

Evidences
of
Inspiration
by Don England

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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EVIDENCES OF INSPIRATION

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PART ONE

WHAT IS INSPIRATION?

WHAT IS INSPIRATION?

Don England

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LESSON ONE

Introduction

We do not propose to have the final word in answer to our title question. The present study is humbly undertaken in the hope and expectation of understanding more fully what the Bible does have to say regarding its own inspiration.

The HOW and WHAT of Biblical Inspiration

The Bible is a little more informative as to the how of divine inspiration than it is the what. However, Scripture is still essentially silent regarding step-by-step, item-by-item information on how divine inspiration was accomplished. The supernatural operation of the Holy Spirit of God in the writing of Scripture is a Biblical claim repeated 3800 times.¹ That Biblical writers claim inspiration is an undisputed, unalterable fact. If we deny the veracity of this claim then the whole superstructure of logical and reasonable argumentation on any aspect of divine inspiration collapses. We must not and we can not lay aside the Biblical claim to the FACT of inspiration. Neither our private intuitive feel for the how or what of Biblical inspiration nor our denial of the veracity of the claim to divine inspiration will alter the existence of this claim. To be sure, the claim does not guarantee the fact of inspiration but the fact of inspiration does guarantee the veracity of the claim. Therefore, if we deny the veracity of the claim we are left with no instrument whatsoever with which to test the fact of inspiration.

In 2 Timothy 3:16 the Apostle Paul stated:

"Every Scripture inspired of God...." (ASV)

"All Scripture is inspired by God...." (RSV)

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God...." (KJV)

¹ Evans, Great Doctrines of the Bible, p. 203; taken from Thiessen, H.C., Introduction to the New Testament, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1944, p. 86.

The word from which we get "inspired of God" is theopneustos of which the brilliant scholar B. B. Warfield says,

"What it says of Scripture is, not that it is 'breathed into by God' or is the product of the Divine 'inbreathing' into its human authors, but that it is breathed out by God, 'God-breathed,' the product of the creative breathe of God. In a word, what is declared by this fundamental passage is simply that the Scriptures are a Divine product,² without any indication of how God has operated in producing them."

It is stated in 2 Peter 1:21 that "no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spoke from God, being moved (ASV, RSV, KJV), impelled (NEB), inspired (Phillips) by the Holy Spirit." Couple this statement with the claim in 1 Peter 1:10, 11 that the prophets sought and searched diligently for the meaning of the content of their own writings and you see that the Holy Spirit's superintendency of the writing of Scripture at times transcended human intellect. The Bible gives no definition of inspiration; however, we would tend to agree with Warfield that inspiration is "a supernatural influence exerted on the sacred writers by the Spirit of God, by virtue of which their writings are given divine trustworthiness."³ We do not, therefore, offer the student any view of a process or how of inspiration and we believe that none is to be found in Biblical revelation. The above statement is, of course, not a Biblical definition but we feel that it is consistent with the Biblical idea of inspiration.

Certain facts must be kept in mind as one attempts to develop a concept of inspiration that is harmonious with Biblical revelation. Some of these facts are the following:

1. As has been emphasized earlier, one must remember that the Biblical writers make repeated emphatic claims that their writings have a divine origin. These claims must not be ignored.
2. There is an evident human quality to Biblical literature. Biblical writers wrote by a divine impulse which often transcended human nature, yet their lives were subject to the same human impulses as ours. Hence

² Warfield, B.B., The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible, Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co., 1948, p. 133.

³ Ibid., p. 131.

David, the author of many of the Psalms, committed sins of immorality and neglect; Moses doubted God's ability to deliver Israel; Jonah ran from God's presence; Paul buffeted his body to keep from sinning; and Peter denied that he even knew the Lord. It is correct to point out the human element in Scripture; however, it is incorrect to overemphasize the human element at the expense of the divine element. The human element in Biblical literature must remain a minor point, yet it is important and must be considered.

3. The evident variation of literary style must be remembered. Paul's writings are typically "Pauline" because they follow Paul's usual literary style. However, Paul's literary style is very different from that of the Gospel of John and John's style in his Gospel is quite variant from that which he used in writing the Revelation. The synoptic gospels are similiar in content but they differ in style.
4. One must consider the fact of the existence of Bible difficulties. More will be said of Bible difficulties later in our series of studies but it is apparent that the Bible is not uniformly easy to understand. This fact need not be unsettling to one who is attempting to develop a consistent view of inspiration; however, we will reserve specific recommendations until later.

Theories or Views of Inspiration^{4,5}

Mechanical Theory

The mechanical theory of inspiration is also known as the dictation theory. This view ignores any contribution whatever by human authorship and visualizes that the apostles and prophets were merely mechanical instruments or "secretaries" through whom the Holy Spirit dictated the Word of God. Hence, the Biblical writers made no contribution to the written text from the background of their own experiences. This view is deficient because it unrealistically ignores the human element

⁴McGarvey, J.W., Evidences of Christianity, Gospel Advocate Co., Nashville, Tenn., 1956, pp. 212-217.

⁵Manly, B., The Bible Doctrine of Inspiration, c. 1888, pp. 44-60.

in Biblical literature. However, as has been pointed out earlier, the presence of the human element must be recognized but it must not be elevated above the divine element.

Theory of Ordinary or Natural Inspiration

This concept of inspiration ignores completely the role of the Holy Spirit in the writing of the Bible. According to this view, the apostles and prophets were inspired no differently from the way modern poets and composers are "inspired." The latter, we would say, are inspired only insofar as they are motivated by mood. This theory denies the veracity and integrity of numerous Bible claims to supernatural inspiration. We dismiss this theory because we have faith in the veracity of these claims. Some of these claims will be enumerated in Lesson Two.

Partial Inspiration

The substance of the theory of partial inspiration is seen in the statement, "The Bible contains the Word of God" as opposed to "The Bible is the Word of God." A similar statement is, "The Bible brings us to the Word of God but it cannot be the Word of God in its entirety." Proponents of this view maintain several lines of thought, the most popular being that the Biblical writers were given ideas by the Holy Spirit but the writers had complete freedom in the manner in which they expressed or elaborated on these ideas. The idea then is divine but the expression is human. It is claimed that the general idea or thrust of the Biblical message is accurate but the Bible may contain error due to human expressions, illustrations, quotations and allusions. On the surface the theory is attractive; however, it has serious shortcomings. The theory leaves the ordinary Bible student helpless to ascertain which parts of the Bible are accurate and which are inaccurate. Furthermore, it is an unreasonable presupposition that the general thrust of the Bible is divine but that it is possibly inaccurate either historically or otherwise.

Illumination

The concept of illumination maintains that the Holy Spirit directly operates upon the mind of the Bible student and enables him to perceive or understand the

message of the Biblical writers. Illumination focuses on the general thrust or message of the Bible rather than individual words. Adherents to this concept maintain that "God acts today through the Holy Spirit within men to enable them to receive the message which he would give to them through the Scriptures."⁶ They further maintain, "The end product of inspiration is illumination. God's Word is always a living word. That God once spoke is only a part of the truth. God still speaks. Illumination helps us immeasurably as we try to understand how the words of men are at the same time the eternal Word of God."⁷

The concept of illumination is nebulous and is without a Scriptural basis. It would appear that if the Holy Spirit of God who himself is absolute and perfect truth were to illumine man's mind with a knowledge of spiritual truths then all would be led to the same understanding of the messages of the Bible. Three hundred denominations of Christendom refute the theory.

Plenary Inspiration

Plenary or full inspiration maintains that every part of Scripture is the Word of God and that it is both infallible truth and is stamped with divine authority. Some proponents go on to conclude that every word of the Bible must, therefore, be interpreted literally; others allow for non-literal, poetical and apocalyptic Biblical literature while still holding to plenary inspiration. Some allow for no errors in the Scriptures due to translation or transmission while others believing in plenary inspiration maintain that only the original autographs were fully inspired. Inasmuch as the words "plenary" and "full" mean different things to different people, with respect to inspiration, we prefer not to use the terms here.

Our Position

It is maintained here that it is not necessary to take a view of the process of inspiration in order to affirm that the Scriptures are "God-breathed." Since we are not told by revelation how the Scriptures were inspired, it is fundamentally

⁶Ward, W.E., and Green, J.F., Is the Bible a Human Book?, Broadman Press, Nashville, Tenn., 1970, p. 122.

⁷Ibid., p. 124.

impossible for us to completely and perfectly know the process by which inspiration came to the Biblical writers. However, we do positively affirm, by faith, that the original autographs of the documents of the Protestant Bible were perfectly, absolutely, and completely accurate in every possible detail with respect to the messages intended to be conveyed by the Holy Spirit through the Biblical writers and that they were as authoritative as the very voice of God itself. The Holy Spirit's superintendency of the writing of the Scriptures allowed the writers to call for information from the background of their experiences as well as individual writing styles and the reflection of personalities through Biblical literature. However, the original autographs were free of inaccuracies of any type. Our reference to the "original autographs" allows for translation and transmission inaccuracies although we maintain that errors of this sort are generally minor and that they are negligible in those places where standard translations bearing on God's plan of salvation and will for man are concerned. Reference to the "messages intended to be conveyed by the Holy Spirit" affirms that the Holy Spirit does not operate upon man's mind to convey to him a knowledge of spiritual truths. Misinterpretations of Scripture are solely the fault of the reader and not the Holy Spirit. Reference to the Protestant Bible affirms that the apocryphal books are not divinely inspired and authoritative. The question of canonization will be covered elsewhere in this series of lessons.

LESSON ONE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The Apostle Paul claimed to have received the gospel which he preached through a revelation of Jesus Christ (Galations 1:11,12). Do you believe this to be true because you have faith in the honesty and integrity of Paul or because you have previously assumed or taken for granted that all Scripture is true? Is there a third alternative? If so, explain.
2. Do you have any reason to believe that the writers of the Bible were not men of honesty and integrity? Do you have any reason to believe that they would falsify a claim to divine inspiration in order to perpetrate a fraud?
3. Cite examples of Biblical literature where it is apparent that the text transcends human intellect. How well educated do you suppose were the writers of the Gospels?
4. Comment on the probable extent of the vocabulary of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John as indicated by their gospels. Now contrast Paul's vocabulary, as

indicated by his epistles, with that of the writers of the Gospels.

5. Would you expect that the literary style of all books of the Bible would be more homogeneous if the mechanical concept of inspiration were true? Explain.
6. Point out several objections to the theory that the Bible is inspired no differently from the way ordinary works of literature are inspired. Do you see that this approach has any advantages over other concepts of inspiration?
7. Elaborate on the possible consequences of the statement, "The Bible contains the Word of God, but the Bible is not the Word of God."
8. Have you had any personal experiences in your Bible study which cause you to believe that the "illumination" theory has validity? If this theory seemingly has validity, explain how the Holy Spirit could "illuminate" different Bible students to differing Biblical views.
9. Specifically point out any differences you may have with the position on inspiration that is taken in this lesson.

PART TWO

SOME EVIDENCES OF THE INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURES

SOME EVIDENCES OF THE INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURES

Don England

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LESSON TWO

Process and Extent of Inspiration

God is all powerful. He is the omni or the consummate and the infinite of the universe. It is inconsistent for one who affirms this belief in the nature of God to say that God could not reveal His divine nature and His will for man through the Scriptures. The Scriptures claim to be a revelation from God, and it is here proposed that there is an abundance of evidence, both internal and external to them, to support the Biblical claim that they are God-breathed. There has been much dispute over the details of the mechanics or process by which God "breathed" His Word into the Biblical writers. We will not concern ourselves here with those disputations. The student is encouraged to see any of several reputable reviews on the theories of inspiration.¹⁻⁴

It is not necessary to take a position on a "theory of inspiration" or how God did it to simply make the affirmation that the Scriptures are "God-breathed." Furthermore, since we have not been told by revelation the intricate details of inspiration mechanics, it is fundamentally impossible for one to completely or perfectly know the process by which inspiration came to the Biblical writers. Such expressions as "inspired of God" (2 Tim. 3:16), "men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:21), "no prophecy ever came by the will of man" (2 Pet. 1:21), "Holy Spirit shall teach you all things" (Jno. 14:26), and others, may not satisfy all our curiosities as to the how of the process of inspiration; however, they must be accepted through faith as adequate. Had God

¹Walvoord, J. F., Inspiration and Interpretation, Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1957.

²Warfield, B.B., The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible, Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co., Philadelphia, Pa., 1948.

³Manly, B., The Bible Doctrine of Inspiration, c.1888 by B. Manly, pp 44-60

⁴Gausson, L., The Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, Moody Press, Chicago, pp. 275-286

intended for us to know and understand the intricate details of inspiration mechanics, He surely would have revealed more information to us.

As to the extent of inspiration, this writer believes that the original autographs of the documents of the Protestant Bible were perfectly and absolutely accurate in every possible detail with respect to the message intended to be conveyed and that they were as authoritative as the very voice of God itself. The foregoing is a statement of faith and deliberately avoids any reference to inspiration mechanics and process but positively affirms the ultimate authority and accuracy of the original autographs with respect to the intended message. As would be expected, all books of the Bible do not bear the same nature or degree of evidence of inspiration.

No attempt will be made in this series to present absolute proof for the inspiration of the Scriptures, and the reader is encouraged to recognize the fact that ultimately one must accept by faith that the Scriptures are inspired of God. However, a rational faith must have a basis (Heb 11:1) and the following are offered simply as evidences in support of the Biblical claim that the Scriptures are of divine origin. These discussions will not be exhaustive and none of the following evidences of inspiration should be depended upon at the exclusion of other evidences.

Biblical Writers Do Not Claim Authorship

There is much about the Biblical text that is "unnatural"; hence our conclusion that these qualities must be attributed to their supernatural origin. It is natural for writers to claim authorship of their ideas and expressions. Books and journals are copyrighted and very little literature is written anonymously. Contrary to human nature the Biblical writers do not claim authorship of their writings. They credit the authorship of their ideas to God and not to themselves. The Apostle Paul may announce that he is doing the writing but he does not claim to be the originator of the doctrine about which he preaches and writes. For example: "For neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught

it, but it came to me through revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal. 1:12). This feature is not unique with the Apostle Paul. It is typical of nearly all the Biblical writers. H.A.Dixon, late President of Freed-Hardeman College, said at the 1962 Harding College lectureship:

"Nearly 2500 times the Bible lays claim to being an inspired revelation. Some 1300 of these times are in the Old Testament prophecies alone. More than 100 are found in the book of Jeremiah, and some 28 are found even in the short book of Malachi."⁵

However, a claim to inspiration by a writer does not make his writings inspired. One finds that Mohammed attributed the wisdom of the Koran to Allah, and Joseph Smith Jr. attributed the Book of Mormon to a special act of divine revelation of God. The real evidence for the inspiration of the Scriptures is in the message they bear and they abound with evidence that their claim to inspiration is more than just a claim; it is a fact.

