostasy of Israel (chps. 30-32). It would create a contradiction to claim, on the one hand, that Israel’s covenant failure was inevitable, and on the other, that Israel was capable of obeying the Law.<sup>1825</sup>

### **Rom 10:11 = Isa 28:16**

Source: LXX (differs from MT)

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<sup>1818</sup>Seifrid, p. 651.

<sup>1819</sup>Mounce R. H. Romans // The New American commentary. – Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995. – P. 208.

<sup>1820</sup>Morris, Romans, p. 382-383; Longenecker, Biblical exegesis, p. 106.

<sup>1821</sup>Dunn J. D. G. Romans 9–16 // Word Biblical commentary. – Dallas, TX: Word, 1998. – P. 604-605.

<sup>1822</sup>Mounce, Romans, p. 208.

<sup>1823</sup>Dunn, Romans 9-16, p. 604-605.

<sup>1824</sup>Seifrid, p. 656.

<sup>1825</sup>Strickland, W. The inauguration of the Law of Christ with the gospel of Christ: A dispensationalist view // Gundry S. Five views on Law and Gospel. – Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1993. – P. 250.

Correspondence:

- (1) Romans has the future tense κατασχυθήσεται (will be ashamed) instead of the subjunctive mood κατασχυθῇ.
- (2) In Romans, the word πᾶς (every) is added
- (3) MT has “not make haste (שִׁיחִי),” while LXX and Romans have “not be ashamed (κατασχυθῇ).”

Comments: See commentary on Romans 9:33

**Rom 10:18 = Ps 19:4**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: exact

Comments:

- (1) In order to prove that the Jews have heard the gospel, Paul cites Psalm 19:4, which speaks of God’s revelation in nature.
- (2) Bruce and Morris feel that by Paul’s time, enough Jews had already heard the gospel that it was already available to the Jewish community worldwide. Note that Paul wrote of the Colossian church that the gospel “has come to you, just as in all the world” (Col 1:6) and “was proclaimed in all creation under heaven” (Col 1:23).<sup>1826</sup>
- (3) It seems that Paul employs the phrases “their voice” and “their words” to represent not the voice of creation, but the voice of preaching.<sup>1827</sup>

**Rom 10:19 = Deut 32:21**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: Third person pronouns are changed into second person pronouns for the sake of context.

Comments: In the original context, God will “provoke” Israel by sending them into exile among the Gentiles. In a similar way, at the present time, God is “provoking” Israel through the conversion of Gentiles to Himself.<sup>1828</sup>

**Rom 11:3-4 = 3 Kin 19:10 (cf. 3 Kin 19:14) and 3 Kin 19:18**

Source: better corresponds to MT

Correspondence:

- (1) In Romans 11:3, the expressions בְּחֶרֶב (with the sword) and לְקַחְתָּהּ (to take it away) are absent.
- (2) In Romans 11:3, the order of sentences is inverted: not “torn down Your altars and killed Your prophets,” but “they have killed your prophets, they have torn down your altars.”
- (3) In Romans 11:4, the phrase “in Israel” is absent.
- (4) Paul uses the past tense, “I have left,” instead of the future, “I will leave.”

Comments: Paul compares the preservation of the righteous remnant in Elijah’s day with the preservation of Jewish believers in Messiah in his day.

**Rom 11:8 = Deut 29:4 and Isa 29:10**

Source: LXX, but it is a combination of verses with paraphrase.

Comments:

- (1) In his day, Moses recognized that “to this day the LORD has not given you a heart to know, nor eyes to see, nor ears to hear.” Paul continues that theme, that even “to this very day” unbelieving Jews still do not understand God’s plan.
- (2) Isaiah speaks of the spiritual blindness of Israel as a punishment from God for its disobedience.

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<sup>1826</sup>Morris, Romans, p. 393.

<sup>1827</sup>Mounce, Romans, p. 212.

<sup>1828</sup>Seifrid, p. 665.

(3) Both Moses (Deut 30) and Paul (Rom 11) promise a future restoration of Israel.<sup>1829</sup>

### **Rom 11:9-10 = Ps 69:22-23**

Source: see below

Correspondence:

- (1) Verse 9 differs greatly from both LXX and MT.
- (2) Verse 10 exactly corresponds to LXX.

Comments:

- (1) Psalm 69 speaks of retribution to enemies of the psalmist, which were also enemies of God. Paul applies these words to unbelieving Jews due to their hostile attitude toward God and His Messiah.
- (2) Psalm 69 contains many examples of messianic prophecy (see Ps 69:4, 9, 15, 19-23, 25).
- (3) In Seifrid's opinion, since David, the author of the psalm, is a type of Christ, the plausibility of a New Testament fulfillment is further strengthened.<sup>1830</sup>

### **Rom 15:3 = Ps 69:9**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: exact

Comments:

- (1) Paul represents Jesus as a "suffering servant of Yahweh," which David also was in his time.
- (2) Psalm 69 contains many examples of messianic prophecy (see Ps 69:4, 9, 15, 19-23, 25).
- (3) Paul presents the voluntary sufferings of Jesus as an example for those who must condescend to weaker brethren.

### **Rom 15:10 = Deut 32:43**

Source: MT

Correspondence: exact

Comments:

- (1) Moses summons the Gentiles to rejoice with Israel over its victory over its enemies. Paul, though, summons the Gentiles to rejoice over their receiving salvation.
- (2) Morris comments that Paul only borrows from this verse the thought of summoning the Gentiles to rejoice, not the reason for the rejoicing.<sup>1831</sup>

### **Rom 15:11 = Ps 117:1**

Source: LXX

Correspondence:

- (1) In Romans, the order of words differs: πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, τὸν κύριον.
- (2) In Romans, we have the third person imperative ἐπαινεσάτωσαν (let them praise Him) instead of the second person (praise Him!).
- (3) In Romans, καὶ (and) is added.

Comments: In Psalm 117, we see a general exhortation to the Gentiles to praise the Lord. Paul, though, gives a specific application to this exhortation – the Gentiles can praise the Lord for their inclusion in the covenant with Him.

### **1 Cor 1:19 = Isa 29:14**

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<sup>1829</sup>Ibid, p. 670.

<sup>1830</sup>Ibid, p. 671.

<sup>1831</sup>Morris, Romans, p. 505.

Source: LXX

Correspondence:

- (1) 1 Corinthians has the verb ἀθετήσω (I will set aside) instead of κρύψω (I will conceal).
- (2) MT expresses the action in the passive voice, while in LXX and 1 Corinthians, we have the active voice in the first person.

