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The Demons Also Believe (Poor Devils!)

The Church today is rife with conflicting views about the nature of “faith.” Ask any two people what it *means* for a Christian to “*have faith*,” and you will get two entirely different answers. Occasionally one even hears reference to the *leap of faith*. More often than not, however, the response is simply an assertion that *faith does not depend on feelings*.

The discussion of “faith” is sometimes couched in philosophical terms.

That is where the phrase *leap of faith* originated—with philosophers. The publication of Darwin’s *Origin of Species* in 1859 and the resultant furor over the theory of evolution raised all sorts of questions about the veracity of the Scriptures’ Creation Account. That controversy by itself forced theologians to wrestle with the relationship between reason and “faith.”

The problem, as viewed by liberal theologians, was simple. Reason dictates

that Truth must agree with fact; that is, one cannot derive Truth from error. If there were errors in the Bible (which they said there were), then “faith”—belief—in the biblical account could not be based on reason. Based strictly on the liberals’ *assumption* of error in the Scriptures, their concerns were justified. Their conclusion was also logical: Reason could not be the basis for belief in the God of the Bible.

The errors that most concerned these “scholars” were the miracles reported in the Scriptures. Their argument in this regard was straightforward as well. Reason does not allow for the occurrence of miracles; so the miracles recorded in the Scriptures had to be in error. But did you catch just a glimpse of their circular reasoning in that position?

After half a century of scholarly debate over issues like these, liberal scholars decided reason and faith could not be reconciled. Consequently, philosophers joined in, trying to establish a philosophical basis for belief. They explained philosophically why one had to suspend reason and *leap* into faith, believing things that were completely irrational.

Once philosophers joined in, faith became whatever one deemed it should be. Under those conditions, the content of one’s beliefs became irrelevant. *What* one believed about God or Jesus Christ was relatively unimportant. The important thing was *that* one believed in God.

The Mystery of Scripture

Gnostic Beliefs and Early Church Teaching

This is the third in a series of articles on “The Mystery of Scripture.” The first two articles presented evidence that many in the time of Christ, including Christ Himself, believed a mystery lay concealed in the Hebrew Scriptures. (See “Jesus Talks About the Mystery,” *The Voice of Elijah*, January 1991, and “Apocalyptic Beliefs and the End of This Age,” *The Voice of Elijah*, April 1991.) This article continues that investigation by exploring the literature of the Christian Gnostics.

In the first two articles, the evidence was clear: Christianity originated with the Jewish people at a time when many of them believed the Hebrew Scriptures contained a secret message. More than that, however, they also believed God had deliberately hidden that message, concealing it in the images of those Scriptures. These same sources, however, contended that only a few would understand that message at the End of the Age. Those who did would be saved. That belief, we maintain, came from their accurate understanding of the Prophet Daniel:

“Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands {guard} over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people,

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Letters to the Editor

I'm pleased to be publishing this, our first anniversary issue. It has been exciting to see our family of readers grow from just a handful to hundreds in the past year.

One reader told me recently he was excited about what he has been learning from *The Voice of Elijah*. His previous opinion of the Old Testament as a "dry book" has been radically changed. He said, "Now I want to read the Old Testament more closely to see the things that are there about Jesus Christ." Responses like this convince me we are doing an important work. It is our purpose, by publishing this newsletter, to cause Believers to seek a complete understanding of God's Word and, through that, a closer walk in faith with the One Who died for us. We believe that only a walk that is based on complete understanding will suffice for us to "endure to the End."

We have chosen to emphasize in this issue the most crucial aspect of our spiritual walk with God: faith, or to use a more accurate term, *belief*. Nothing holds more eternal significance than what we believe. Doesn't it make sense then that we should do everything possible to make sure what we believe is true? Yet many are willing to accept traditional beliefs, including those related to the Return of Jesus Christ, without questioning because so many others do the same.

Imagine the skydiver preparing for a jump. He checks, rechecks, and checks the parachute again. His understanding of physics has convinced him that air friction against the large surface of his open chute will provide him a safe ride to the ground. But, even with that firm belief, he still checks, rechecks, and checks his parachute again. Why? Not because he doubts his understanding of physics, but because he wants to make sure that the appropriate law of physics has opportunity to operate. You see, physics also tells him that a free-falling object accelerates at the rate of thirty-two feet per second per second.