The Biblical Doctrine of God

The Biblical doctrine of God drastically stands in contrast to the concepts of gods which arose from within natural man as seen in pagan literature and mythology. Mythological literature is replete with gods and goddesses fashioned after man's image, warring after one another, practicing polygamy and concubinage, to be feared by man and often only appeased of their wrath by human sacrifice. The savage ritual of the worshippers of Baal as related in 1 Kings 18 is typical of a pagan people's concept of the demands of their gods. On the other hand, one sovereign eternal God, the creator of all the universe, is announced in the first statement of the book of Genesis. God created man in His own image (not God after man's image) and made him a free moral agent by giving him a will to choose between good and evil. Man chose to rebel against his creator but God responded to His rebellious creature with just discipline attended by kindness and favors.

Since natural man by choice partook of a sinful nature, there was only one

⁵Dixon, H.A., "The Holy Scriptures Are Inspired of God," Harding College Bible Lectures 1962, Firm Foundation Pub. House, Austin, Tex., 1962, p. 18.

way that he could be restored to his original state of purity and God-like spiritual nature. He had to be cleansed of his sinful nature, which he accepted by his own willfulness, and be spiritually regenerated. However, he could not cleanse himself. God did it for him in Jesus Christ by taking on human flesh, suffering all of natural man's temptations, accepting all of humanity's sins and dying a cruel physical death for him. Sinful natural man could then by obedience to God's commands accept Christ's death and in so doing be spiritually regenerated by spiritually putting to death his former sinful way of life. In this regenerated state it became possible for man to so live as to become more and more like his Savior until finally in his own death and spiritual resurrection he becomes like his Savior (1 Jno. 3:2).

As this story unfolds in the Bible it becomes apparent that not man but God in Christ is the central figure of the plot. Man is sinful, rebellious and undeserving of God's favors. Jehovah God of the Bible is an eternal, loving, redeeming, saving, self-sacrificing and personal God who drastically stands in contrast to natural man's concept of gods as revealed in pagan literature and mythology. The only logical explanation is to assume the divine inspiration of Scripture and the self revelation of an omnipotent God.

In our next lesson we will consider The Homogeneity and Nature of the Biblical Plot, The Unity of the Scriptures, The Central Figure of the Biblical Plot, and The Quality of the Scriptures.

LESSON TWO DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Do you agree that evidences of inspiration are not proofs of inspiration and that ultimately the Christian must accept by faith that the Scriptures are inspired of God? Explain your reasoning.
2. Define "evidence." Define "proof." Cite illustrations to show your distinction between these words. Relate your findings to our present study on the inspiration of the Scriptures.
3. Cite several specific references where claims are made in the New Testament that these writings are of divine origin. Do the same thing for the Old Testament.
4. Give one or more examples of extrabiblical writings which claim divine authorship. Does a claim to inspiration guarantee that the writing is inspired? If a writing does not claim inspiration, would you hold in

question its divine origin? Be prepared to defend your answer.

5. Christ often quoted from Old Testament writings or else referred to them. Do you believe this to be evidence that Christ regarded those writings as divinely authoritative? Be prepared to defend your answer.

SOME EVIDENCES OF THE INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURES

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LESSON THREE

No claim for originality is made for the material presented in this series of lessons. Many arguments included here have been presented elsewhere by a great number of authors, many of whom are unknown to the present writer. Religious literature abounds with both valid and invalid arguments on the inspiration of Scripture and there is no doubt that all has been written with good intentions. In a very important sense, the Scriptures do not need our defense or apology and these articles are not intended apologetically. As pointed out in the first article, no proof per se for inspiration will be attempted in this series; we will simply attempt to show that the position of faith that the Scriptures are inspired of God is reasonable and justifiable on the basis of evidence.

The Homogeneity and Nature of the Biblical Plot

A careful student of the Bible sees a developing plot of human redemption running from the first Bible prophecy in Genesis 3:15 throughout the Old Testament to the death of Christ as revealed in the New Testament. God announced in Genesis 3:15 the beginning of a great struggle (enmity) between good and evil and stated that one (Christ) to be born of woman would triumph over the forces of evil in the world. Many times the thread of human redemption becomes imperceptably thin as it appears that the birth of Jesus the Christ is to be prohibited and many times it even seems that the first Bible prophecy is nearly reversed. First, Satan so influenced the mind of humanity with evil that every thought of man was evil continually until God in righteous indignation announced His intention to destroy sinful and rebellious man with a great flood. Just as it seems apparent that the first Bible prophecy is to be completely reversed, we learn that Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord, was spared, and through

his family the earth was repopulated. The prophecy was then to be fulfilled through Abraham, and Satan concentrated his efforts on Abraham and his family. He and his wife Sarah passed child-bearing age only to bear a child (Isaac) unnaturally when approximately a hundred years old. Had Abraham and Sarah not had the necessary faith to bear Isaac late in life or had Abraham refused to offer him to God for a sacrifice (Genesis 22), then the story of human redemption would have had a tragic termination. To be sure Satan was active trying to effect this result.

The plot of the Bible continues to develop as we see that hope for one to arise to triumph over evil was again virtually lost as the posterity of Abraham's grandson Jacob was held in subjugation to Pharaoh in Egypt. However, just as natural man would see no way of escape, God prepared Moses who led the people out of bondage to a land of plenty. Centuries passed and numerous times the thread of human redemption becomes so thin that it seems apparent that humanity is hopelessly lost and beyond redemption. Finally, however, the birth of Jesus Christ was announced and it was He who was to redeem man by triumphing over evil. King Herod had all male children under two years of age slain but the promised Christ child miraculously escaped as His earthly parents fled to Egypt. Later when Christ began His personal ministry, all the forces that Satan and hell could muster tried to triumph over Him, and it appeared that they had succeeded when He was sentenced to death by crucifixion. He was crucified and buried. In the developing plot, Satan and evil appear to triumph over good; the first Bible prophecy seemingly is reversed; God's Son appears to be destroyed—but three days later the tomb is empty, Christ is raised, death is conquered, and it is not Satan but Christ who is the victor! He did for man what man could not do for himself. How unnatural and unlike man's thinking is this plot of human redemption! Again, the message rings of divine inspiration.

The Unity of the Scriptures

Unlike other books that claim to be inspired, the Bible was written in

three languages by about forty different men, scattered over three continents and many different countries. A period of approximately 1600 years elapsed from the time the first book was written until the last was completed. Yet, despite its many writers of various races, coming from almost every walk of life and spanning sixteen centuries there is an astounding homogeneity to the Biblical plot and harmony in all that was written. It is inconceivable to the rational mind that chance or even a deliberate attempt to perpetuate a fraud could account for the Bible. The only alternative is divine inspiration.

The Central Figure of the Biblical Plot

Jesus Christ, the central figure and "hero" of the Biblical plot, is not the kind of major character that uninspired men write about. He was crowned king, but His crown was made of thorns and thistles, not jewel-studded gold. He did not ride a fine chariot drawn by neatly groomed stallions in His triumphant entry into Jerusalem but went riding on the back of a borrowed donkey. His triumph came through His love and utter humiliation, not through victory by force as with Alexander the Great, Napoleon, and other great world heroes. His claim to greatness was backed not by might and force but by the good that He did and the words and ethics that He taught. It is also inconceivable that uninspired, uneducated Jews could perpetuate a fraud that would be a dynamic force in the world two thousand years after its inception which literally, through no earthly violence of its own, wielded a mighty blow to the Roman Empire.

The Quality of the Scriptures

After all evidence is in and carefully weighed it is realized that the greatest of evidence for the inspiration of the Scriptures is their quality. The Scriptures are not of human origin because their quality is more than human. They are above the natural. It is difficult to imagine how one can discernibly study the Pentateuch, the Psalms, the Proverbs, the Gospels, and Paul's Epistles and not be convinced that they are of divine origin. The Ten Commandments given four thousand years ago contain the essential principles that must be honored if

any modern society is to maintain its order and structure. The drama in the book of Job is regarded by literary authorities to be one of the world's greatest masterpieces, but it is more than just a good piece of literature; it is God showing humanity that good can come from human suffering and that it is not within man to comprehend the wisdom of God.

The Proverbs are matchless in their wisdom and Psalm 23 has doubtless brought more peace into troubled hearts than all the literature of the world combined. Christ taught the principles of modern psychology on human relations in His Sermon on the Mount. The Apostle Paul's dissertation on love in 1 Corinthians 13 is unparalleled in beauty and meaning. True, divinely uninspired men have brought forth great writings, but there is no literature that compares with the Scriptures in their impact for good on the world. The only place where Biblical literature has not left its impact is where it has not been carried. The Scriptures are superior to their contemporary literature in their nature, their quality, their impact upon the world for good, and their historical preservation.

Our next lesson will be on The Bible and "Scientific Foreknowledge."

LESSON THREE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The concept of the God of the universe personally revealing Himself in human flesh and dying for mankind is a concept of redemption that is completely unique to the Bible. This, of course, does not prove the Bible's divine origin, but is it not indicative of it? Does this concept of man's mode of salvation not appeal to the depth of your soul and the height of your intellect?
2. Contrast the Biblical plan of salvation with the "annihilation of feeling" (Nirvana) of Buddhism.
3. The Apostle Paul often spoke of man's reconciliation to God" (Rom. 5:10; 2 Cor. 5,18,19,20; Eph. 2:16; Col. 1:21,22), but never does he, or any other Biblical writer, make the mistake of speaking of "God's reconciliation to man." Comment on the importance of this distinction and the likelihood that uninspired writers might not be so consistent and accurate in their expressions as inspired writers.
4. A student stated, "genealogy bores me." Is this necessarily either a fault of the student or a reflection on the quality of Scripture? Would the genealogy of Matthew one likely appeal to a Hebrew scholar more than it would appeal to the average individual?
5. We have referred to Biblical inspiration as unique in order to distinguish it from ordinary "inspiration" which is that mood which motivates great authors,

composers and poets. Would you say that the United States Constitution, The Iliad, Don Quixote, The Hallelujah Chorus and other similar great works were "inspired?"

6. How would you proceed to show that the great works listed above were not divinely inspired? Does this not emphasize the importance of our repeated emphasis that our evidences of the divine inspiration of the Scriptures are not proof per se? Discuss the role of faith in regards to one's affirmation that the Scriptures are divinely inspired.
7. An interesting question is, "Did the New Testament writers know that their writings were divinely inspired as they wrote them?" 2 Peter 3:2,15,16; Acts 4:8; 13:9 and Galations 1:11,12 may have some bearing on this question. However, other Scriptures imply the opposite conclusion. The answer is, of course, inconsequential, but it does lend itself to friendly debate. What is your opinion?

SOME EVIDENCES OF THE INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURES

Don England

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LESSON FOUR

The Bible and "Scientific Foreknowledge"

Some have been heard to say, "The Bible is my textbook of science." However, the Bible was never intended to be a textbook of science and we err when we try to make it one. The most distinguishing characteristic of science is change. When we say that "modern science" has verified the truth of a particular verse of Scripture, we overlook the fact that "modern science" will soon be outdated and science will most likely change its position on that very point as more data are accumulated. This, in turn, calls for a change in our view of Scripture. Over the years such scientific concepts as the flat earth world view, the Nebular Hypothesis of cosmological origins, Freudian psychology and even the evolutionary theory on the origin of life have been used by some as "scientific proofs" that the Bible is inspired. However, all of these concepts now are either highly debated, totally discarded or have been significantly modified by more recent discovery.

There is an inherent danger in saying that science has verified Scripture or even using "scientific foreknowledge" as a proof per se for the inspiration of Scripture. The inspired revelation of God's Word is complete, authoritative, unchanging, and absolute. Science, however, is incomplete and changing; rarely, if ever, do scientists speak in unison and absolute certainty regarding the phenomena of nature. Therefore, it is not logical to propose that the changing and the relative confirm or verify the unchanging and absolute. Where positive statements of science and Biblical interest coincide, one expects to find and, in fact, one does find harmony. The difficulty comes in knowing when science is accurate in its statements and when we have correctly interpreted Scripture.

Nevertheless, in spite of these facts, men have persisted in using changing,

relative scientific knowledge to "verify" or "confirm" Scripture, and in so doing make the claim that Biblical Scientific foreknowledge has proven per se that Scripture is inspired. More often than not these writers have in fact read into a passage of Scripture scientific information, as determined by their day and age, which most likely was never intended to be even implied by the Holy Spirit through the Biblical writers. All too often, even the scientific information used is distorted in order to fit one's own understanding of Scripture. The result is that frequently more harm than good is done when the unskillful use science as a tool to "verify" or "confirm" Scripture. One does not need to be a Hebrew or Greek scholar, nor even an accomplished scientist to determine when Scripture is being so mishandled. With a fair knowledge of science, the aid of two or more standard versions of the Bible and a reliable Bible commentary it is fairly easy to tell whether a passage represents true "scientific foreknowledge" or whether one has merely read "scientific foreknowledge" into the passage. The following illustrate the point made here:

In Isaiah 40:22 it is written that "God sitteth upon the circle of the earth." This passage, along with Proverbs 8:27, has been used as evidence that the Biblical writers knew, centuries before its discovery, that the earth was round or spherical. However, reference to the circle of the earth most likely is a reference to the clearly discernible "circle of the horizon" rather than an affirmation of the later discovered rotundity of the earth. Acknowledging this does no injustice whatsoever to Scripture. Of course, when one denies the correctness of the application of a Scripture to a particular scientific position he is not denying the inspiration or truth of the passage. One is simply saying that he does not think the passage should be applied as some people have applied it.

Truth can certainly be expressed poetically and Biblical poetry may contain figures of speech which are nonliteral. For example, the beautiful 23rd Psalm contains nonliteral significance for the modern reader. Where Biblical poetry

bears on the subject of nature, it is particularly difficult to know of a certainty whether the message was intended to be literal or nonliteral. In Job 38 God affirmed that there are treasures (storehouses) of the snow (vs. 22), but who is twentieth century man to say exactly what those storehouses are? Within the past fifteen years the writer has heard at least four different "modern scientific" explanations given for the storehouses of the snow, all of which were presented as Biblical scientific foreknowledge:

1. One has said that the "storehouse" of the snow is the beautiful symmetry and order in the snowflake as revealed by modern man's microscope which, of course, could not have been seen prior to the invention of the microscope.

2. Another has said that it is the slow manner in which snow melts which waters the earth with minimal flooding.

3. A third has said that the storehouses are the chemicals trapped in the snow crystals as they form and fall to the earth to fertilize the soil.

4. Still a fourth has said it is the colloidal gold particles trapped in the snow crystal, which gold can be recovered for man's use and profit.