Comments:

- (1) In the original context, God, through Isaiah, reproves His people for their superficial and insincere faith. Because of this, He will remove the “wise men” from Israel. Similarly, in 1 Corinthians, human wisdom cannot comprehend God’s plan – understanding comes only through revelation.
- (2) In both cases, human wisdom hinders people from knowing God and His plan.

### **1 Cor 3:20 = Ps 94:11**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: In 1 Corinthians, the word ἀνθρώπων (people) is replaced by σοφῶν (wise).

Comments:

- (1) Paul makes a more narrow application of the verse, highlighting the “wise” among people, since this is the theme of his discourse.
- (2) Toy suggests that the psalmist may be employing the word “people” in the same sense as Paul, i.e., to indicate the wise men of his day.<sup>1832</sup>

### **1 Cor 5:13 = Deut 17:7**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: 1 Corinthians has the imperative ἐξάρατε (remove) instead of the future tense ἐξαρείς (you shall purge).

Comments: This verdict is often repeated in the Old Testament for the excommunication of a covenant violator. Its New Testament usage is similar.

### **1 Cor 6:16 = Gen 2:24**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: exact

Comments: Paul expands the Old Testament principle of husband and wife becoming one flesh in order to include illegitimate extra-marital relations.

### **1 Cor 9:9 (1 Tim 5:18) = Deut 25:4**

Source: MT or LXX

Correspondence:

- (1) The word order in 1 Corinthians corresponds to the MT, but the order in 1 Timothy does not.
- (2) 1 Corinthians has the verb κημῶσεις (muzzle) instead of the LXX φιμώσεις (muzzle).

Comments:

- (1) Paul works off the Old Testament principle that the laborer is worthy of his wages, both in the field, and in gospel work.
- (2) In Toy’s opinion, when Paul says, “God is not concerned about oxen, is He?” he is not contradicting the Old Testament text, but is simply emphasizing the relative importance of gospel workers in comparison to beasts of burden.<sup>1833</sup>

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<sup>1832</sup>Toy, p. 173.

<sup>1833</sup>Ibid, p. 174.

### **1 Cor 10:7 = Ex 32:6**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: exact

Comments: Paul exhorts the church in Corinth with lessons from Israel's history.

### **1 Cor 14:21 = Isa 28:11-12**

Source: Does not correspond to either LXX, or MT, but closer to MT.<sup>1834</sup>

Comments:

- (1) Isaiah 28 relates that during the exile, the Gentiles will speak to the sons of Israel in other tongues. This will be a sign of God's rejection of them. Grudem argues that Paul uses this verse in the same sense, that if during the worship service believers speak in other tongues, this will alienate unbelievers, who will interpret this as "rejection."<sup>1835</sup>
- (2) Ciampa and Rosner suggest that, just as Israel will not turn to God in a foreign land, unbelievers in Jesus will not turn to God during the worship service if they hear other tongues.<sup>1836</sup>

### **1 Cor 15:32 = Isa 22:13**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: exact

Comments: Paul repeats the idiomatic expression of hopelessness found in Isaiah 22:13.

### **1 Cor 15:45 = Gen 2:7**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: 1 Corinthians has the additional words πρῶτος (first) and Ἀδάμ (Adam).

Comments: Paul compares Adam's condition at creation with the condition of the last Adam, Jesus Christ.

### **1 Cor 15:55 = Hos 13:14**

Source: Does not correspond to either LXX, or MT.

Correspondence:

- (1) The word order in 1 Corinthians basically corresponds to MT.
- (2) In both MT and LXX, the word "victory" is absent. Ciampa and Rosner feel that Paul employed the word "victory" in order to align this verse with the previous one.<sup>1837</sup>
- (3) MT and LXX alternate the words "death" and "Sheol," while in Paul, "death" is repeated twice.

Comments:

- (1) In the book of Hosea, God invites death and Sheol to smite His disobedient people.
- (2) Although in the context of 1 Corinthians, Paul speaks of victory over death, one may still see in 1 Corinthians 15:55 a meaning similar to Hosea 13:14. Paul sarcastically challenges death to smite: "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" Then he answers this threat by saying: "But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!"
- (3) Toy advances the idea that Paul is not so much quoting this passage, as using familiar terminology to express his own thoughts.<sup>1838</sup>

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<sup>1834</sup>Ibid, p. 176-177.

<sup>1835</sup>Grudem W. 1 Corinthians 14:20-25: Prophecy and tongues as signs of God's attitude // Westminster Theological Journal. 1979. 41. P. 381-396.

<sup>1836</sup>Ciampa R. E., Rosner B. S. 1 Corinthians // Beale G. K., Carson D. A. Commentary on the New Testament use of the Old Testament. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2007. – P. 742.

<sup>1837</sup>Ciampa, Rosner, 1 Corinthians, p. 748.

<sup>1838</sup>Toy, p. 181.



## **2 Cor 4:13 = Ps 116:10**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: exact

Comments:

- (1) In the original context, the author “believes” in the sense that he faithfully recalls what he had earlier said of his sufferings. Paul uses these words to convey the thought that his faith is expressed in his speech.
- (2) Toy interprets the words of the psalmist as follows: “Now I believe. Earlier I said that I suffer greatly.” In so saying, he creates a contrast between the psalmist’s faith and his confession.<sup>1839</sup>
- (3) Harris comments that from this Old Testament passage Paul extracts only one thought – faith prompts one to speak.<sup>1840</sup>
- (4) Balla explains the situation thusly: Paul “shares the sufferings with the psalmist and also his faith that enables him to speak,” and that the psalmist speaks of “trust (belief) in God in spite of the afflictions.”<sup>1841</sup>

## **2 Cor 6:16 = Ezek 37:27 and Lev 26:12**

Source: Does not correspond to either LXX, or MT (paraphrase)

Comments: Balla defends the view that God’s relationship with Israel included a call to holiness, which directly applies to New Testament believers as well.<sup>1842</sup>

## **2 Cor 6:17 = Isa 52:11 and Ezek 20:34**

Source: LXX (differs from MT)

Correspondence:

- (1) In 2 Corinthians, the order of sentences in Isaiah 52:11 is inverted.
- (2) 2 Corinthians has αὐτῶν (i.e. worldly people) instead of Isaiah 52:11’s αὐτῆς (i.e. Babylon).
- (3) In 2 Corinthians, the final phrase καὶ ἐγὼ εἰσδέξομαι ὑμᾶς (and I will receive you) is taken from Ezek 20:34 (LXX), where the MT reads not “I will receive you,” but “I will gather you.” Still, the basic sense of MT is preserved.