The fact is, we do not know exactly what God had in mind when He asked Job the question, "Have you entered the storehouses of the snow?" Job's speculation was surely different from ours and ours will be different from those of "modern man" a thousand years hence. It may be that God intended one, all, or even none of the above in reference to the storehouses of the snow. Most likely the reference is to "the place where snow is stored." Modern man should stand amazed at the wisdom of God today in reading Job 38 just as Job did when God first directed the questions to him. To this writer it seems best to assume that such statements as Job 38:22 are beautiful poetical expressions with indeterminate scientific significance.

The following table lists numerous Scriptures often proposed as scientifically accurate statements made by Biblical writers centuries prior to their discovery by man. The reader is encouraged to study this table carefully by reading each Scriptural reference. If possible, use a good Bible commentary in your

study. The following codes have been used to express this writer's opinion of the value of each Scripture as to its content of scientific foreknowledge:

- X -- The scripture possibly represents true "scientific or medical foreknowledge"
- A -- The Biblical statement is a figurative poetical expression with indeterminate scientific significance.
- B -- The Biblical statement has literal meaning other than the "scientific" meaning often assigned to it (see a good Bible commentary).
- C -- The "scientific foreknowledge" attributed to the Biblical statement represents highly disputed or unverified statements of science.
- D -- The "scientific foreknowledge" seen here is the result of an arbitrary emphasis placed on the meaning or form of one word by the reader.
- E -- Any apparent "scientific" content seen in these Scriptures is purely incidental to the real message which is generally spiritual in nature.

Code	"Scientific Forethought"	Reference
B	Taxonomical classification of animals	Gen. 1
C	Life originated in the seas	Gen. 1
E	Spencer's scientific principles	Gen. 1:1-2
C	Nebular Hypothesis	Gen. 1:2
B, D	Drifting continent hypothesis	Gen. 1:9
D	More than one sea (ocean)	Gen. 1:10
B, E	General anesthetics, surgery	Gen. 2:21
X	Basic ship proportions	Gen. 6:15
C	Moon younger than the earth	Gen. 1:14-16
E	Indefinite number of stars	Gen. 15:5; Jer. 33:22
X	Mendelian genetic laws	Gen. 30, 31
X	Diagnosis of a communicable disease	Lev. 13
X	Use of quarantine in disease control	Lev. 13
B, E	Life is in the blood	Lev. 17:11
A	Photosynthesis of plants	Job 8:16
A, B	Void of stars over the north hemisphere	Job 26:7
A	Air has weight	Job 28:25
A	Radio astronomy	Job 38:7

A	Wave theory of light	Job 38:19
A	Treasures of the snow	Job 38:22
A	Visible electromagnetic spectrum	Job 38:24
A, B	Movement of the stars	Job 38:32
A	Paths of the sea	Psalms 8:8
B, E	Rotundity of the earth	Isaiah 40:22
D	Day and night occur simultaneously	Luke 17:31-36

The above Scriptures are by no means exhaustive of all those to which scientific foreknowledge has been assigned and the writer by no means suggests that his is the final word on the matter. There are two general reasons why the Bible seems to be inspired: (1) what it does say and (2) what it does not say. From a scientific point of view, what the Bible does not say about science is far more significant than what it does say. The Bible is remarkably free of outdated, outmoded "scientific" concepts which were generally accepted in the day of the Biblical writers. For example, you do not find in the Bible that all matter is composed of earth, air, fire and/or water, nor that the earth rests on the back of a giant turtle which floats in a great ocean. It is significant that Moses did not write in scientific language about the details of creation given in Genesis 1. Furthermore, God could have revealed the principle of gravitation to Moses but in what language would He have described it: the language of Moses' contemporaries (if so we would surely reject it today), the language of Sir Isaac Newton or Albert Einstein (in which case even Moses could not have understood it) or still in the language of some yet unborn thinker (in which case we today possibly could not understand it). The silence of the Scriptures in scientific matters is evidence of their inspiration.

In conclusion, we must remember that the Bible is a book primarily with a spiritual message. Any scientific import to its message is purely incidental to the primary message. Furthermore, once one determines what the primary spiritual message of a passage is the secondary "scientific" meaning will often fade into

insignificance or disappear altogether.

In our next lesson we will consider The Bible and Human Relations

LESSON FOUR DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Science is incomplete, relative, and changing. Scripture is complete, absolute, and unchanging. Is it reasonable that the incomplete, relative, and changing should verify the complete, absolute and unchanging? Explain why you either agree or disagree with this logic.
2. Is it possible to "read more into" a Scriptural passage than it is to "read out of it?" If possible, justify your answer by examples.
3. Is it possible that 20th Century Christians can know with 100 per cent certainty the "scientific forethought," if any, in Isaiah 40:22? Is it important that we know this? Explain your answers.
4. Show that the 23rd Psalm contains nonliteral significance for the modern reader. Does this detract at all from the spiritual impact of the truths of Psalm 23 in our lives today?
5. How can one determine whether a passage is to be taken literally or nonliterally? If time permits, discuss Genesis one within the context of this question.
6. Do you agree with the statement, "The silence of the Scriptures in scientific matters is evidence of their inspiration." Why do you agree or disagree with the statement?
7. Select one or more items from the table on "scientific forethought" in this lesson and study it carefully to see if you would assign it the same code as it has been assigned in the table.

SOME EVIDENCES OF THE INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURES

Don England

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LESSON FIVE

The Bible and Human Relations⁶⁻¹¹

The Bible is acclaimed by some to be the greatest textbook on human behavior ever put together.⁶ This is to be expected since it is derived from God who is the author of man's emotions, his mind and his intellect. Freudian deterministic psychology disparaged the value of the Scriptures but the pendulum has now swung in the opposite direction to a great extent. Many of the principles of modern psychology were a part of Christ's teachings two thousand years ago. No teaching of any living world religion can make the claim of having contributed so much to man's understanding of himself as well as making guidelines for his peaceful coexistence with his fellows as can the Bible.

It is not suggested here that one attempt to harmonize the Bible with all of the teachings of modern psychology. There are many conflicting theories within the science of psychology just as there are within other branches of science. However, it does appear that some principles of human relations have been soundly established and many of these sound principles were a part of the teachings of the Bible predating modern psychology by two millenniums.

Human Dignity

The dignity and worth of the individual is emphasized in the Scriptures for it is said that he (man) was "created a little lower than the angels"(Psa. 8:5).

⁶Blanton, S., M.D., "The Bible's Timeless--and Timely Insights." Reader's Digest, August 1966, pp. 93-96.

⁷Baxter, B.B., As A Man Thinketh In His Heart, Washington Industries, Nashville, Tenn., 1966.

⁸McMillen, S.I., M.D., None Of These Diseases, Spire Books, Westwood, N.J., 1963.

⁹Peale, N.V., The Power of Positive Thinking, Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1956.

¹⁰Frankl, V.E., M.D., The Doctor And The Soul, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1966.

¹¹Hutschnecker, A.A., M.D., The Will To Live, Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1958.

Unlike the animals, God created man in His own spiritual image (Gen. 1:26-27), and thus imparted to man a unique dignity. Contrary to a sentiment expressed in a song frequently sung in worship services, we are not as "worms" in His sight. In redeeming fallen man God so "loved the world that He gave His only begotten son" for him (Jno.3:16). This is not to say that any one of us was meritoriously deserving of the death of Christ but what could be more uplifting to a depressed spirit than to know that He through whom the sun was set aflame and endless galaxies were flung out into space loved me enough to die for me?

Christ further assured us of God's awareness of and concern for the individual when He said that the very hairs of our heads are numbered (Matt. 10:30) and that God knows even when a sparrow falls to the earth but that we are worth more than many sparrows (Matt. 10:29, 31). Furthermore He assured us that if God clothes the grass of the field He surely will provide those who love Him and seek His righteousness with the necessities of life (Matt. 6:30, 33).

Personal Relationships

Concerning personal relationships, Christ taught that we should love our neighbors as we love ourselves (Lk. 10:27); He thus recommended a properly accessed love for self and demanded a like love for others. How many petty arguments would be squelched if this basic principle of human relationships were practiced! It is most regretful when those proposing to wear the name of Christ do not practice this principle. Christ was very practical when He recommended that we go and talk to our adversary about the matter that has come between us (Matt. 18). If our adversary does not hear us, we should take a witness and review the matter again. This formula for the solution of disputes works whether it involves only two individuals in a petty disagreement or matters of international concern discussed over peace tables or at summit conferences. The Apostle Paul said, "Let not the sun go down on your wrath" (Eph. 4:26). He further admonished that "love suffers long, is kind and patient" (1 Cor. 13).

Mind-Body Problems

Solomon wrote, "As a man thinketh in his heart so is he" (Prov. 23:7).

Medical research has shown that the condition of the mind (psyche) directly affects the condition of the body (soma), and hence the claim that 50 percent to to possibly 90 percent of all medical treatments are for psychosomatic diseases; that is, inflictions of the physical body which are directly caused by or related to the condition of the mind of the patient. The first step to good bodily health is to improve the attitude of the mind toward one's self and his fellow. The bulk of Christ's teachings lead one to be able to live at peace with himself and all men, because he is at peace with God.

The Best Rule for Living⁷

The Christian's rule of life is the "Golden Rule" of Christ, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" (Matt. 7:12). Meditate on the intrinsic value of this sublime teaching and compare it with man's way of dealing with his fellow. The "Iron Rule" has been stated as, "Do unto others what you would not want them to do unto you." The "Brass Rule" says "Do unto others as they would do unto you," and the "Silver Rule" says, "Do not do unto others what you would not want them to do to you." The Iron and Brass Rules are beastly and animalistic. The Silver Rule is passive, recommends that we do not harm, but fails to recommend that we do any good. The Golden Rule is active and constructive for good.

The Way to True Greatness

Probably no single recommendation is made more frequently in modern psychology counselling than the recommendation that the patient get his mind off himself and start thinking of others. We are finally learning the personal worth of the fact that we are our brother's keeper. God showed man compassionate love in Jesus Christ and Christ taught that the Christian life was to be one of service to others (Matt. 25, Lk. 10). The way to true greatness is through servitude (Matt. 20:29). How contrary to the thinking of natural man is this!

Freedom in Christ

"You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free" (Jno. 8:32). Though these words have primary reference to truth embodied in Jesus Christ and His teachings, it has been claimed that the whole theory of modern psychotherapy

is also stated in these words of Christ. The more we really know about ourselves, our actions, and our motives, the less tendency we have to rationalize and deceive ourselves. Learning truth about ourselves frees us from crippling anxieties, tensions, and frustrations.

Toward Good Mental Health

Space does not permit comment on many other guidelines to good mental health found in the Scriptures. Spend some time to carefully meditate on the limitless value of the following Biblical statements from Romans 12:

"Don't cherish exaggerated ideas of yourself or your importance, but try to have a sane estimate of your capabilities" (vs. 3, Phillips).

"Be of the same mind toward one another. Set not your mind on high things, but condescend to things that are lowly. Be not wise in your own conceits" (vs. 16, A.S.V.).

"If it be possible, as much as in you lieth, be at peace with all men" (vs. 18, A.S.V.).

"Vengeance belongeth unto me; I will recompense, saith the Lord" (vs. 19, A.S.V.).

"But if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him to drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" (vs. 20, 21, A.S.V.).

The Bible literally overflows with instruction which will lead one to a full, free and more meaningful life in Jesus Christ. All factors taken into consideration, we can best account for this by assuming the unique inspiration of the Scriptures. He who made us also gave us the Bible that we may know ourselves and Him and that we may live harmoniously and productively with our fellow man.

In our next lesson we will study "The Bible and Medicine."

LESSON FIVE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Comment on the importance of a properly accessed love for one's self and respect for one's own integrity and uniqueness as prerequisites to his fulfilling the command of Christ, "Love thy neighbor as thyself."
2. Many Christians have difficulty accepting the forgiveness of their sins and consequently continue to bear the burden of sin long after God has forgiven them. Comment on the psychological value of Psalm 55:22 "Cast your burden on the Lord, and He will sustain you; He will never permit the righteous to be moved." Also comment on the psychological, as well as the spiritual, significance of the continuous cleansing action of the blood of Jesus Christ for the Christian who is "walking in the light as Christ is in the Light" (1 John 1:7-9).

3. It is often stated that Confucius formulated the Golden Rule five centuries before Christ. Actually, Confucius said, "What I do not wish others to do unto me I also wish not to do unto others." Is this statement, in fact, the same as Christ's statement, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you"? Is it necessary that every utterance of Christ or the apostles be original in order to be Divinely inspired? Explain your reasoning.
4. Study carefully the excerpts from Romans 12 reproduced in the present lesson. Comment on the psychological impact that each should have on the life of the Christian.
5. Read Phillipians 4:11-13. Discuss the psychological value of one having a positive outlook on life such as is expressed here. How does one come to develop this attitude toward life?

SOME EVIDENCES OF THE INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURES

Don England

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LESSON SIX

The Bible and Medicine

There is no doubt that the medical practices of the Jews of Moses' day were far advanced beyond those of neighboring nations. In many respects Hebrew medical practices were thousands of years ahead of their times. Moses was trained in all of the ways of the Egyptians (Acts 7:22) and this most certainly included training in Egyptian medical practices. Nevertheless, one finds that the Pentateuch is free of Egyptian superstitious medical beliefs and, in most instances, Hebrew medical practices far excelled those of the Egyptians. For example, the Papyrus Ebers, a medical book written in Egypt about the time of Moses suggested drug remedies containing such bizarre items as the fat of a hippopotamus, crocodile, cat or snake, the hoof of a donkey, heads of worms, brains of fishes and tadpoles, and excreta from donkeys, antelopes, dogs, cats, flies, and human beings.¹²

One can most readily account for advanced Jewish medical practices by assuming that Moses was divinely inspired to relate medical instructions to God's people just as the Bible claims (Exo. 15:26). However, it must not be overlooked that the Old Testament is primarily a religious document and not an anthology of Jewish medical practices. Its primary thrust is not that of a medical manual any more than it is a science textbook. References to medical practices in the Old Testament are casual in nature, are generally associated with religious or civil laws, and always take second place to the primary spiritual thrust of the Bible. Consequently, we must be careful not to "read into" a Biblical statement a medical inference or foreknowledge which is not clearly implied by the inspired writer. For example, the hardening of Pharaoh's heart was not due to the harden-

¹²Ghalioungui, P., Magic and Medical Science in Ancient Egypt, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1963, p. 137.

ing of his arteries and the figure of knees weak as water mentioned by the prophet in Ezekiel 7:17 does not refer to "water on the knee" as some have supposed.

There is no doubt but that the Jews of the Egyptian Exodus carried with them many medical superstitions and customs of which Jehovah did not approve. Furthermore, one would suspect that the Israelites came under the influence of pagan medical practices just as they came under religious and social influences of foreign nations. Consequently, before attributing a Jewish medical procedure to inspiration one should determine from a contextual study whether or not instruction regarding the procedure came from God. We must remember that the Bible was written by inspiration, but that the writers recorded statements, practices and customs of uninspired people and even demons. It is only by assuming the divine inspiration of the Scriptures that we can account for the fact that superstitious medical customs and practices of pagan peoples are not incorporated into the Old Testament and attributed to Divinity.

As B. L. Gordon, M.D., has observed, it matters little that ancient Jewish medical practices were associated with religious law:

"It is entirely immaterial whether the hygiene and prophylaxis as promulgated by Moses in the Pentateuch were intended as religious rituals or as health measures. The fact is they were scientifically sound. . . . The fact is that neither the Old Egyptian medical documents nor other early medical codes have been so thoroughgoing on subjects of hygiene and prophylaxis as the Mosaic Code."¹³

Dr. Gordon has further observed that the Jewish community had professional physicians distinct from the priesthood 450 years before Hippocrates! This is evidenced from 2 Chronicles 16:12-13 where we learn that King Asa, though greatly diseased, "sought not to the Lord, but to the physicians."¹⁴

It is not our purpose here to present an exhaustive critique of Hebrew medical practices. The following are brief references to some of the more outstanding and advanced practices of the early Hebrews in regard to personal hygiene and the prevention and cure of disease. These practices were highly

¹³Gordon, B.L., Medicine Throughout Antiquity, F.A.Davis Co., Philadelphia, 1949

¹⁴Ibid., p. 254.

p. 255.

advanced for their day but, of course, they are not described in modern medical terminology. They are, nevertheless, still invaluable.

(a) The washing of garments as related in Exodus 19:10 had primarily a religious significance of sanctification but still was valuable in respect to personal hygiene.

(b) Quarantine as a prophylactic measure against the spread of leprosy is taught in Leviticus 13:46. Also, many sanitary precautions to be taken against the spread of communicable disease are found in Leviticus 13.

(c) In addition to being an important teaching regarding morals, the commandment, "Thou shalt not commit adultery" (Exo. 20:14) has important medical implications in regard to the prevention and spread of venereal disease.

(d) Shaving and thorough washing was required of one healed of leprosy (Lev. 14:8, 9).

(e) In addition to its many spiritual implications, circumcision as required of all male Jewish children eight days after birth (Gen. 17), also has for many years been recognized as having definite medical prophylactic advantage.

(f) Cleansing by washing was required of anyone who ate the flesh of an animal which died of natural causes or which was torn by another animal (Lev. 17:15, 16).

(g) Anyone who touched an unclean person or even an object that had been touched by an unclean person was declared himself unclean until he was thoroughly washed (Lev. 15).

(h) The expectorate of an unclean person was unclean (Lev. 15:8) and anyone touched by such was to cleanse himself by bathing in water. He was considered unclean (could not touch anyone else, etc.) himself until the evening came.

(i) The burial of excrement outside the camp (Deut. 23:12, 13) had obvious medical prophylactic advantage and contributed to improved personal hygiene for all the people.

(j) In Lesson Five, mention was made of the fact that 50 to 90 percent of all medical treatments are for psychosomatic disorders and that the Scriptures

offer sound advice for a good wholesome mental outlook on life.

In regard to the Jewish practice of circumcision, S. I. McMillen, M.D., has pointed out that due to biochemical factors an eight-day-old baby has available in its blood stream more of the blood clotting factor prothrombin than on any other day of its entire life.¹⁵ Consequently, the first and the safest day to circumcise a child is the eighth day after birth which is precisely the very day that Jehovah commanded Abraham to circumcise Isaac (Gen. 17:12) as well as being the day upon which the operation was to be performed on all male Jewish children. The most logical explanation for this phenomenal fact is to assume the inspiration of the Scriptures.

In conclusion, it would be good for us to speculate as to why Moses did not instruct the mothers of the children of Israel to soothe the teething pains of their babies by giving them a fried mouse on which to chew. For, after all, this is what the Egyptians did¹⁶ and Moses was trained in all the ways of the Egyptians. Furthermore, the Israelites had lived for 400 years among them and knew of their customs. The answer is now obvious. The Bible has an unnatural origin; it was not written by the human impulses of mere men but its writing was supervised and directed by the Holy Spirit of God. Peter claimed (2 Pet. 1:20, 21) that holy men of God spake as they were "moved," "impelled," or "borne along" by the Holy Spirit. This present study seems to bear out that claim.

In our next lesson we will examine Christianity and Other Living World Religions.

¹⁵McMillen, S.I., M.D., None of These Diseases, Fleming H. Revell Co., Westwood, New Jersey, 1963, p. 22.

¹⁶Ghalioungui, P., op cit., p. 130.

LESSON SIX DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In lesson four we emphasized that one should avoid reading "scientific forethought" into a Biblical passage where no forethought was intended by the Holy Spirit through the Biblical writers. The same caution should be exercised with respect to "medical forethought." Critically evaluate the Scriptures referred to in the present lesson and attempt to determine if the indicated "medical forethought" is in fact a part of the Biblical text or have we inadvertently read this information into the text.

2. Read 1 Cor. 6:9-20 and 1 Cor. 10:31. The primary thrust of Paul's messages here is of course spiritual in nature. Do you feel that these passages have any relevance whatsoever to such things as balanced diets, immoral dissipation of one's body, use of tobacco and use of alcohol? Explain your reasoning.
3. Many students have difficulty accepting the fact of the extreme crudeness and superstitious nature of medical practices of nations contemporary with the ancient Hebrews. Students would find it very rewarding to do research projects on the medical practices of Assyrian, Babylonian and Egyptian peoples.

SOME EVIDENCES OF THE INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURES

Don England

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LESSON SEVEN

In Lesson Two of this series it was stated that there is much about the Bible that is "unnatural" and hence our conclusion that these "unnatural" qualities must be attributed to their supernatural origin. Indeed, in a study of comparative world religions, one discovers that there is much about the Bible, Christ, and the Christian faith that is above or beyond the natural. In this article evidence of the inspiration of the Scriptures is obtained by examining basic tenets of major living world religions. The Bible and Christ truly stand out.

Christianity and Other Living World Religions¹⁷⁻²⁰

It is frequently stated that Christianity is just another religion and that the Bible is just another book with a religious theme. Religion's critics place the Bible along side the Koran of Islam, Vedic literature of Hinduism and the sayings of Confucius. One cannot pass off lightly these accusations and neither should he be afraid of the truth. A little time and effort put into a study of comparative world religions will quickly reveal that Christ has no comparison in the religions of the world and that the Bible has no peer as a religious book.

No attempt is made here to compare Christianity with all of the presently existing world religions. The reader is encouraged to do this on his own. In order that we may more fully appreciate Christianity, the distinguishing features of the more representative world religions are given. They are Hinduism and

¹⁷ An excellent volume comparing Christianity with ten major living world religions is the July, 1963, issue of the 20th Century Christian. The articles and their authors are: "The Quest of Hinduism" by R. Batey, "The Way of Buddhism" by C. Doyle, "The Release of Jainism" by D. Taylor, "The Religion That Isn't a Religion (Confucianism)" by J. White, "The Way of Taoism" by G. Benson, "Shintoism" by L. Fox, "O, Jerusalem, Jerusalem" by S. Eckstein, "The Monotheism of Islam" by R. Johnson, "Silkism" by H. Butler, and "Zoroastrianism" by J. Zink.

¹⁸ Noss, J., Man's Religions, The Macmillan Co., New York, 1956.

¹⁹ Jurji, E.J., The Great Religions of the Modern World, Princeton Univ. Press, 1947.

²⁰ Hastings, J., Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1924.

Buddhism of India, Confucianism of the Far East, and Judaism and Islam of the Near East.

Hinduism

Early Hinduism dates to earlier than 1500 B.C. Today over 400 million people embrace one form or another of the religion. Hinduism is polytheistic but the Hindu's supreme god is Brahman, an eternal spirit transcending nature. All human spirits derive from Brahman and are subject to a series of cyclic incarnations. The ultimate hope of every Hindu is, through noble living, to rise higher and higher through the Indian social caste system until he is released from this transitory temporal existence to be absorbed into the eternal spirit of Brahman. People who are materialistically minded in this temporal life descend through the caste system and may even be reincarnated as pigs, other animals, or insects. A Hindu from a priestly family once expressed to the writer a desire, through righteous living in this present life, to be reborn as a Son of God. He was very proud of his present priestly status.

The Hindu has a very impersonal relationship with Brahman. Brahman has made no effort to help the Hindu in his quest for release from his temporal existence. He is not a compassionate, self-sacrificing god of love. Each Hindu obtains release (hence salvation) through his own efforts. Hinduism is a "salvation-by-your-own-bootstrap religion." God helps the Christian but the Hindu struggles alone. The Hindu "washes away sins" by giving gifts to Brahman which result in exploitation. Idols with many limbs, symbols of energetic deity, are worshipped. It is well known that the philosophy of reincarnation has led to animal worship in Hinduism and other religious forms, such as Jainism, which are related to or derived from Hinduism. This animal worship has led to cattle, monkeys, rats, and even insects being held sacred. Needless to say, the results contribute to famine and spread of disease.

Buddhism

Buddhism bears a relationship to Hinduism similar to that which Christianity bears to Judaism. Buddhism is derived from the 5th Century B.C. partly as a

reaction against the Hindu caste system. The mother of Buddha is said to have conceived him after a dream in which she beheld him descend from heaven and enter her womb in the form of a white elephant. Elephants are, therefore, sacred to Buddhists. His birth supposedly was preceded by prophecy, earthquakes, miracles, and heavenly music. The gods (hence, polytheism) prepared the way before him and his birth was attended by four Brahma angels. He walked immediately upon birth and found none to be his equal. He died a peaceful death and thereupon was absorbed into the mysterious Nirvana after, according to tradition, over-indulgence in "dried boar's flesh"; hence, the aversion of Buddhists to a meat diet.

Buddha wrote nothing and Buddhist writings were composed 400 years after his death. A portion of Buddha doctrine consists of the "Four Noble Truths":

1. all existence is sorrow (hence pessimism),
2. sorrow is caused by the influences of the "outer world,"
3. one is delivered from sorrow only by annihilation of feeling (Nirvana) at death (more pessimism), and
4. one achieves Nirvana by "right" beliefs, feelings, speech, actions, means of livelihood, endeavor, memory, and meditation.

To the Buddhist, God is impersonal and man "saves" himself. The meaning of Nirvana is highly disputed. Pessimism and despair prevail. To some, God is non-existent or can be ignored. The real god of the people is their society or nation. To the Christian, God is compassionate, redeeming love who has a personal interest in man. Optimism, cheerfulness, hope, and expectation of eternal happiness are for the Christian.

Confucianism

Confucianism derives from its founder, Confucius, who lived during the 5th Century B.C. It is a humanistic, ethical system that contains no reference to a personal God. Numerous gods are worshipped. The Emperor stands as head of the whole earth and acknowledges only the superiority of Heaven, whose son he is. There is no God beyond the world and the world has no maker. Man is ultimately good but a class system is tolerated and woman is inferior to man. Confucius had

only few admirers during his life. The popularity of his ethics is attributed to successive national attempts to deify him.

The defects of Confucianism as a religion are apparent. In fact, many authorities object to calling Confucianism a religion at all. It is a humanistic man-centered ethical system which does not satisfy any of man's spiritual longings. It is silent on sin and redemption, no god is worshipped, the Emperor is earth's superior and idols of nature (sun, moon, etc.) are worshipped.

Judaism

Judaism is strictly monotheistic and is man's oldest presently existing religion dating to the covenant of circumcision which the eternal God of the universe made with Abraham (Gen. 17), the father of all the faithful (Rom. 4:11). Judaism denounces all forms of idolatry. Orthodox Jews still look for the coming of the Messiah who is the subject of much Old Testament prophecy. They reject the historical man Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah and therein lies the central distinction between Judaism and Christianity. They regard the man Jesus as a good Jew, a good philosopher and an influential teacher but they do not regard Him as Christ, God's anointed. Christians believe that the historical man Jesus was the object of Old Testament prophecies, and that He was indeed God revealing Himself to man.

Islam

The Islam or Moslem religion dates to the seventh century A.D. and to its founder Mohammed who died in 632. There are estimated to be 400 million adherents of the faith and the number is growing at a spectacular rate. Mohammed claimed to be and is still regarded by Moslems as the Prophet of God. Orthodox Moslems regard the Koran as absolute truth and the eternal utterances of Allah through Mohammed. The doctrine of Islam includes resurrection from the dead, predestination by Allah, good and evil, judgment, paradise and hell-fire. Religious rites of Islam include almsgiving, fasting, and the highly recommended pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca. Islam is an admixture of Judaism, Christianity, and pagan religions.

With the aid of fire and the sword the Islam religion spread at a phenomenal rate during its early years. New "converts" were not expected to agree to Islam doctrine or even understand it; they were only expected to submit and become a Moslem or "submitter." The Koran justifies bloodshed, persecution, slavery, and polygamy. Murder is justified against anyone who does not let a Moslem practice his religion. Mohammed and Christ: Islam and Christianity stand diametrically in contrast to each other in terms of ethical teaching and the propagation of the movements.

As stated in the beginning, no attempt was made here to compare the Bible with all of the world's religious literature. Greater in-depth studies are left to the reader. The writer, however, has found his limited experience with comparative world religions to confirm his faith in the superiority of Jesus Christ and the inspiration of the Scriptures.

In our next lesson we will study Prophecy and Its Fulfillment as evidence of the inspiration of Scripture.

LESSON SEVEN DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The representative religions, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Judaism and Islam could not be justifiably treated here. Appointed students should do in-depth studies on these religions and be prepared to answer questions about them as they arise in class. A special effort should be made to contrast Christianity with the major tenets of each of these world religions.
2. It is sometimes argued that Christianity is a "naturally evolved" religion and that other world religions are but remnants of the evolution of Christianity. How would you answer these accusations? Is Christianity an "evolved" religion or is it an historically based "revealed" religion? Explain.
3. Secure and read a copy of the sayings of Confucius. Note that these proverbs contain many helpful thoughts. Is there any recognition of man's sin and need for God in these sayings? Is there any recognizable plot of redemption in these sayings? Do you now understand why many refuse to call Confucianism a religion but regard it as a humanistic man-centered ethical system without any reference to a personal God?
4. Secure and read a copy of the Koran. Do you understand why it is claimed that Islam is an admixture of Judaism, Christianity and pagan religions? Refer to an encyclopedia for information regarding the propagation of Islam during the early years of the movement. Compare the spread of Islam during the seventh century with the spread of Christianity during the first century.