Comments:

- (1) These are parallel cases. The summons in Isaiah is to depart from sinful Babylon. Paul’s call is to non-participation in the sinful lifestyle of this world.
- (2) Both Old Testament passages are located in a context where God is gathering His people and leading them out of the midst of worldly people.
- (3) Also, see the commentary on verse 16 above.

## **2 Cor 6:18 = 2 Sam 7:14**

Source: LXX

Correspondence:

- (1) 2 Corinthians has second person pronouns instead of third person pronouns.
- (2) 2 Corinthians has the plural “sons” instead of the singular “son.”

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<sup>1839</sup>Ibid, p. 183.

<sup>1840</sup>Harris M. J. The Second Epistle to the Corinthians: A commentary on the Greek text // New International Greek Testament commentary. – Grand Rapids, MI; Milton Keynes, UK: Eerdmans ; Paternoster Press, 2005. – P. 352.

<sup>1841</sup>Balla P. 2 Corinthians // Beale G. K., Carson D. A. Commentary on the New Testament use of the Old Testament. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2007. – P. 765.

<sup>1842</sup>Ibid, p. 773.

(3) In 2 Corinthians, the words καὶ θυγατέρας (and daughters) are added, possibly in imitation of Isaiah 43:6.<sup>1843</sup>

(4) It is thought that the phrase “says the Lord Almighty” was taken from 2 Sam 7:8.<sup>1844</sup>

Comments:

- (1) In the original context, this is a promise to a son of David (which would include the Messiah). For Paul, this is a promise for believers in Jesus.
- (2) Harris feels that “sonship” includes God’s people in general (see Jer 31:9) and, consequently, extends to God’s New Testament people.<sup>1845</sup>
- (3) One may also consider that believers are “in the Son of David,” that is, “in Christ.”
- (4) Longenecker relates that the Jews considered this verse messianic.<sup>1846</sup>
- (5) Paul reveals that this promise is also for women.<sup>1847</sup>
- (6) Also, see commentary on verse 16 above.

**2 Cor 8:15 = Ex 16:18**

Source: LXX

Correspondence:

- (1) In 2 Corinthians, the order of words is different.
- (2) 2 Corinthians has ὀλίγον (little) instead of ἔλαττον (little).

Comments: Paul forms a principle out of what happened with manna – God supplies everyone with exactly what they need, both in the wilderness, and now in the Church. Those who gathered much (in the wilderness) or receive much (in the Church), did not, or should not, have an excess. Those who gathered little (in the wilderness) or receive little (in the Church), did not, or should not, have a lack.

**2 Cor 13:1 = Deut 19:15**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: Abbreviated

Comments:

- (1) Paul applies the general principle of the number of witnesses to his oversight of the church. If upon his third visit, he still finds disorder, he will discipline the church.
- (2) Douglas Moo holds that Paul is not intending to quote this verse, but is simply using words familiar to his audience to express his own thoughts.<sup>1848</sup>

**Gal 3:6 = Gen 15:6**

Source: LXX

Correspondence:

- (1) In Galatians, the name Ἀβραάμ (Abraham) replaces the name Ἀβραμ (Abram).
- (2) In Galatians, we see inversion of the words Ἀβραάμ (Abraham) and ἐπίστευσεν (believed).

Comments: Paul applies Abraham’s experience of faith to believers in Jesus.

**Gal 3:11 (see Rom 1:17)**

**Gal 3:13 = Deut 21:23**

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<sup>1843</sup>Harris, Inspiration and canonicity, p. 510.

<sup>1844</sup>Archer, Encyclopedia, p. 53.

<sup>1845</sup>Harris, Inspiration and canonicity, p. 510.

<sup>1846</sup>Longenecker, Biblical exegesis, p. 81.

<sup>1847</sup>Archer, Encyclopedia, p. xxviii.

<sup>1848</sup>Moo, p. 189.

Source: LXX (differs from MT)

Correspondence:

- (1) Paul possibly omits the words ὑπὸ θεοῦ (by God), because he did not want to imply that Jesus was cursed by God.
- (2) In Galatians, we find the adjective ἐπικατάρατος (cursed) instead of the passive participle κεκατηραμένος (cursed).
- (3) MT does not have the words “on a tree.”

Comments:

- (1) Paul makes a new application of the principle that “cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree.” The crucified Jesus took upon Himself the curse of all humanity.
- (2) Beale sees a certain irony here. In the Old Testament, a criminal was so punished. But in Jesus’ case, an innocent person was.<sup>1849</sup>

### **Gal 3:16 = Gen 12:7**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: exact

Comments:

- (1) Paul sees in the use of the singular σπέρμα (seed) an indication that Abraham’s heir is Christ. Yet, one must also consider that the singular “seed” is the conventional way to speak of offspring. Paul, in fact, uses σπέρμα (seed) in this way in Galatians 3:29.
- (2) Bruce thinks that we can take the term “seed” in both senses: in relation to the offspring of Abraham, and in relation to Christ.<sup>1850</sup>
- (3) Longenecker adds that Christ is the true representative of Abraham’s line. Therefore, all who are “in Christ” inherit the blessing of Abraham.<sup>1851</sup>

### **Eph 2:17 = Isa 57:19**

Source: LXX or MT (paraphrase)

Comments: Isaiah speaks of the restoration of Israel, while Paul speaks of the spread of the gospel to both Jews and Gentiles. In light of Isaiah’s emphasis on the inclusion of the Gentiles in general, we may still catch that nuance in the words: “Peace, peace to him who is far and to him who is near.”

### **Eph 4:8 = Ps 68:18**

Source: LXX

Correspondence:

- (1) Ephesians has ἔδωκεν (gave) instead of ἔλαβες (received). The Syriac Peshitta and the Aramaic Targum also have “gave” in Psalm 68:18.<sup>1852</sup>
- (2) Ephesians uses the third person instead of the second person.
- (3) Ephesians has τοῖς ἀνθρώποις (to men) instead of ἐν ἀνθρώπῳ (by a man).

Comments<sup>1853</sup>:

- (1) In the original context, God’s victory over His enemies and His ascent to Jerusalem is celebrated. In a similar way, Paul celebrates Christ’s victory and His exaltation in heaven.

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<sup>1849</sup>Beale, Handbook, p. 93.