SOME EVIDENCES OF THE INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURES

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LESSON EIGHT

Prophecy and Its Fulfillment

The word "prophecy" is frequently used in the Bible to mean "to speak for or on behalf of God." However, it is also used to mean "to predict future events under the influence of divine guidance." Great among the evidences for the Bible being the Word of God are the voices of the prophets followed by the fulfillment of their prophecies even to the most minute detail.

In the writer's home there is a barometer which is a replica of the crude instrument used to determine changes in atmospheric pressure during the time of George Washington. By observing the fluctuating level of the liquid in the instrument, one can predict with a fair degree of accuracy, whether approaching weather will be fair or stormy. A prediction may also be made as a student estimates his probable performance on a certain instructor's examination. However, neither of these examples of "prediction of future events" is done under the influence of divine guidance but rather are short range conclusions drawn from background information. Biblical prophecy is more than a fortuitous guess or conjecture. Bernard Ramm has observed that, in many cases, Bible prophecy is very minute in its specifications. For example, he says:

"People are named before birth; kingdoms are outlined before their historical existence; battles are described before occurring, and personal destinies are delineated before the persons themselves are born."²¹

When studied rationally and without prejudice, Biblical prophecy and its fulfillment is staggering to human mentality. It is as convincing and faith confirming as the miracles of Christ recorded in the New Testament. Nevertheless, we do not regard prophecy and its fulfillment as proof per se of inspiration but rather we regard it as evidence in support of a position of faith in the

²¹Ramm, B., Protestant Christian Evidences, Moody Press, Chicago, 1953, p. 85.

inspiration of the Scriptures.

Other religions have their prophetic elements but these often take the form of conjectures or foresights of well-informed priests or soothsayers. Any predictor, ancient or modern-day, is likely to have a certain percentage of his guesses fulfilled. Prophecy of the character and magnitude of that found in the Bible is peculiar to the Bible. Prophecy abounds throughout the Bible; no category of Biblical literature is without some prophecy. Biblical prophecy generally is not vague or ambiguous as is evidenced by the fact that there are some 350 fulfilled prophecies that relate to the coming of Jesus Christ, His life, death, and resurrection.

It is often objected that the Bible records its own fulfillments and is naturally prejudiced. First, let us observe that it is not always true that the Bible records its own fulfillments. In some instances, we must go to secular history in search of fulfillment of Bible prophecy, but even then the results are just as convincing! Second, let us remember that the Bible is either God's Word or it is not. If it is, then we are obligated to accept His Word that Bible prophecies are fulfilled just as the Biblical writers claim. However, if we say that it is not God's Word then we are still forced to reckon with it as an historical document, and historically the Bible has not been shown to be untrustworthy on any other point. So why should one expect it to be untrustworthy in respect to the record of fulfilled prophecies? Third, let us remember that the Bible was written over a period of 1,600 years in three languages by forty different men from three continents representing a wide diversity of backgrounds. In many instances the prophet was completely unaware of the meaning of his prophecy (1 Pet. 1:10-12), and writers who recorded fulfillments were apparently unaware that they were doing this. Time and history are the great illuminators of fulfilled prophecies. This is no fault of Bible prophecy for it is as it should be.

The Character of Bible Prophecy

The character of Bible prophecy is unique inasmuch as we find that very strict requirements had to be met before an utterance was recognized as a message

from Jehovah. These requirements were essential to distinguish the true prophet of God from the sorcerer, enchanter, charmer, wizard, and the necromancer, all of whose practices were an abomination unto Jehovah (Deut. 18:11-12). No practitioner of these evil ways could, by his own devices, meet the strict requirements which Jehovah required of a true prophet. The following Scriptures are self-expressive of the strict character of Divine prophetic utterances.

(a) The prophet's word must be fulfilled:

"The prophet that prophesieth of peace, when the word of the prophet shall come to pass, then shall the prophet be known, that Jehovah hath truly sent him" (Jer. 28:9).

"When a prophet speaketh in the name of Jehovah, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which Jehovah hath not spoken: the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously, thou shalt not be afraid of him" (Deut. 18:22).

(b) The prophets of God challenged other "prophets":

"Let them bring them forth, and declare unto us what shall happen: declare ye the former things, what they are, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or show us things to come. Declare the things that are to come thereafter, that we may know that ye are gods: yea, do good, or do evil, that we may be dismayed, and behold it together. Behold, ye are of nothing, and your work is of naught; an abomination is he that chooseth you" (Isa. 41:22-24).

"So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto mount Carmel. And Elijah came near unto all the people, and said, How long go ye limping between the two sides? If Jehovah be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word" (1 Kings 18:20-21).

Prophecies Were Fulfilled in Great Detail

Old Testament prophecies often had a two-fold application. They spoke a vital message to the people of the day but they also carried a prophetic message which was to be illumed by time and history. The detail of Joel's prophecy concerning the earthly establishment of God's Kingdom and the outpouring of His Spirit rivals the detail which one finds in the notebook of a laboratory scientist. Details of this prophecy found in Joel 2:28-32 and references where one may find records of precise fulfillment are given below:

<u>Prophetic Detail</u>	<u>Fulfillment</u>
a. Both Jews and Gentiles would receive God's Spirit.	Acts 2:5,39; Acts 10
b. Both men and women would prophecy.	Acts 2:17-18; 21:8-9
c. Servants or slaves would not be excluded	Philemon 8-20.

- d. Dreams, visions and prophecies would accompany the outpouring of God's Spirit. Acts 2:17; 10:3,10-23
- e. Wonders would appear in the heavens and on earth. Luke 21:11,25,26; Acts 2:19
- f. The sun would be darkened Luke 23:45
- g. The outpouring of God's Spirit would precede catastrophic events which would come upon the Jewish community. Josephus Antiquities

<u>Date of Prophecy*</u>	<u>Reference</u>	<u>Event</u>	<u>Record of Fulfillment</u>	<u>Date Fulfilled</u>
Before 4000 B.C. (recorded about 1700).	Gen. 3:15	A Savior would triumph over evil.	Matt.1:21,23; 1-33 A.D. Matt.28	
Before 2000 B.C. (recorded about 1700).	Gen.12:2,3	Abraham would be the father of the faithful.	Gal.3:8-9	58 A.D.
1055 - 1000 B.C.	Psa.16:10	The Savior would be resurrected.	Matt.28:6	33 A.D.
1055 - 1000 B.C.	Psa. 22:16	The Savior's hands and feet would be pierced.	Matt.27:35; Jno.20:27; Rev.1:7	33 A.D.
1055 - 1000 B.C.	Psa.22:18	Lots would be cast for the Savior's garments.	Jno.19:23,24; Matt.27:35	33 A.D.
1055 - 1000 B.C.	Psa.34:20	Not one of the Savior's bones would be broken.	Jno.19:32-36	33 A.D.
1055 - 1000 B.C.	Psa.41:9	The Savior, betrayed by His friend.	Matt.26:47-50	33 A.D.
1055 - 1000 B.C.	Psa.69:21	The Savior would be offered gall and vinegar.	Matt.27:34	33 A.D.
810 - 700 B.C.	Isa. 2:3	Christ's Kingdom would spread from Jerusalem.	Lk.24:47-49; Acts 2	33 A.D.
810 - 700 B.C.	Isa.7:14	The Savior, born of a virgin.	Matt.1:18	1 A.D.
810 - 700 B.C.	Isa.7:14	The Savior's name, Emmanuel.	Matt.1:23	1 A.D.
810 - 700 B.C.	Isa.9:6-7	The Savior, a descendant of David.	Matt.1:1	1 A.D.
810 - 700 B.C.	Isa.53:7	The Savior would not answer His accusers.	Mk.15:3-5	33 A.D.
810 - 700 B.C.	Isa.53:9	The Savior's grave would be with the wicked and the rich.	Matt.27:38, 57-59	33 A.D.
810 - 660 B.C.(?)	Joel 2:28	All flesh(Jews & Gentiles) would receive the outpouring of God's Spirit.	Acts 2:5,39; Acts 10	33 A.D.
758 - 700 B.C.	Micah 5:2	The Savior would be born in Bethlehem.	Matt.2:3-6; 2:8	1 A.D.
430 - 390 B.C.	Mal.3:1; 4:5	Elijah, a messenger to prepare the way of the Savior.	Lk.1:17; Jno.1:22,23; Matt.11:14-15	1-33 A.D.

33 A.D.	Matt.24:1-2	Jerusalem temple would be destroyed.	Josephus Antiquities	70 A.D.
33 A.D.	Matt.23; Lk.19:41-44	Jerusalem to be destroyed	Josephus Antiquities	70 A.D.

*All dates approximate.

In summary let us again point out that prophecy of the detail, character and magnitude of that found in the Bible is peculiar to God's Word and is not to be compared with idle predictions, foresights, soothsayings, and hocus-pocus that generally characterize extra-biblical prophecy. One clearly delineated Bible prophecy and its fulfillment should be sufficient evidence that the writer was motivated by divine and not human impulses alone. However, instead of having one such testimony we have scores and even hundreds! The Bible is the inspired Word of God!

Next we will examine some miscellaneous internal evidences of inspiration.

LESSON EIGHT DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Read 1 Peter 1:10-12. Does it appear to you from this text that the prophets fully understood the meaning of their own prophecies concerning salvation that was to come in Jesus Christ? Comment on the statement, "Old Testament prophets could not even see the target yet they hit the bull's-eye in prophecy."
2. Explain and illustrate the statement, "time and history are the great illuminators of Bible prophecy."
3. Read Deuteronomy 18: 10-12. Now consult a Bible dictionary for definitions of the following who were abominations unto God: augur, sorcerer, charmer, medium, wizard and necromancer.
4. There are several modern "prophets" who claim to be able to predict future events. Contrast the character of the utterances of these people with the character of Bible prophecies.
5. The vast majority of some 350 fulfilled prophecies that relate to the coming of Jesus Christ, His life, death and resurrection were fulfilled during the last week of his earthly ministry. Comment on the likelihood that these fulfillments were nothing more than natural fortuitous occurrences. Comment on the likelihood that the gospel writers fabricated these fulfillments in order to perpetrate a fraud.

SOME EVIDENCES OF THE INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURES

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LESSON NINE

Miscellaneous Internal Evidences

J. W. McGarvey on Internal Evidences

In the spring of 1893 Brother J. W. McGarvey delivered a lecture²² on the inspiration of the Scriptures which has served as a source of material for our brethren on the subject for many years. It is certainly appropriate to summarize his major points on evidences of inspiration at this time.

The writers of the Bible set forth records of their own sins and follies with the same unexampled impartiality that they write of the worst deeds of their enemies. Hence, we read of David's sins of immorality, the proposal of James and John to call down fire from heaven to consume a Samaritan village, the dispute among the apostles as to who should be the greatest and Peter's cowardly denial of Jesus. All of these events and many others such as the crucifixion and the resurrection are described by a superhuman imperturbable calmness.

Biblical narratives are set forth with unexampled brevity. According to McGarvey, the entire biography of Jesus Christ recorded in the four Gospels occupies only about thirty-six pages of a New Testament. The baptism of God's Son is given in twelve lines, Saul's persecution and scattering of the Jerusalem Church is dealt with in four short lines and the martyrdom of the Apostle James is given only eleven words in English Translation and seven words in Greek. In addition one finds omissions of remarkable events striking and contrary to human nature. What but a superhuman impulse would cause the omission of ninety per cent of the life period of God's Son on earth. Nearly all of the labors of ten of the twelve apostles are omitted and we have not a word of Paul's trial before Nero. John, who witnessed both the transfiguration and Gethsemane, says not a

²² McGarvey, J. W., Sermons, The Standard Publishing Company, Cincinnati, Ohio.

single word of either and Matthew, Mark and Luke are silent on the resurrection of Lazarus! How could natural man by natural impulses restrain himself from writing about an eye witnessed account of the bodily resurrection of a personal friend?

The Biblical concept of angelology is unnatural in that invisible beings of uninspired literature are grotesque, capricious, impure or malicious whereas angels of the entire Bible are holy, mighty, humble, compassionate, self-poised, and in every way worthy to be the messengers of Jehovah. The writers of both testaments when writing on difficult themes such as angelology, disembodied spirits and the nature of God speak with an air of confidence and infallibility.

Finally, McGarvey cites the power of the New Testament to convince men of their own divine origin and move them to holy living. All of us who believe are living examples of the fact of this affirmation.

Bernard Ramm on Internal Evidences

Bernard Ramm²³ also sees certain internal characteristics of the Bible as evidence of its being a phenomenal book. He speaks of the Bible's unparalleled treatment of certain themes such as the Creation, God and the Decalogue; the scope of the Bible's contents; the historical background of the Bible; its realism; its emphasis on the holy true and good; its men; its doctrines; and the Bible's lack of prudishness, aceticism, fanaticism and extreme mysticism. To all of these observations we would voice a hearty "Amen."

Additional Miscellaneous Internal Evidences

Yet, there seems to be much more that could be said of the internal evidences that the Bible is indeed a phenomenal book possessing unnatural if not superhuman qualities.

God's Name(s)

Bible names are descriptive and connote something of the nature, being or character of the one named. Hence, Bible names are often changed to indicate new roles to be lived by Bible characters. Abraham, Sarah, Israel and Peter

²³Ramm, B., Protestant Christian Evidences, Moody Press, Chicago, 1953, pp 242-248.

are all new names with descriptive meanings. Since we hold that the Bible is a revelation from God it follows that man did not name God but rather God named Himself and in His names He reveals to mankind something of His nature, character and being. It is here proposed that the names of God as found in the Old Testament transcend human mentality and because of their superhuman unnatural character they testify to the unique divine inspiration of Scripture. Among the names of God are the following²⁴: El, Elohim, The Powerful One; Adonai, Ruler; El-Shaddai, The Omnipotent One (Able to Help); Yhwh (Yahweh or Jehovah), I Will Be That I Will Be, The Ever-Faithful One; and Father, He Who Loves Us. These names of God point to His very essence, His essential character, being, attributes and nature. Virtually all that we can know about God is revealed to us in His names.

Of the above names, the one that is most penetrating and staggering to human mentality is Yhwh (Jehovah), the true meaning of which is found in Exodus 3: 13-15: "I WILL BE THAT I WILL BE." God is He who exists in the eternal present tense; He is unchangeable in Grace; He is the Ever-Faithful and Eternally Existing One of the Universe. Jesus incurred the wrath of the Jews when he identified Himself with God saying, "Before Abraham was born, I AM" (John 8: 58).

The Precision with Which Biblical Writers Wrote

The precision with which the Biblical writers wrote should never cease to amaze us. Indeed this feature alone can only be accounted for by assuming a divine superintendency of the writing of Scripture. This is magnified by understanding the difficult circumstances under which men such as the Apostle Paul wrote. Having on his mind the care of the churches, himself in poor health and using inefficient writing techniques, imagine our beloved apostle pacing back and forth in a first-century prison as the following words transcending human intellect fall slowly from his lips and are recorded by his scribe:

²⁴ Bavinck, H., The Doctrine of God, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1951, p. 98.

"Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross. Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the Glory of God the Father."

Philippians 2: 5-10

The Apostle Paul did not have the opportunity to write, proofread, then rewrite; submit the manuscript to a typesetter and then proofread again before finishing his work. Yet he deals with difficult topics and integrates the whole purpose and plan of God's eternal scheme of salvation in such a way that it transcends human mentality.

In our next lesson we will study Bible Difficulties, Part I.

LESSON NINE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Evidences of Biblical inspiration are generally divided into two broad categories. These are internal and external evidences. Internal evidences come from within the Bible whereas external evidences are extrabiblical in nature. Which type of evidence appeals to you most? Explain why you feel as you do.
2. We have emphasized throughout our study that evidences of inspiration are merely indicators that the Bible is divinely inspired. In other words, evidences are not proof per se of inspiration. Do you agree with this position now that several evidences of inspiration have been studied? Is "proof of inspiration" an objective reality, a subjective opinion, or is it possibly a position of faith with an objective basis? Explain.
3. Explain how the names of God as revealed in the Bible indicate that the Bible has a divine origin.
4. A famous writer has been quoted as saying, "I know the Bible is inspired because it speaks to the depth of my soul better than any other book can." Does this statement express your sentiments also? Explain.
5. In several places (Rom. 5:10; 2 Cor. 5,18,19,20 and Col. 1:21) the Apostle Paul speaks of man being reconciled to God but he never speaks of God being reconciled to man. Comment on the significance of the precision with which Paul speaks of man's reconciliation. Point out other examples where Biblical writers are seemingly very precise in their choice of words.

PART THREE

BIBLE DIFFICULTIES

BIBLE DIFFICULTIES I

Don England

College Church of Christ, Searcy, Arkansas

LESSON TEN

Introduction

Probably no other factor has caused so many to question the unique inspiration of the Scriptures as have the difficulties which they have encountered in their study of the Bible. Most, if not all, of these difficulties, however, are traceable to the defective knowledge and approach of the Bible student and not to the message intended to be conveyed by the Holy Spirit through the Biblical writers. We shall not attempt here to give answers for a catalog of Bible difficulties or alleged Bible contradictions. The reader is referred to other works for this sort of information.^{1,2} However, we would like to give the reader a knowledge of the more common origins of Bible difficulties and a few general rules which will minimize the number of difficulties to be encountered and their consequences. It is very unlikely that a completely satisfactory explanation or rationale will be found for every Bible difficulty. To expect to do so is just another indication of the "walking-by-sight-and-not-by-faith-syndrome" that partly characterizes so many of us. As will be emphasized in the next lesson in this series, faith plays a critical role in our "solution" to many difficulties; especially those which arise in the Old Testament.

Is the Bible difficult to understand? Those who say that it is not quote such passages as Psalm 119:105--"Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path." God's Word indeed lights our way in a world darkened by sin, but this certainly does not categorically mean that it is easy to understand. Peter said of the epistles of Paul, "...wherein are some things hard to be understood, which the ignorant and unsteadfast wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures,

¹ Haley, J. W., Alleged Discrepancies of the Bible, B.C. Goodpasture, Nashville, Tennessee, 1951.

² Torrey, R.A., Difficulties in the Bible, Moody Press, Chicago.

unto their own destruction" (2 Peter 3:16). Concerning Christ, God's high priest after the order of Melchizedek, the author of Hebrews said, "of whom we have many things to say, and hard of interpretation, seeing ye are become dull of hearing" (Hebrews 5:11). Peter informs us that the prophets found it difficult to understand their own prophecies: "Concerning which salvation the prophets sought and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you.... which things angels desire to look into" (1 Peter 1:10-12). Most of us will likewise admit that Revelation, a prophetic book, is not easy to understand whereas the epistles of Paul are understood only after the expenditure of effort and mental industry. However, Christ's teachings in the Gospels and God's plan of salvation as outlined in the Acts of the Apostles can easily be understood even by the uneducated. Some passages are so clear and lucid that one needs assistance in order to misunderstand them!

Origins of Bible Difficulties

(a) Difficulties Due to One's Concept of the Fact and Extent of Inspiration

Some casually approach a study of the Bible as if God is expected to miraculously reveal to them a knowledge of His Word from the printed page. However, the Bible claims that God has once and for all miraculously operated in the revelation of His Word (Jude 3). Revelation, as an activity of God, is not a continuing process. Indeed, we may receive a knowledge of His revelation into our minds but this often requires intensive study of the Bible on our part.

One's concept of the extent of inspiration will in part determine the magnitude of his difficulty in Bible study. One who assumes that the Bible is partially inspired faces the greatest of all difficulties, namely which part is inspired and which is not inspired. To this writer, it is an unreasonable presupposition to suppose that the Biblical text is accurate in doctrinal matters but possibly inaccurate in historical matters. As suggested in Lesson One and Two we feel that it is best not to take a view of the process of inspiration inasmuch as the Biblical writers did not reveal such to us; however, we have

affirmed through faith the absolute inerrancy of the original autographs with respect to the message intended by the Holy Spirit through the Biblical writers. This reduces all Bible difficulties to problems associated with the translation, preservation and transmission of the Biblical documents and to the limitations of the Bible student.

(b) Difficulties Encountered Due to Translation

No attempt will be made here to treat in a few short sentences the vast topic of the translation of the Bible. We do wish, however, to assure the reader that the Bible is by far the most nearly accurately translated ancient document available in the English language. No other book, ancient or modern, has been subjected to as severe scrutiny and textual criticism by as many of the world's best scholars as has the Bible. Sir Frederick Kenyon, the eminent scholar of ancient manuscripts said:

"The interval then between the dates of original composition and the earliest extant evidence becomes so small as to be in fact negligible, and the last foundation for any doubt that the Scriptures have come down to us substantially as they were written has now been removed. Both the authenticity and the general integrity of the books of the New Testament may be regarded as finally established."³

Also, worthy of our attention is the following statement of Dr. Hort, an eminent Greek scholar and textual critic:

"The books of the New Testament as preserved in extant documents assuredly speak to us in every important respect in language identical with that in which they spoke to those for whom they were originally written."⁴

One needs only to compare the readings of standard versions of the Bible to see that textual variations exist. These variations are further traceable to variations in ancient versions and manuscripts. However, the vast majority of these variations in the New Testament are either trivial in nature or are otherwise of little consequence. A major variation of little consequence is the last twelve verses of Mark 16 which appear in the King James Version and others but which are omitted from the Revised Version except for a footnote notation. As

³ Kenyon, F., The Bible and Archeology, Harper Bros., New York, 1940, p. 228.

⁴ Westcott and Hort, Introduction to the Greek New Testament, p. 284; taken from McGarvey, J.W., Evidences of Christianity, Gospel Advocate Co., Nashville, Tennessee, 1956, p. 17.

pointed out by McGarvey,⁵ the problem is not one of authenticity of the passage but rather a question of its genuineness as a part of Mark's original manuscript. With the aid of a reliable concordance such as Young's or Cruden's any student of the Bible can easily verify that the content of Mark 16:9-20 is expressly taught elsewhere in the Gospels. It is consequently of little significance as to whether the passage in question is authentically a part of Mark's Gospel. Similar argumentation may be made for most, if not all, other major textual variations in the New Testament.

(c) Difficulties Due to the Language in Which the Bible Was Written

The Bible was originally written in the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek languages.⁶ No two languages are entirely equal in their scope and flexibility. Consequently the Holy Spirit was able to communicate through the inspired writers as allowed by the scope and flexibility of the original language. Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek vocabulary was limited just as the English vocabulary is limited. However, we may rest assured that maximum utility was made of these languages by the inspired writers inasmuch as they were directed by the Holy Spirit of the all-wise, omniscient, and eternally existing Jehovah who is God of the universe. In short, we are saying that one cannot improve upon the Biblical message by speculations and theories; one is safe only in speaking as the oracles of God have spoken. However, the oracles of God speak to us today through the media of translations and not the original languages unless, of course, we are proficient in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. We have no choice but to conceptualize how a particular passage would have been stated in our own language, but this brings us only to an approximation of the original message. Nevertheless, our translations are reliable and there is really very little that we can do to improve our situation except to compare translations. Here it is gratifying to find that the several translations speak in unison with respect to God's plan of salvation for man.

⁵McGarvey, J.W., The New Testament Commentary, Vol. I, Matthew and Mark, Gospel Light Publishing Co., Delight, Arkansas, pp. 377-382.

⁶Lightfoot, N.R., How We Got the Bible, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Mich., 1963, p. 23.

(d) Difficulties Due to the Language into Which the Bible Is Translated

The King James Bible of 1611 was a translation into the language of English speaking people of that day. Consequently, that version presents many difficulties for the modern reader inasmuch as many words commonly used in the seventeenth century are no longer in the common English vocabulary. Such expressions as thee, thou, thy, to wit, wot not, wist, etc., are discouraging to a modern inexperienced Bible student. The American Standard Version, the Revised Version and the New English Bible help us overcome many of these difficulties though they may not be as aesthetically pleasing in places as the King James Version. For general, non-technical reading of the New Testament the Phillips translation and Good News for Modern Man are recommended. These difficulties are, of course, not traceable to the original documents.

(e) Difficulties Due to Attempts to Harmonize Science and the Bible

A disproportionate number of Bible difficulties arise from needless efforts to harmonize Scripture with every utterance of science. The reader is referred to previous comments on the Bible and "scientific foreknowledge" in Lesson Four of this series. It should be sufficient to reemphasize here that it is futile, if not vain, to attempt to harmonize every Scripture bearing on nature to ever changing hypotheses of science. Due caution should be exercised to make sure that one does not "read into" a Biblical statement scientific content not expressly intended to be there by the Holy Spirit through the Biblical writer. Indeed, we tend to read into the Bible more "scientific foreknowledge" than we tend to read out of it.

In our next lesson we will continue our study on Bible Difficulties.

LESSON TEN DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Make a list of specific difficulties which you have encountered in your study of the Bible and submit this list to your class teacher. Request that these difficulties be reviewed in class.
2. Suppose that a doctrine or concept is difficult to understand. Does this necessarily mean that the doctrine is untrue? Explain.

3. Suppose that a doctrine contains obvious self-contradictions. Does this necessarily mean that the doctrine is untrue? Would you find it difficult to accept any part of a doctrine containing obvious self-contradictions? Explain.
4. Suppose you have encountered a difficulty in your study of the Bible. Does this mean that the difficulty has no solution? Recommend a procedure for seeking solutions to Bible difficulties.
5. Comment on the role that prayer should play in the seeking of a solution to a Bible difficulty.
6. As pointed out in this lesson, a major New Testament textual variation is the last twelve verses of Mark 16 which appear in the King James Version but which are omitted from the Revised Standard Version except for a footnote notation. Use a Bible concordance and demonstrate that the content of Mark 16: 9-20 is expressly taught elsewhere in the Gospels.
7. The Revised Standard Version omits verse 37 of Acts Chapter Eight where the King James Version and other ancient authorities record that Philip said to the Ethiopian, "If you believe with all your heart, you may (be baptized), and he (the Ethiopian) replied, 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.'" Show, from other passages, that it is within the doctrine of New Testament Scripture to verbally confess that Jesus Christ is God's son. Does Scripture elsewhere teach that this verbal confession necessarily be a requisite to baptism?

BIBLE DIFFICULTIES II

Don England

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LESSON ELEVEN

Introduction

We would remind the student that in the present two-part series we are making no attempt to rationalize individual Bible difficulties. It is felt that the safest course is to acknowledge the existence of difficulties in the Bible rather than imagine that they are non-existent. General principles and a generous amount of faith in the trustworthiness of God and the Scriptures should be used in approaching a Bible difficulty. Just because a solution is not apparent to us does not mean that a solution is non-existent.

(f) Difficulties Due to Our Failure to Properly Interpret Scripture

The reader would do well to refer to a reliable text on Biblical hermeneutics.⁷ What one claims that the Bible teaches may be quite different from what it actually teaches. We cannot blame the Bible for the some 300 denominations of Christendom in the United States. The Bible is simply not that difficult to understand. The problem of Biblical interpretation often rests with the reader and not the intended message of the Holy Spirit through the Biblical writers. The following are minimal guides which must be followed if one is to properly interpret any Biblical text.

(1) The student must determine who is speaking in the text since the Bible contains many statements of uninspired people, demons, Satan, etc. For example, the point is sometimes made that the Lord does not hear the prayers of sinners and John 9:31 is quoted in support of this view: "We know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and does His will, him He heareth." To the bewilderment of many Bible students, we find that God has answered the prayers of sinners with Cornelius of Acts 10

⁷ A recommended text is Dungan, D.R., Hermeneutics, Gospel Light Publishing Co., Delight, Arkansas.

being a notable example. Now, does God hear the prayers of sinners or doesn't He? Certainly He does if the prayer is according to His will and Cornelius is a perfect example. But what of John 9:31? The answer is simple; John 9:31 was recorded by inspiration, but it was not spoken by inspiration. The statement did not originate with John or with Christ, but was made by the man for whom Jesus had restored eyesight. The statement of John 9:31 was the mere opinion of the healed man and it was in accord with the views of his Pharisee accusers. The Bible teaches that God does not hear the prayers of scoffers or those who do (live in) iniquity (Psalm 66:18; Isaiah 1:14, 15; Job 27:9), but He does hear the prayers of the obedient sincere worshipper who loves and adores Him (Psalm 34:15; Matthew 7:7,8).

(2) The student of the Bible must ascertain to whom and about what the Biblical statement is addressed. He should read the contextual setting of every passage of Scripture before ascertaining its meaning. When the disciples returned from their limited commission they rejoiced because demons were subject to their commands. Christ said to them, "I beheld Satan fallen as lightning from Heaven" (Luke 10:18). Many Bible references direct the student at this point to Isaiah 14:12, "How art thou fallen from Heaven O day-star"(Lucifer). More complications arise as the student confuses vague memories of Milton's Paradise Lost with these Scriptures. However, a careful contextual study of Isaiah 14 reveals unmistakably that Lucifer or "day-star" of that reference is none other than the fallen King of Babylon and there is no connection whatsoever with either Christ's statement of Luke 10 nor certainly with Milton's Paradise Lost. The student may be able to think of other confusing or difficult Scriptures which are clarified by a contextual study.