<sup>1850</sup>Bruce, Galatians, p. 172.

<sup>1851</sup>Longenecker, Biblical exegesis, p. 106-107.

<sup>1852</sup>O’Brien P. T. The Letter to the Ephesians // The Pillar New Testament commentary. – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999. – P. 289-290.

<sup>1853</sup>Ibid.

- (2) Archer defends the Targum translation by noting that it is impossible to give God what already belongs to Him. In addition, the preposition ך before the word םִן (man) could imply that Christ received gifts in order to distribute them “among” (ב) people.<sup>1854</sup>
- (3) Toy notes that the following context speaks of the eschatological glory of God’s people, which may lend to Psalm 68:18 a messianic sense.<sup>1855</sup>

#### **Eph 4:26 = Ps 4:4**

Source: LXX (differs from MT)

Correspondence: exact

Comments:

- (1) MT reads not “be angry,” but םִן (tremble). In the Old Testament context, this command is directed to enemies, so that they would fear God.<sup>1856</sup>
- (2) In the LXX, םִן (tremble) is translated by ὀργίζεσθε (be angry), which Paul repeats.
- (3) Paul uses this quotation to teach the church how to handle anger.

#### **Eph 5:31 = Gen 2:24**

Source: LXX

Correspondence:

- (1) Ephesians has a new introduction: ἀντὶ τούτου (because) instead of ἕνεκεν τούτου (because)
- (2) In Ephesians, the pronoun αὐτοῦ (his) before the words πατέρα (father) and μητέρα (mother) is omitted.

Comments: In Thielman’s words, Paul uses this quotation “to support his contention that Christ is one with the church and to introduce the new thought that marriage illustrates this unity.”<sup>1857</sup>

#### **Phil 2:10-11 = Isa 45:23**

Source: LXX (paraphrase)

Correspondence: Paul applies this Old Testament text to Jesus, adding the phrases, “at the name of Jesus,” “those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth,” and “that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Comments: In Isaiah, this verse speaks of Yahweh, while Paul applies it to Christ Jesus, thereby underscoring his Deity.

#### **1 Tim 5:18 (see 1 Cor 9:9)**

#### **Heb 1:6 = Ps 97:7 (cf. Deut 32:43 LXX)**

Source: LXX (differs from MT)

Correspondence: Psalm 97:7 (LXX) reads: προσκυνήσατε αὐτῷ, πάντες οἱ ἄγγελοι αὐτοῦ (worship Him, all you His angels). Hebrews 1:6 reads, καὶ προσκυνήσάτωσαν αὐτῷ πάντες ἄγγελοι θεοῦ (let all the angels of God worship Him). Thus, the second person imperative becomes a third person imperative.

Comments:

- (1) The MT version, “Worship Him, all you gods,” fits the Old Testament context better, which speaks against idolatry. However, the author of Hebrews prefers LXX since his goal is to show the preeminence of Jesus to angels. In any case, both authors emphasize that God is worthy of praise.

<sup>1854</sup>Archer, Encyclopedia, p. xviii-xix.

<sup>1855</sup>Toy, p. 197.

<sup>1856</sup>Ibid, p. 199.

<sup>1857</sup>Thielman F. S. Ephesians // Beale G. K., Carson D. A. Commentary on the New Testament use of the Old Testament. – Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2007. – P. 828.

- (2) In Deuteronomy 32:43 (LXX), we read, καὶ προσκυνήσάτωσαν αὐτῷ πάντες υἱοὶ θεοῦ (let all the sons of God worship Him), and later, ἐνισχυσάτωσαν αὐτῷ πάντες ἄγγελοι θεοῦ (let all the angels of God confirm Him), which corresponds to Hebrews 1:6 as well.<sup>1858</sup>
- (3) The verbatim version of Hebrews 1:6 is found in the *Biblical Odes* (2.43): προσκυνήσάτωσαν αὐτῷ πάντες ἄγγελοι θεοῦ.<sup>1859</sup>
- (4) In the Old Testament, this verse speaks of Yahweh, while Hebrews applies it to Christ Jesus, thereby underscoring his Deity.

### Heb 1:7 = Ps 104:4

Source: LXX (differs from MT)

Correspondence: Hebrews has πυρὸς φλόγα (a flame of fire) instead of πῦρ φλέγον (flaming fire). MT = שִׁחַל (flaming fire). Ellingworth says that the version in Hebrews, πυρὸς φλόγα (a flame of fire), reflects changes that occurred in the Greek language at that time.<sup>1860</sup>

Comments:

- (1) Hebrew grammar (MT) allows the translations: “You make winds Your messengers (or “angels”), and flaming fire Your ministers,” or “You make Your messengers (or “angels”) winds, and Your ministers flaming fire.” Yet, the Old Testament context speaks of creation. Therefore, the first option is preferred. Greek grammar (LXX) requires the translation: “You make Your messengers (or “angels”) winds, and Your ministers flaming fire.” The author of Hebrews prefers the LXX, since he is contrasting the permanence of Christ to the more transient nature of angles.<sup>1861</sup>
- (2) The author of Hebrews changes the discussion of God’s sovereignty over nature into a description of the nature of angels.

### Heb 1:10-12 = Ps 102:25-27

Source: LXX

Correspondence:

- (1) Hebrews’ word order: σὺ κατ’ ἀρχάς, κύριε (You, Lord, in the beginning) differs from LXX: κατ’ ἀρχὰς σύ, κύριε.
- (2) Hebrews has the present tense διαμένεις (remain) instead of the future tense διαμενεῖς (will remain).
- (3) Hebrews has the verb ἐλίξεις (role up) instead of the verb ἀλλάξεις (change).
- (4) Hebrews adds ὡς ἱμάτιον (as a garment) in verse 12 (2nd instance). These words are absent in both LXX and MT.

Comments:

- (1) In Psalm 102, these words are written about Yahweh, but in Hebrews – to Jesus, thereby highlighting his Deity.
- (2) The author of Hebrews uses this quotation to stress the permanence of the Son compared to the angels more transient nature.

### Heb 2:6-8 = Ps 8:4-6

Source: LXX (differs from MT)

Correspondence:

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<sup>1858</sup>Guthrie, p. 931.

<sup>1859</sup>Ibid, p. 932.

<sup>1860</sup>Ellingworth P. The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek text // New International Greek Testament commentary. – Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle: Eerdmans; Paternoster Press.C, 1993. – P. 121.

<sup>1861</sup>Guthrie, p. 935.

- (1) Hebrews omits: καὶ κατέστησας αὐτὸν ἐπὶ τὰ ἔργα τῶν χειρῶν σου (You make him to rule over the works of Your hands). Guthrie feels that this section is omitted, because earlier, the book of Hebrews spoke of the Son as the Creator.<sup>1862</sup>
- (2) MT reads, “You made him a little lower than God (יְהוָה), but LXX has: “You made him a little lower than the angels.” The LXX version better supports the author of Hebrew’s argument concerning the preeminence of the Son to the angels.<sup>1863</sup>

Comments: Jesus fulfills the role of the second Adam.

### **Heb 3:7-11 (3:15; 4:3-7) = Ps 95:7-11**

Source: LXX (differs from MT)

Correspondence: Hebrews 3:15 and 4:3-7 = exact. Hebrews 3:7-11 differs:

- (1) ἐν δοκιμασίᾳ (by testing) instead of ἐδοκίμασαν (tested)
- (2) εἶδον (saw) instead of εἶδοσαν (saw)
- (3) addition of the word διὸ (therefore)
- (4) ταύτη (this) instead of ἐκείνη (that)
- (5) καὶ εἶπον (and said) instead of καὶ εἶπαν (and said)
- (6) αὐτοὶ δὲ (but they) instead of καὶ αὐτοὶ (and they), which may imply that for the author of Hebrews, the error of God’s people arose because “they did not know My ways.”<sup>1864</sup>
- (7) MT and LXX associate the phrase “forty years” with “I loathed *that* generation,” while in Hebrews – with “saw My works.”
- (8) Even though the MT differs, its sense is preserved in LXX and Hebrews.

Comments: Just as Israel failed to enter the Promised Land because of unbelief, God’s New Testament people may fail to obtain salvation for the same reason.

### **Heb 10:30 = Deut 32:35-36**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: exact

Comments: In Deuteronomy, God promises His people “judgment” in the sense of vindication, but in Hebrews, it carries the sense of punishment. The following explanations are offered:

- (1) the general context of Deuteronomy 32 speaks of God’s chastisement of His people,
- (2) that punishment, which God’s enemies undergo in Deuteronomy 32, can apply to His people, if they turn from Him,
- (3) through chastisement of backsliders, God vindicates His true people.<sup>1865</sup>

### **Heb 10:37-38 = Isa 26:20 and Hab 2:3-4**

Source: LXX (differs from MT)

Correspondence:

- (1) In Hebrews, the first part of Habakkuk 2:3 is paraphrased with words borrowed from Isaiah 26:20: μικρὸν ὅσον ὅσον (yet in a very little while).
- (2) Hebrews has: ὁ δίκαιός μου ἐκ πίστεως ζήσεται, “My righteous one by faith will live,” LXX = ὁ δίκαιός ἐκ πίστεως μου ζήσεται, “The righteous one by My faith will live,” and MT = “The righteous one by his faith (יִתְחַיֵּי) will live.” In some LXX manuscripts (A, κ) we find, “My righteous one by faith will live.”<sup>1866</sup>

<sup>1862</sup>Ibid, p. 946.

<sup>1863</sup>Ibid, p. 946.

<sup>1864</sup>Ibid, p. 217.

<sup>1865</sup>O’Brien, Hebrews, p. 391-392.

<sup>1866</sup>Guthrie, p. 983.

- (3) Hebrews 10:38 rearranges the order of sentences from Habakkuk 2:4. The result is that the “righteous one” becomes the subject of the sentence “...and if he shrinks back, My soul has no pleasure in him.”<sup>1867</sup>
- (4) In Hebrews 10:37, the word ἐρχόμενος (coming), which in Habakkuk refers to the “vision,” now refers to Christ.<sup>1868</sup> Correspondingly, the article stands before ἐρχόμενος (“the coming one”).
- (5) MT reads, “Behold, as for the proud one, his soul is not right within him,” while in LXX and Hebrews we have: “...and if he shrinks back, My soul has no pleasure in him.” Archer posits that when the word נַפְשׁוֹ (his soul) was transcribed, the original letter י (My) accidentally became ι (his), and that the original was preserved in the LXX (“My soul”). In addition, the word עֲפֹלָה (proud one) is related to the Aramaic word “shrink back,” which also corresponds to the version in LXX and Hebrews.<sup>1869</sup>

Comments:

- (1) The author of Hebrews applies the warning “...and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him” to the “righteous one,” which supports the thrust of his epistle – believers should not revert back to Judaism.<sup>1870</sup>
- (2) The situations of Habakkuk and the author of Hebrews are similar. In both cases, believers must hold fast to faith in the face of opposition.
- (3) Also see the commentary on Romans 1:17.

**Heb 12:21 = Deut 9:19**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: Hebrews adds the phrase καὶ ἔντρομος (and trembling)

Comments:

- (1) Ellingworth thinks that the words καὶ ἔντρομος (and trembling) are added for emphasis.<sup>1871</sup>
- (2) The context of Deuteronomy 9 differs in that it records the experience of Moses on Mount Sinai *after* the golden calf was made.<sup>1872</sup>

**Heb 13:5 = Deut 31:6**

Source: MT

Correspondence: Hebrews has the third person instead of the first person.

Comments: God did not forsake Israel in its struggle against the inhabitants of Canaan, and He will not forsake believers in Jesus in their time of need.

**Jam 2:23 = Gen 15:6**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: exact

Comments: James focuses on Abraham’s faith being demonstrated in his sacrifice of Isaac.

**1 Pet 1:24-25 = Isa 40:6-8**

Source: = LXX (differs from MT)

Correspondence:

- (1) 1 Peter has αὐτῆς (its) instead of ἀνθρώπου (of man), which is also in the MT version.
- (2) 1 Peter adds the word ὡς (as).

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<sup>1867</sup>O'Brien, Hebrews, p. 390.

<sup>1868</sup>Toy, p. 127.

<sup>1869</sup>Archer, Encyclopedia, p. 105

<sup>1870</sup>O'Brien, Hebrews, p. 391-392

<sup>1871</sup>Ellingworth, p. 676.

<sup>1872</sup>Noted in Guthrie, p. 988.

(3) 1 Peter has κυρίου (Lord) instead of τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν (our God). Possibly, Peter changes τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν (our God) to κυρίου (Lord) in order to align it with the mention of the gospel of the *Lord* Jesus in the statement: “This is the word which was preached to you.”

(4) MT has the same sense, but LXX and Peter utilize a condensed variant with some modifications.