(3) The student of the Bible should not limit his study to a search for "proof texts." Such a study is frequently seated in prejudice and produces misleading results as one generally finds the "proof" he is looking

for whether or not God intended the passage to fit his situation. This type person's attitude can often be characterized by the statement, "Do not confuse me with the facts; my mind is made up."

(4) The student should not try to harmonize the Bible with creeds or doctrines written by men. The Bible is neither Calvinistic, Catholic nor denominational in its content, for it pre-dates all of these.

(5) One should use common sense judgment whenever judgment must be made; otherwise, simply let the Holy Spirit speak through the written Word. The Bible was not written in the theological language of Buber, Tillich, Bultmann, Barth, Kant, Hegel, nor any other theologian or philosopher. It was written in the common language of the day of its own composition.

(6) It should be remembered that the Bible is the inspired message of God. The student should give conviction to this faith and believe that he will overcome his difficulties. However, he should not expect to obtain a knowledge of God and His will without mental industry.

(7) One's life should be patterned after the message of the Bible; he should desire to do God's will and expect to understand the Bible with the expenditure of effort. Bible study should be approached with a positive attitude. It is a Biblical principle that children of darkness do not comprehend the light of God's Word.

(8) Bible study should be approached prayerfully. Most Bible difficulties will disappear if approached with this attitude. For those difficulties which do not disappear, prayer gives patience to enable one to wait for a solution.

(9) It should be remembered that the Bible is not only a book with a spiritual message, but also that it is one of the world's greatest pieces of literature. As literature, it contains poetry, prose, parallelisms, allegories, metaphors, hyperbolies, irony, personifications, proverbs, history, and prophecy. Before justice can be done to many passages of

Scripture one must ascertain, if possible, the character of literature represented.

(10) The Bible student should form the habit of permitting the clear and easy to understand passages of Scripture to illuminate the obscure passages. He should never expect an admittedly obscure passage to illuminate the otherwise clear passages.

(11) Finally, one should remember that the Bible is a book with primarily a spiritual message. It is important to first ascertain the spiritual significance of any passage or statement before looking for the secondary meaning of science, psychology, history, etc., and then one's approach should be with due caution.

(g) Difficulties Due to Our Lack of Knowledge of Bible Culture and Customs

We stand over four thousand years removed from some of the Bible's culture and customs. Many statements of the Old Testament were set within the contextual setting of customs and cultures which are strange and unusual to us today. For example, the exchange of a sandal confirmed a transaction in the days of Ruth (Ruth 4:7). Common people, and even King Saul, believed that the dead could be summoned though this is not a Biblical doctrine (1 Samuel 28). The eldest son received the major portion of an inheritance (Genesis 27), and Abraham had a mistress in addition to his wife Sarah (Genesis 16). In the New Testament many of the teachings of Christ relate to customs of His day concerning farming, marriage, funerals, fishing, taxation, trading, housing, home furnishings, food and drink, clothing and family life. The reader is referred to standard references on customs and the life and times of Jesus' day.^{8,9}

(h) Difficulties of a Moral Nature Arising Due to One's Tendency to "Play God"

The skeptic seems compelled to question the justice and righteousness of God when he encounters a moral Bible difficulty for which he has no ready

⁸Gift, J.L., Life and Customs in Jesus Time, Standard Publishing Co., Cincinnati, Ohio, 1957.

⁹Wight, F.H., Manners and Customs of Bible Lands, Moody Press, Chicago, Ill., 1953

explanation. Often, in lack of faith, the entire Bible if not the very existence of God is called into question. This attitude is quite prevalent but it is utterly presumptuous. God's thoughts are not our thoughts and neither are our ways His ways (Isaiah 55:8). It is a violation of logic to suppose that we who are His creatures can justifiably question the righteousness of His actions.

In Deuteronomy 20:16,17 we read of God's command for the Israelites to utterly destroy everything that breathes among the Hittites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites. The thought of God commanding women and children as well as the elderly to be put to death is disturbing. Disturbing at least until we consider the situation more broadly.

(1) First, who are we to set in judgment of God? Does our faith not grant us conviction that God had a just reason for His actions? A reason for His actions could exist and yet we could be entirely unaware of the reason.

(2) Secondly, our ways are not God's ways. Were we able to view sin and its horrible consequences as God does then possibly we would understand His actions. Sin must be much more horrible than we can imagine for because of sin God gave Christ to die for us. Our human nature and frailties stand between us and our perception of the enormity of sin.

(3) Thirdly, God places a different value on life from most people. Human nature regards life in the present tense as the most precious of all possessions, but God and the spiritually minded recognize that a life lived for the wrong purpose is worse than a life not lived at all. Jesus taught that a man has gained nothing even if he gains the whole world but loses his soul in the process (Matthew 16:26). The peoples of Canaan apparently had no worthy goals for which to continue living.

(4) Fourthly, Deuteronomy 20:18 itself contains the solution to this moral difficulty. The peoples of Canaan were to be utterly destroyed because of their abominable practices which they did in service to their gods. They were a totally and utterly depraved people who contaminated all that they contacted. We learn in Romans chapter one that even God eventually gives

up on any expectation that the totally depraved will turn from their wicked practices. It was not only for the good of the Israelites but for the entire human race that the peoples of Canaan be utterly destroyed. It was the wisdom of God to clean the slate, so to speak, and to start all over again. Previously, God had made a similar just and righteous decision when he destroyed all of a depraved humanity, excepting eight souls, with a great flood (Genesis 6). Later He was to make a similar decision regarding the peoples of Amalek (1 Samuel 15).

LESSON ELEVEN DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Cite specific examples where Biblical literature utilizes the following styles: poetry, prose, parallelisms, allegories, metaphors, hyperbolies, irony, personifications, proverbs, history and prophecy.
2. Elaborate on the importance of the student having a positive attitude in his search for solutions to Bible difficulties. Comment on the possible consequences of a negative or defeatist attitude in one's search for solutions to Bible difficulties.
3. Elaborate on the fact that the Bible was written in the common language of the day of its own composition as opposed to the language of modern theologians and philosophers.
4. We took the position in Lesson Four that the Bible is not unscientific but that it is in fact non-scientific. Show how the belief that the Bible is non-scientific leads to the solution of many Bible difficulties.
5. Cite specific examples where the Bible contains statements or opinions of uninspired people. Does the Bible contain any untruths or false doctrines which were spoken by uninspired people yet were recorded by inspiration?

PART FOUR

CANONIZATION AND PRESERVATION OF SCRIPTURE

CANONIZATION AND PRESERVATION OF SCRIPTURE

Don England

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LESSON TWELVE

Canonization of Scripture

Introduction

The Protestant Bible is composed of two major divisions, the Old Testament containing 39 subdivisions and the New Testament containing 27 subdivisions. The Catholic Bible contains several additional books or subdivisions that are regarded by Protestants as uninspired or apocryphal (in doubt). The alert student of the Bible will demand to know by what authority or process some documents were accepted as inspired while others were rejected as uninspired.

As recorded in John 14:17 and 26 Jesus, anticipating His death and departure, assured His disciples that God's Holy Spirit would enter into them, cause them to recollect His teachings, and teach them all things. Some therefore claim that the selection of certain writings as inspired, and the rejection of others, was effected through the operation of the Holy Spirit. Though one may disagree with this position of faith, historical research can neither disprove nor confirm it. Whether or not one assumes the intervention of the Holy Spirit, the original documents did not become authoritative because they obtained canonical status, but they obtained canonical status because they showed evidence of being authoritative and of divine origin.

Use of Terms

Canonization is the historical process whereby a document comes to be generally recognized as divinely inspired. The word "canon" is a transliteration of the Greek word kanon¹ meaning "cane" or a straight rod or beam of balance, and carries a secondary meaning of a tool for measuring or a tool for keeping

¹Johnson, D., The Christian and His Bible, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1953, p. 61.

anything straight.² According to the eminent Biblical scholar and textual critic, Westcott, the word kanon is used only twice in the New Testament; one in Galatians 6:16 ("rule of faith") and the other in 2 Corinthians 10:13-16³. Athanasius (A.D. 296-373) first used the phrase "canon of Scripture" in reference to a list of books reckoned as Holy Scripture⁴ and this is the modern sense of the word. The concept of "canon" in the modern sense antedated the use of the word for it is clear that prior to Athanasius certain documents were regarded as inspired whereas others were deemed uninspired.

The Old Testament Canon

The historical Christian and Scriptural position is that the Old Testament documents were written by special divine inspiration. It is conceivable then that their authority was immediately recognized and the Old Testament canon gradually developed as the books were written.⁵ We see in Jeremiah 36 that the authority of the words of the prophet were recognized upon their first public reading. By the time of Christ, the Old Testament Scriptures had been grouped into three categories: the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms (Luke 24:44). It is noteworthy that Jesus frequently quoted from, or referred to, the books of Moses (Matthew 19:7,8; Mark 10:3; 12:19; Luke 16:29; 20:28; John 1:17), the books of the Prophets (Matthew 5:17; 7:12; 22:40; Luke 1:70), and Psalms (Luke 20:42; 24:44), but he never referred to or quoted from those books regarded by Protestants as apocryphal (e.g., Baruch, Maccabees).

Josephus, a first century Jewish historian, said, "only twenty-two books... are justly believed to be divine."⁶ In the writings of Eusebius⁷ is preserved

²Westcott, B.F., A General Survey of the History of the Canon of the New Testament, 7th ed., The Macmillan Co., New York, 1896, p. 512.

³Ibid., p. 513.

⁴Foster, L., "The Earliest Collection of Paul's Epistles," Bulletin of the Evangelical Theological Society, Vol. 10, No. 1, Winter 1967, p. 44.

⁵Harris, R.L., "Factors Promoting the Formation of the Old Testament Canon," Bulletin of the Evangelical Theological Society, Vol. 10, No. 1, Winter, 1967, p. 21.

⁶Bruce, F.F., The Books and the Parchments, Fleming H. Revell Co., Westwood, N.J. 1953, p. 98.

⁷Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, Book IV, Chapter XXVI.

the Old Testament canon of Melito, bishop of Sardis (ca. A.D. 170), which is our earliest extant Old Testament canon.⁸ Assuming that Melito combined Nehemiah and Ezra, Lamentations and Jeremiah and assuming that the "twelve prophets" he groups together are the twelve minor prophets of our modern canon, then his listing corresponds perfectly with that of the Protestant Bible except his omission of Esther.⁹ Origen (A.D. 185-254) specifically combined Ezra and Nehemiah into one and Jeremiah and Lamentations into one. Otherwise his listing corresponds perfectly with that of Melito. Origen regarded the books of Maccabees as "outside" his listing.¹⁰ The Catholic Church fixed the limits of its Old Testament at the Council of Trent in 1546 and included the following books not accepted by Protestants: Tobit, Judith, Additions to Esther, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, 1 and 2 Maccabees and Additions to Daniel.¹¹ However, there is evidence that the Hebrew canon was fixed by about the second century B.C.¹² It appears, then, that with the possible exception of the book of Esther, the Hebrew canon has been fixed for well over two thousand years. Inasmuch as this period antedates the appearance of Christ, we may rest with assurance that the Hebrew canon of the Protestant Bible is accurate. The Protestant Old Testament canon antedates the Catholic canon by approximately 1700 years.

The New Testament Canon

The New Testament canon apparently was being developed during the first century as the documents were written. Luke, having "perfect understanding" of the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, addressed his gospel to a friend, Theophilus, that he might know the certainty of those things wherein he had been instructed (Luke 1:3,4; Acts 1:1). John affirmed that his testimony of the biography of Christ was true (John 21:24) and that he recorded the life and

⁸Bruce, op.cit., P. 99.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 100.

¹¹Schroeder, H.J., Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent, B. Herder Book Co., St. Louis, 1960, p. 18.

¹²Zink, J., "The Canon of the Bible," 1962 Harding College Bible Lectures, Firm Foundation Publishing House, Austin, Texas, 1962, p.60.

teachings of Christ that others might believe (John 20:31). Many of the actions of Jesus were not recorded (John 20:30). Paul's adversaries regarded his writings as "weighty and powerful" (2 Corinthians 10:10). The Apostle Peter categorically classed all of Paul's epistles with "other scripture" (2 Peter 3:16), and the Apostle John warned against any man adding to or taking away anything from "the book of this prophecy" (Revelation 22:19). It is not unreasonable to assume that by the end of the first century the church of Christ commonly accepted a listing of documents as authoritative and inspired and rejected others. The fact that we do not know of the existence of a listing at that time does not preclude the possibility of its existence.

Our earliest known canonical list of New Testament documents was drawn up by the heretic Marcion of Rome about A.D. 140.¹³ Little importance can be attached to his listing because of his aversion to all of the Old Testament and any portion of the Gospels or Epistles which related to Judaism or the concept of "law". His canon consisted only of his own edition of the Gospels and parts of the writings of the Apostle Paul.¹⁴ There appears to have been no question about the authority and inspiration of the Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, as early as the end of the second century.¹⁵ Thereafter the Gospels regularly appeared in canonical listings. Excepting Marcion's listing, the first serious attempt to define the books of the New Testament canon was the Muratorian Canon (ca. A.D. 175)¹⁶ which was published in Italy in 1740 by Cardinal L. A. Muratori and listed the four Gospels, Acts, Paul's nine letters to churches, Philemon, Titus, 1st and 2nd Timothy, Jude, two of John's letters, Revelation, Wisdom of Solomon and the Apocalypse of Peter.¹⁷ Matthew and Mark

¹³ Bruce, F.F., The New Testament Documents, Are They Reliable?, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1960, p. 22.

¹⁴ Bruce, F.F., The Books and the Parchments, op.cit., p. 107.

¹⁵ Tenney, M.C., "The Canon of the Gospels," Bulletin of the Evangelical Theological Society, Vol. 10, No. 1, Winter, 1967, p.37.

¹⁶ Johnson, D., op.cit., p. 64.

¹⁷ Bruce, F.F., The New Testament Documents, Are They Reliable?, op.cit., pp. 22, 23.

are inferred to be a part of this fragmented listing since Luke's is called the "third gospel." Origen (185-254), the early Biblical Greek scholar, listed the now recognized 27 books of the Protestant New Testament, but said that Hebrews, 2 Peter, 2nd and 3rd John, James, Jude, "Epistle of Barnabas", Shepherd of Hermas, the Didache, and the "Gospel according to Hebrews" were disputed by some.¹⁸ Eusebius, who died about 340 A.D., listed all those documents accepted by Protestants today except James, Jude, 2nd Peter, 2nd and 3rd John and Hebrews.¹⁹ Eusebius said that James and Jude were "approved by many" and that 2nd and 3rd John were in doubt due to questioned authorship. Athanasius (A.D. 367) listed the 27 books of the Protestant New Testament only. Later Jerome (A.D. 347-420) and Augustine did the same. From then on there was little doubt as to the canonical listing.²⁰

How then did the early church determine which books or documents were God-breathed? We can best answer the question by asking ourselves, "Why do we today accept the 27 books of the New Testament as inspired and reject others?" Certainly not just because the books claim inspiration, nor do we find it satisfactory to accept them because of tradition, or because "our fathers accepted them." The serious student who has considered the New Testament books in light of other books accepts them because of their supreme quality and message. This is also essentially how the early Christians selected certain books as inspired and rejected others. Those books that were rejected were more of a human quality than divine quality. Today, a discerning individual can read the writings of the Apostolic Fathers and other apocryphal writings and easily detect that they are not on a par with the list of books that has long been accepted as inspired or God-breathed. F. W. Mattox²¹ has suggested that gradually tests were applied to eliminate the uninspired books from general

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 25.