Comments: This principle applies to both Israel and the Church. In addition, this passage occurs in a messianic context.

### **1 Pet 2:6-8 (see Rom 9:33 above)**

### **1 Pet 3:14-15 = Isa 8:12-13**

Source: LXX

Correspondence:

- (1) 1 Peter has the possessive pronoun in the plural, i.e., “their fear,” instead of the singular as in LXX.
- (2) 1 Peter has the name “Christ” instead of the title “Lord of hosts.”
- (3) LXX employs the double negative, while Peter has only one negative particle.

Comments:

- (1) Peter exchanges the title “Lord” for “Christ” in order to apply this quotation to his situation. So then, the second part of the quotation, which mentions Christ, is not so much a direct quotation as it is an application of an Old Testament directive to the Christian.
- (2) Isaiah exhorts Israel not to fear “their fear,” that is, what other nations fear (the assault of the Assyrians). Peter, however, exhorts the Church not to fear its persecutors.<sup>1873</sup>

### **Rev 1:7 = Dan 7:13 and Zech 12:10 (paraphrase of both verses)**

Comments:

- (1) In Daniel, the Son of Man comes on the clouds to the Ancient of Days, while in Revelation, He comes to the earth. Jesus applied the text of Daniel 7 to His second coming. The general context of Daniel 7, though, does concern the earthly reign of Messiah as well.
- (2) “Mourning” in Revelation concerns the coming judgment on unbelievers, while in Zechariah it concerns the repentance of Israel.<sup>1874</sup>
- (3) Matthew 24:30 also contains a combination of Daniel 7:13 and Zechariah 12:10.<sup>1875</sup>

## **F. Cases of Typological Fulfillment of an Old Testament Text in the New Testament**

### **Matt 1:23 = Isa 7:14**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: Matthew = they will call, MT = she will call, LXX = you will call.

Comments:

- (1) Morris thinks that Matthew possibly included other parties in the naming of Jesus, particularly Joseph.<sup>1876</sup> Blomberg feels the pronoun “they” in Matthew refers to those who will someday come to know Jesus as Savior.<sup>1877</sup> Longenecker states that the use of the third person plural finds parallel with the Isaiah scroll of Qumran (1QIs).<sup>1878</sup>

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<sup>1873</sup>Carson, 1 Peter, p. 1038; Toy, p. 245.

<sup>1874</sup>Beale, McDonough, Revelation, p. 1090-1091.

<sup>1875</sup>Ibid, p. 1090.

<sup>1876</sup>Morris, Matthew, p. 31.

<sup>1877</sup>Blomberg, Matthew // Commentary on the New Testament use of the Old Testament, p. 4-5.

<sup>1878</sup>Longenecker, Biblical exegesis, p. 143-144.



- (2) In the Isaiah scroll of Qumran (1QIs), the word “Immanuel” stands as a proper name, and not as separate words אֱלֹהֵינוּ (God with us), as in MT.<sup>1879</sup>
- (3) This prophecy concerns both Mary and an unmarried woman in Isaiah’s time. Thus, the prophecy could have significance for both Ahaz, to whom it was given, and Mary. The prophecy is fulfilled typologically in Mary.
- (4) The term עֲלֻמָּה (*alma*) conventionally refers to an ordinary young woman, but may also refer to a virgin. Therefore, in Isaiah’s time, the word עֲלֻמָּה (*alma*) could refer to an ordinary young woman, who would bear a child after marriage. In regard to Mary, though, עֲלֻמָּה (*alma*) could refer to a virgin, who would bear a child in the state of virginity.
- (5) In Blomberg’s opinion, this prophecy was initially fulfilled in Isaiah’s child, mentioned in Isaiah 8:3. The description of Isaiah’s child in Isa 8:4, in fact, parallels what was said of the virgin’s child in Isaiah 7:16. In addition, Isaiah’s children “are for signs and wonders in Israel.” The *future* fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14 is alluded to in Isaiah 9:6.<sup>1880</sup>

### **Matt 2:15 = Hos 11:1**

Source: MT

Correspondence: exact

Comments:

- (1) Jesus is the “recapitulation” of Israel. In other words, He “sums up” Israel in Himself (see below). Therefore, the Exodus of Israel from Egypt can represent the “exodus” of the child Jesus from Egypt as well.
- (2) In connection with the above, we see definite parallels between Israel (specifically in its leader Moses) and Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew. Jesus was born according to a promise (1:18ff), was rescued from death as a babe (2:1ff), departed from Egypt (2:15), passed through water (3:13ff), spent time in the wilderness (4:1ff), called twelve followers (4:18ff), gave a “law” on a mountaintop (chps. 5-7), performed ten miracles (chps. 8-9), sent twelve men to “spy out” the land (10:1ff), fed a multitude (14:15ff; 15:32ff), and was transfigured before disciples (17:1ff).<sup>1881</sup>
- (3) The phrase “My son” can apply to both Israel in general (Ex 4:22-23) and individually to the Messiah (2 Sam 7:14; Ps 2:7).<sup>1882</sup>

### **Matt 2:18 = Jer 31:15**

Source: MT

Correspondence:

- (1) In Matthew, the phrase עַל־בְּנֵיהָ (for her children) is absent.
- (2) The sense of the phrase בְּכִי תִמְרוּרִים (bitter weeping) is expressed in Matthew’s phrase ὁδυρμὸς πολὺς (great mourning).

Comments:

- (1) Jeremiah writes of a tragic event, when the sons of Israel were banished to Babylon. Matthew sees in this a typological representation of Herod’s slaughter of children in Bethlehem.
- (2) The prophetic nature of a type is indicated by Matthew speaking of it as a “fulfillment.”<sup>1883</sup>

### **Jn 13:18 = Ps 41:9**

Source: MT

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<sup>1879</sup>ibid.

<sup>1880</sup>Blomberg, Matthew // Commentary on the New Testament use of the Old Testament, p. 4.

<sup>1881</sup>Longenecker, Biblical exegesis, p. 125.

<sup>1882</sup>Kaiser, Hard sayings of the Bible, p. 49.

<sup>1883</sup>Longenecker, Biblical exegesis, p. 129.

Correspondence: In John, the word αὐτοῦ (his) is added at the end (differs from LXX and MT)

Comments:

- (1) The betrayal of the psalmist typifies the future betrayal of Jesus by Judas.
- (2) Some assume that the first part of the verse, “Even my close friend in whom I trusted,” was omitted to avoid giving the impression that at some point Jesus trusted in Judas.<sup>1884</sup>
- (3) The prophetic nature of a type is indicated by Jesus speaking of it as a “fulfillment.”

#### **Jn 15:25 = Ps 69:4 (paraphrase)**

Comments:

- (1) Those who hated the psalmist typologically represent those who hated Jesus.
- (2) Psalm 69 contains many examples of messianic prophecy (see Ps 69:4, 9, 15, 19-23, 25).
- (3) The prophetic nature of a type is indicated by Jesus speaking of it as a “fulfillment.”

#### **Jn 19:24 = Ps 22:18**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: exact

Comments:

- (1) Christ’s experience on the cross parallels David’s experience of suffering, who serves as a type of Christ here.<sup>1885</sup>
- (2) Psalm 22 contains many messianic elements.

#### **Jn 19:36 = Ex 12:46 and Num 9:12 (possibly Ps 34:20) (paraphrase)**

Comments: The passage concerns the Passover Lamb, the bones of which must not be broken. Jesus is a fulfillment of this type.

#### **Rom 15:9 = Ps 18:49 (cf. 2 Sam 22:50)**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: The word κύριε (Lord) is missing, possibly because Paul represents Jesus as speaking these words.<sup>1886</sup>

Comments: Here we are dealing with David as a type of Christ. Through the preaching of the gospel, Jesus truly glorifies God the Father among the Gentiles.

#### **1 Cor 15:27 (Eph 1:22) = Ps 8:6**

Source: LXX or MT

Correspondence:

- (1) 2 Corinthians has the third person instead of the second person.
- (2) 2 Corinthians differs from LXX in having ὑπο (under) instead of ὑποκάτω (under).

Comments: Jesus fulfills the role of the “last Adam” and accomplishes the commission given the first Adam.<sup>1887</sup>

#### **2 Cor 6:16 = Lev 26:12**

Source: LXX

Correspondence:

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<sup>1884</sup>Toy, p. 89.

<sup>1885</sup>Von Rad, p. 31.

<sup>1886</sup>Seifrid, p. 688.

<sup>1887</sup>Beale, Handbook, p. 65-66.

- (1) In 2 Corinthians, the phrase ἐνοικήσω ἐν αὐτοῖς (I will dwell in them) is added. Possibly, this is implied in the next phrase, “walk among them,” or Paul may have been thinking of Leviticus 26:11: “I will make My dwelling among you.”<sup>1888</sup>
- (2) 2 Corinthians has the third person instead of the second person.
- (3) In 2 Corinthians ἐν ὑμῖν (among you) is absent

Comments: Paul sees here a typological fulfillment in the Church of a promise made to Israel. In Toy’s words, “He regards the church of Christ as identical spiritually with the true church of Israel.”<sup>1889</sup>

#### **Gal 4:27 = Isa 54:1**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: exact

Comments:

- (1) Paul typologically presents Sarah as a symbol of New Jerusalem, whose children are believers in Jesus. To substantiate his claim, he compares the ruined city of Jerusalem, which subsequently enjoys prosperity (Isa 54:1), with barren Sarah, who subsequently gave birth to Isaac. Believers in Jesus now enjoy those blessings, of which Isaiah spoke in chapter 54 of his prophecy. Silva notes that Isaiah also speaks of Sarah in Isaiah 51:1-2.<sup>1890</sup>
- (2) The Old Testament declares the results of Messiah’s sufferings (Isa 53) – the prosperity of God’s people.

#### **Gal 4:30 = Gen 21:10**

Source: LXX

Correspondence:

- (1) Galatians omits the word ταύτης (this) after παιδίσκης (maid) twice.
- (2) Galatians has “son of the freewoman” instead of “Isaac.”

Comments: Paul typologically presents Hagar as a symbol of old Jerusalem (unbelieving Jews). Like Hagar, they are also rejected, i.e., excluded as heirs of God’s promise.

#### **Heb 1:8-9 = Ps 45:6-7**

Source: LXX

Correspondence:

- (1) Hebrews adds the article and καὶ (and) before the word ῥάβδος (scepter) (first occurrence), and the article before the word εὐθύτητος (righteous), yet omits the article before ῥάβδος (scepter) (second occurrence).

Comments:

- (1) The rabbis considered this passage messianic.<sup>1891</sup> It also refers to an earthly king, since mention is made of wife and children.
- (2) Here, Messiah is spoken of both as God, and as a person distinct from God.<sup>1892</sup>

#### **Heb 2:12 = Ps 22:22**

Source: LXX

Correspondence: Hebrews has ἀπαγγελῶ (will tell) instead of διηγέσσομαι (will tell).

Comments:

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<sup>1888</sup>Harris, Inspiration and canonicity, p. 505-506.

<sup>1889</sup>Toy, p. 185.

<sup>1890</sup>Silva, Galatians, p. 809.

<sup>1891</sup>Guthrie, p. 941.

<sup>1892</sup>Ibid, p. 939.

- (1) The experience of Jesus parallels that of David. Von Rad views the psalmist of Psalm 22 as a type of Christ.<sup>1893</sup>
- (2) Psalm 22 contains many messianic elements.

### **Heb 2:13 = Isa 8:17-18**

Source: LXX

Correspondence:

- (1) Hebrews has a different word order for ἔσομαι πεποιθὼς (I will put my trust in).
- (2) Hebrews adds ἐγὼ (I).

Comments:

- (1) The idea of trust in God when under threat concerns both Isaiah and Messiah.
- (2) In Isaiah 8:18, the “children” belong to Isaiah, while in Hebrews 2:13, they belong to Jesus. Lane feels that these situations have some common features. In his day, Isaiah represented the faithful remnant of Israel, which role Jesus also filled in His day.<sup>1894</sup> Similarly, just as Isaiah fathered natural children, Jesus “fathers” spiritual children.