¹⁹ Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, Book III, Chapter XXV.

²⁰ Bruce, F.F., The New Testament Documents, Are They Reliable?, op.cit., p. 25.

²¹ Mattox, F.W., The Eternal Kingdom, Gospel Light Publishing Co., Delight, Arkansas, 1961, p. 105.

use in the churches. These tests were:

1. Does the book claim inspiration?
2. Was the book written by an Apostle?
3. If not, is its content in keeping with Apostolic teachings?
4. Was the book accepted by loyal churches and read in their worship services?
5. Does the book have the "ring of genuineness"?

LESSON TWELVE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Explain the meaning of the following words or expressions: kanon (Greek), canon of Scripture, and canonicity.
2. Did the original Biblical documents attain canonical status because they were authoritative or did they become authoritative because they attained canonical status? Explain why it is important to make this distinction.
3. Comment on the role that the Holy Spirit could have played in the development of the canon of Scripture. Is there any evidence from Scripture that the Holy Spirit was active in this respect?
4. Summarize the evidence from the New Testament which bears on the Old Testament canon.
5. The Book of Esther has been omitted in several canonical listings of the Old Testament. Read this book and judge for yourself as to its rightful place in the Old Testament. The word "God" or "Jehovah" does not occur in Esther. Does this fact alone call into question the canonicity of this book?
6. There are several books of the Bible for which authorship is uncertain. Does this fact alone call into question the canonicity of these books? Explain.
7. Explain the manner in which early Christians ascertained the difference between apocryphal writings and those writings which were God-breathed or inspired.

CANONIZATION AND PRESERVATION OF SCRIPTURE

Don England

College Church of Christ, Searcy, Arkansas

LESSON THIRTEEN

Apocryphal Writings and Preservation of Scripture

Introduction

In our final lesson of this series we are to examine the character and the text of those writings which most closely resemble canonical Scripture of the Protestant Bible. We have stressed in this series that no evidence should be regarded as a final proof per se of inspiration. However, we are convinced that if such a proof does exist it is to be found in a comparison of Protestant Canonical Scripture with the apocryphal writings. The Scriptures are the divine Word of God because they exemplify by their character and their quality that they are above the natural.

Apocryphal Writings

Apocryphal writings are those documents which were regarded as in doubt as to divine inspiration and consequently were not accepted as a part of the canonical listing of Scripture. Fifteen books comprise the Old Testament Apocrypha and the New Testament Apocrypha consists of varieties of literary types of the Gospels, Acts, Letters to Churches and Apocalypses. None of these apocryphal writings have been summarized in this lesson. However, we have rather chosen to summarize several of the writings of the Apostolic Fathers. These writings generally cause the Bible student more concern than the apocryphal writings because they are often erroneously described as the "lost books of the Bible." The term is completely false and misleading. Evidence for this is seen in the following discussions and from the student's own reading of the writings.

Writings of the Apostolic Fathers

Many of the Apostolic Fathers were elders or bishops in various congregations of the early church who were either contemporary with the Apostles or, as

in most cases, knew people who had known and been directly influenced by the Apostles. Their writings are liberally dated from 90 to 150 A.D. and were among the writings most frequently disputed in the development of the New Testament Canon. They are of great historical value. The writings are mainly commentaries on, quotations or paraphrases of the Gospels, Christ's teachings, or the Acts or the Epistles. Even to the novice reader they appear immediately to be of an inferior quality and occasionally statements appear which directly contradict the teachings of the Apostles. The following abstracts of the major uninspired writings were made from English translations and introductory comments by Dr. J. B. Lightfoot.²² The student is encouraged to read the complete text of the writings of the Apostolic Fathers.

(a) The Epistle of Clement of Rome

A letter from the church at Rome to the church at Corinth was supposedly written about A.D. 100 by an elder at the former church whose name was Clement. Clement made no claim to inspiration but made numerous quotations from and references to the Old and New Testament writings. He called the Corinthian church to repentance for the extreme jealousy that was within the congregation and rebuked them for their rebellion, persecution and sedition against the eldership. His language appears strong and authoritative. In one place (paragraph 25) Clement referred to the fable of the bird Phoenix which lived for 500 years, died, and underwent a type of resurrection. He then, in paragraph 26, based the rationality of the human resurrection on the actuality of the fable! His argument is clearly inferior to that of the Apostle Paul in I Corinthians 15 and is obviously uninspired.

(b) The Epistles of Ignatius

The seven epistles bearing the name of Ignatius were written during the early part of the second century as he was being escorted by ten Roman soldiers to Rome where he expected to be thrown to the wild beasts in the amphitheatre.

²²Lightfoot, J.B., The Apostolic Fathers, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Mich., 1965.

Four letters were sent from Smyrna to the Ephesians, Magnesians, Trallians and the Romans and three letters were sent from Alexandria Troas to the Philadelphians, the Smyrnaeans and to Polycarp. Ignatius claimed to have "many deep thoughts in God"²³ and an ability to "comprehend heavenly things."²⁴ Many times in his letters he expresses the desire for martyrdom to come quickly.

In the Protestant canonical New Testament writings a plurality of deacons and elders (bishops) is authorized in each autonomous congregation of the church. Ignatius is at odds with this organization having mentioned several times the plurality of deacons but a singularity of bishops²⁵, thus indicating that the apostasy as predicted by the Apostles (Acts 20:28-30, 2 Thessalonians 2:3-7) had already begun, and that Ignatius did not have the divine authority to recognize the departure. Hence, his writings could not be on a par with the apostle's writings. Ignatius was an idealist, seeing the church as he wanted it to be rather than as it should be.

(c) The Epistle of Polycarp

Irenaeus said that Polycarp (A.D. 70-156), an elder in the church at Smyrna, was a companion of the Apostles.²⁶ His epistle to the Philippians was written about A.D. 115 in reply to a letter he had received from them. The epistle is doctrinally sound and mainly concerns the Epistles of Ignatius and his martyrdom. He quotes frequently from the New Testament and expressed grief over the sin of Valens and his wife in the church at Philippi. His statement in paragraph 12, "For I am persuaded that ye are well trained in the sacred writings," implies his acknowledgement that the New Testament Canon was established and that it was not his intention to add to it.

It is inspirational to read of the martyrdom of Polycarp. The Letter of the

²³Lightfoot, op. cit., "Epistle to the Trallians," paragraph 4.

²⁴Lightfoot, op. cit., "Epistle to the Trallians," paragraph 5.

²⁵Lightfoot, op. cit., "Epistle to the Ephesians," paragraphs 2, 4, 5, 6; "Epistle to the Magnesians," paragraph 13; "Epistle to the Trallians," paragraph 3; and "Epistle to the Smyrnaeans," paragraph 8.

²⁶Mattox, op. cit., p. 64.

Smyrnaeans on the subject purports that a miracle attended his death by stabbing and burning²⁷ which came after his refusal to revile Christ. His words were, "Fourscore and six years have I been His servant and He hath done me no wrong. How then can I blaspheme my King who saved me?"²⁸

(d) The Didache or Teaching of the Apostles

The Didache (Did'-a-ke) is a type of church manual from an unidentified author of the early part of the second century and consists of two parts. Part one is a philosophical treatise on "two ways," the way of life and the way of death, between which the author says "there is a great difference."²⁹ The second part gives directions concerning church rites of baptism, prayer, fasting, communion, the eldership, and the second coming of Christ.

Here again there is evidence that the apostasy is well under way and the author had not authority to recognize it inasmuch as in paragraph 7 he gave instruction first to baptize by immersion in cold running water, secondly to use warm running water, or thirdly to pour water three times on the head. Baptism was to be administered only after the subject and the baptizer had fasted. Baptism by pouring and fasting as a part of the baptismal ritual are nowhere a part of the Apostolic teaching of the Protestant New Testament canon.

(e) The Epistle of Barnabas

This epistle was written between A.D. 70 and 132. It is not certain how the name of Barnabas came to be associated with it but most certainly he was not the "Son of Consolation" who is given Apostolic status in Acts 14:14. Inasmuch as many new converts to Christianity from Judaism held on to Jewish custom and tradition the Epistle of Barnabas was written to counteract this. In this respect it is similar to Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews, but contrary to these epistles it is written in a strangely ambiguous style. Of this document Mattox

²⁷ Lightfoot, op. cit., "The Letter of the Smyrnaeans on the Martyrdom of S. Polycarp," paragraphs 15, 16.

²⁸ Ibid., paragraph 9.

²⁹ Lightfoot, op. cit., "The Didache," paragraph 1.

said, "The argumentation is a mixture of Greek philosophy with Christian scripture."³⁰

(f) The Shepherd of Hermas

The epistle called The Shepherd of Hermas is of uncertain authorship and date.³¹ The writing is lengthy, allegorical and apocalyptic in nature, and deals with the problem of whether or not one can obtain forgiveness for sins committed after baptism into Christ. Origen (A.D. 185-254) included the writings in his New Testament canon regarding it as divinely inspired.³² The author of the Muratorian Canon (ca.A.D. 180) excluded the document but recommended it for private reading and edification.³³

In conclusion, the reader is again encouraged to read the apocryphal writings and compare their quality with the quality of the 27 books of the Protestant New Testament. The superiority of the Protestant canon to the apocrypha is apparent.

Preservation of God's Word

The preservation of Scripture is too vast a subject to be even summarized here. The reader is referred to studies in depth on the subject.³⁴⁻⁴¹ However,

³⁰Mattox, op. cit., p. 62.

³¹Lightfoot, op. cit., p. 161.

³²Bruce, F.F., The New Testament Documents, Are They Reliable?, op. cit., p. 25.

³³Lightfoot, op. cit., p. 161.

³⁴Bruce, F.F., The English Bible, A History of Translations, Oxford University Press, New York, 1961.

³⁵Kenyon, F., The Bible and Archeology, Harper Bros., New York, 1940.

³⁶Bruce, F.F., The Books and the Parchments, op. cit.

³⁷Ramsey, W., The Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1953.

³⁸Westcott, op. cit.

³⁹Smyth, J.P., How We Got Our Bible, Harper and Bros., Publishers, New York, 1912.

⁴⁰Lightfoot, N.R., How We Got the Bible, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1963.

⁴¹Des Barres, F.W.W., Story of the English Bible, Russell F. Moore Co., New York, 1950.

it is to the consternation of some that we do not have the Biblical documents in their original autographs. At least we have hand copies of the autographs or copies of copies of the autographs. There is no question that the preservation of the New Testament documents greatly exceeds the preservation of their near contemporary literature. We have, in whole or in part, about 4500 New Testament Greek Manuscripts, and about 2,475 Latin manuscripts.⁴² For what it is worth, the plays of Aeschylus are preserved in perhaps fifty manuscripts, none of which is complete. Sophocles is represented in one hundred manuscripts of which only seven are of appreciable value. Caesar's Gallic Wars of 58-50 B.C. are extant in only nine or ten good manuscripts. Greatest evidence as to the historical accuracy of the Gospels and the epistles lies not in their being the original handwriting of the Apostles, but in the attestations of the Apostolic Fathers. As we have already noted, these men wrote during A.D. 90-150 and some of them were most likely personal acquaintances of the Apostles. They were so familiar with the writings of the Apostles and the teachings of Jesus that modern textual critics have testified that the greater portion of the New Testament could be reconstructed from their quotations alone if we were suddenly deprived of the New Testament as we now have it.

Built into the laborious scheme of hand copying a manuscript is a safety feature for the preservation of the original message. True, errors are likely to be made, but is highly unlikely that a copyist will make the same error in two successive copies. The care that was exercised in making exact hand copies of manuscripts is indicated in the following statement found in a book of Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons, of the second century:

"Whosoever thou art who shalt transcribe this book, I charge thee with an oath by our Lord Jesus Christ, and by His glorious appearing, in which he cometh to judge the quick and dead, that thou carefully compare what thou hast transcribed, and correct it according to this copy whence thou hast transcribed it, and thou transcribe this oath in like manner, and place it in thy copy."⁴³

⁴² Lewis, J.P., "The Transmission of the Text of the Bible," 1962 Harding College Lectures, Firm Foundation Publishing House, Austin, Texas, 1962, p. 49.

⁴³ Smyth, op. cit., p. 6, footnote one.

Summary

In summary, it should suffice to quote again from Sir Frederic Kenyon, a scholar whose authority in making pronouncements on ancient manuscripts is second to none, who said:

"The interval then between the dates of original composition and the earliest extant evidence becomes so small as to be in fact negligible, and the last foundation for any doubt that the Scriptures have come down to us substantially as they were written has now been removed. Both the authenticity and the general integrity of the books of the New Testament may be regarded as finally established."⁴⁴

LESSON THIRTEEN DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is meant by the terms "apocrypha" and "apocryphal writings"?
2. Who were the Apostolic Fathers and when did they live and write? Explain why it is misleading to call the writings of the Apostolic Fathers the "lost books of the Bible."
3. Secure a copy of a Catholic text of the Bible and read those books regarded by Protestants as apocryphal. Make a list of the reasons why you feel these books either should or should not be a part of the Protestant canon. Lightfoot⁴⁰ lists the following seven reasons why these books are not to be listed with the canon of Scripture:
 - a. They were never included in the Hebrew Old Testament.
 - b. They were never accepted as canonical by Jesus and His Apostles.
 - c. They were not accepted by early Jewish and Christian writers.
 - d. They do not evidence intrinsic qualities of inspiration.
 - e. They have been shrouded with continual uncertainty.
 - f. They cannot be maintained on a compromise basis.
 - g. Objections to them cannot be overruled by dictatorial authority.
4. Assuming that you have read the apocryphal writings as recommended above, list some of the values of the Apocrypha.
5. Point out the manner in which hand copying of manuscripts tends to preserve the original message in spite of the fact that errors are likely to be made in the process of hand copying.
6. Contrast the preservation of the New Testament documents with their contemporary literature.

⁴⁴Kenyon, op. cit., p. 228.