### **Heb 10:5-7 = Ps 40:6-8**

Source: Does not correspond to either LXX, or MT

Correspondence:

- (1) The main difference from the MT is that instead of “You opened (literally = “dug out” - כָּרַה) my ears,” Hebrews follows LXX: “A body you prepared (κατηρτίσω) for me.”
- (2) Origen and Theodotion have “ears” as well.<sup>1895</sup>

Comments:

- (1) Several explanations are advanced here for the LXX version: (a) the Hebrew text was mistakenly altered in transmission, while LXX preserved the original; (b) the LXX translators understood the figure of speech implied in the MT, that in order to “dig out ears,” God must first prepare a body; (c) here we have a case of synecdoche, where one part represents the whole (i.e., “ears” indicates “body”).<sup>1896</sup>
- (2) This psalm is attributed to David, who may serve as a type of Christ.<sup>1897</sup>
- (3) Kaiser sees in these verses a prediction of Messiah. The Messiah could easily say, “In the scroll of the book (i.e., Scripture) it is written of me,” and, “Your Law is within my heart.”<sup>1898</sup>

### **1 Pet 2:9 = combination of Deut 14:2, Ex 19:6 and Mal 3:17**

Source: LXX

Comments: The Church is God’s new people, to which all the titles previously attributed to Israel now belong. Israel is therefore a type of the Church. In the words of Carson, the epistle’s author is “showing how he understands the true line of continuity to run from the people of God under the old covenant to the people of God under the new covenant.”<sup>1899</sup>

### **1 Pet 2:10 = Hos 1:10; 2:1, 23 (paraphrase)**

Comments:

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<sup>1893</sup>Von Rad, p. 31.

<sup>1894</sup>Lane W. L. Hebrews 1–8 // Word Biblical commentary. – Dallas, TX: Word, 1998. – P. 60.

<sup>1895</sup>Toy, p. 228. Also see Rahlfs A. Septuaginta – Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1979.

<sup>1896</sup>Archer, Encyclopedia, p. 69; Kaiser, Hard sayings of the Bible, p. 132.

<sup>1897</sup>O'Brien, Hebrews, p. 349.

<sup>1898</sup>Kaiser, Hard sayings of the Bible, p. 136-137.

<sup>1899</sup>Carson, 1 Peter, p. 1032.

- (1) Hosea speaks of Israel's restoration after its "divorce" from Yahweh. Peter, though, writes of the status of believers in Christ in comparison with their previous condition of alienation from God as unbelievers.
- (2) Most likely, Peter is speaking figuratively of believers as the "new Israel." Believers in Jesus are now "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for {god's} own possession" (v. 9), which previously described Israel. Also of note is that in this context, unbelievers are figuratively called "Gentiles."

## **G. Quotation of an Old Testament Text by an Incidental Individual or Unbeliever in the Biblical Narrative**

**Matt 4:6 (Lk 4:10-11) = Ps 91:11-12**

Comments: Satan is speaking.

**Matt 22:24 (Mk 12:19; Lk 20:28) = Deut 25:5**

Comments: A quotation made by the Sadducees

**Lk 10:27 = Deut 6:5 and Lev 19:18**

Comments: A quotation made by the rich young man

**Jn 6:31 = Ps 78:24**

Comments: A quotation made by the Jews

**Matt 21:9 (Mk 11:9; Lk 19:38; Jn 12:13) = Ps 118:26**

Comments: When Jesus made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, the people welcomed Him with these words as an expression of joy, yet possibly with a messianic connotation as well.<sup>1900</sup>

## **H. Cases Where the Source of the Quotation is Unknown**

**Matt 2:23 = ?**

Comments:

- (1) There may be a play on words between Ναζωπαῖος (Nazarene) and ναζιραῖος (Nazirite)(see Judg 13:5-7).<sup>1901</sup> Possibly, Matthew is referring to the total dedication of Jesus to His Father, reflected in the Nazirite vow.<sup>1902</sup>
- (2) There may be a play on words between Ναζωπαῖος (Nazarene) and נֶצֶר (*nešer* – "branch")(see Isa 11:1).<sup>1903</sup> Toy writes, "The idea of the evangelist would then be, that Jesus, in being a resident of Nazareth... fulfilled the prediction that Messiah should be a *nešer* or *našr*."<sup>1904</sup>
- (3) This may be a reference to Jesus' human origin from Nazareth in Galilee, which corresponds to the humble nature of Messiah predicted in the Old Testament (see Isa 53:2-3).<sup>1905</sup>

**Jn 7:38 = ?**

Comments:

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<sup>1900</sup>Blomberg, Matthew, New American commentary, p. 66.

<sup>1901</sup>Ellis, p. 44.

<sup>1902</sup>Toy, p. 13.

<sup>1903</sup>Blomberg, Matthew // The New American commentary, p. 70.

<sup>1904</sup>Toy, p. 14.

<sup>1905</sup>Ibid, p. 15-16.

- (1) This verse may derive from Isaiah 55:1 (see Jn 7:37) or Isaiah 58:11. It also may be an indirect reference to the ritual of pouring water during the Feast of Booths, which may symbolize the eschatological outpouring of the Spirit (Ezek 47:1-9; Zech 13:1).<sup>1906</sup>
- (2) In Köstenberger's opinion, Jesus was not referring to one specific passage of Scripture, but "the entire matrix of scriptural expectations associated with the eschatological abundance presaged by the Feast of Tabernacles."<sup>1907</sup>
- (3) Toy feels that John 7:38 derives from Prov 18:4 (LXX): "The word in a man's heart is deep water, and a river springs forth and a fountain of life."<sup>1908</sup>

### **Eph 5:14 = ?**

#### Comments:

- (1) Some propose that this verse is based on Isaiah 26:19; 51:17; 52:1; 60:1.
- (2) O'Brian asserts that we are dealing here with an early Christian hymn based on the above-mentioned Scripture passages.<sup>1909</sup>

### **1 Cor 2:9 = ?**

#### Comments:

- (1) Origen claimed that this verse came from the lost book *Apocalypse of Elijah*.
- (2) The verse may be an adaptation of Isaiah 64:4 – "For from days of old they have not heard or perceived by ear, nor has the eye seen a God besides You, Who acts in behalf of the one who waits for Him."<sup>1910</sup>  
In this vein, Toy writes, "Paul gives a free expanded rendering after the Septuagint, taking only the general idea from the Old-Testament passage."<sup>1911</sup>

### **Jam 4:5 = ?**

#### Comments:

- (1) Douglass Moo thinks that in using the word "Scripture," James is speaking in generalizations of "God's jealousy," noted throughout the Old Testament.

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<sup>1906</sup>Carson D. A. The Gospel according to John // The Pillar New Testament commentary. – Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: InterVarsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans, 1991. – P. 323-326.

<sup>1907</sup>Köstenberger, p. 454.

<sup>1908</sup>Toy, p. 85

<sup>1909</sup>O'Brien, Hebrews, p. 375-377.

<sup>1910</sup>Ciampa, Rosner, 1 Corinthians, p. 127.

<sup>1911</sup>Toy, p. 171.

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