The skydiver's concern is sensible. His life depends on the correct operation of his parachute. Every skydiver knows a properly prepared parachute will open with just a pull on the rip cord. However, he also knows an improperly prepared one may not operate at all, allowing said skydiver to experience the unpleasant acceleration of a free-falling object. In the same way, our eternal life depends on the content of our faith. So we shouldn't be afraid to question what we believe. If what we believe is the Truth, our faith will just grow stronger with each answered question.

Two articles in this issue present what I view as compelling evidence for the need to examine the content of one's faith. I trust they will challenge you to increase your understanding of God's Word and with that, your own belief. You are the one, after all, who is responsible before God for what you believe.

A Letter of Some Significance

I would like to thank all of you who have written to "Letters to the Editor." While we are not able to respond to each letter in this column, your questions and comments do influence the content of this publication. Please continue to let us know what you consider important. I truly value your input as we reach out to others with our understanding of the message of the (Old Testament) Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Since the last issue we received the following letter, which I am sure many of you will find of interest:

I am very interested in the present situation within Israel of Orthodox Jews vs. Messianic (Christian) Jews. I am also interested in additional input that you or your peo-

ple in Israel can supply concerning the following recent reports:

(1) A Messianic Jew now witnessing in Israel ("Zvi") reports the initial plight of the immigrants as soon as they enter Israel: "As soon as they arrive they are contacted by ultra-orthodox elements, whose job it is to bring them into the fold of Judaism. They have free access to the emigres, but the emigres are told not to have any contact with those who believe in Christ. Even though the immigrants have been instructed to stay away from believers, they are very independent and want to make their own decisions in their new land, and they are open to discussion." (*Israel My Glory*, Apr/May 1991, p. 30)

(2) Article: "Immigrant families may have to contain at least one Jew":

"Likud MK Michael Kleiner said last week he plans to present a bill that would narrow the Law of Return to restrict the number of non-Jewish Soviet immigrants entering the country." (Par. 1)

"Under Kleiner's plan, a family could only immigrate if it includes one person born of a Jewish mother, **or who converted to Judaism.**" (Par. 2) (Emphasis mine)

"Kleiner, head of the Knesset's Immigration and Absorption Committee, said ... that such a change is necessary to prevent the immigration of 'people who have absolutely no tie to Jews or Judaism' ... " (Par. 3)

"Kleiner said he feels the need to introduce the law now ... because of **reports that churches are 'exploding' with Soviet immigrants.**" (Par. 4) (Emphasis mine)

"Under the [present] Law of Return, anyone with one Jewish grandparent has the right to immigrate to Israel along with his spouse and children, regardless of whether or not the Jewish grandparent immigrates as well." (Par. 5) (*Jerusalem Post Int. Ed.*, 7/20/91, p.3)

My questions then are (1) Is there now a growing Messianic (Christian) Jewish movement existing in the land of Israel now (Because of recent aliya)? (2) Is there also now a growing counter-movement that is striving to eliminate the inroads of a "Great Awakening"? This counter-movement seems centered among Orthodox powers.

According to *Moment* (Aug. 1991, p.47-48), "... Orthodox authorities in Israel have recruited a huge spiritual army that is reaching out to the new Soviet olim in an effort to introduce them to authentic Judaism." These Orthodox authorities control the Ministry of Absorption (Yitzchak Peretz), the Ministry of Interior (Aryeh Deri), and the Ministry of Education (Zevulun Hammer): three cabinet portfolios that deal directly with immigrants.

If you can verify the existence of these two movements, please respond. I know that you are interested in this situation also. Thank you very much.

Michael L., Fort Scott, KS

I commend this reader's thorough monitoring of the events unfolding in Israel today. Given the fervor of Orthodox Jews to preserve the purity of their faith and the vigilance of Zionists to assure the exclusive population of their land, I'm not surprised that they are taking great pains to regulate the flow of immigrants into Israel. I can also identify with any Jew who has insight into the identity of Jesus Christ as the Messiah. Naturally, they would be eager to tell others about the Truth.

The Voice of Elijah has no personal contacts in Israel to verify your report. I do not doubt the veracity of the sources you cite, however. Many Christians are closely monitoring current events in Israel, motivated by the belief that the Second Coming of Jesus Christ is connected with the birth of Israel as a nation in 1948.

Some believe the "fig tree" mentioned in Matthew 24:32-33 refers exclusively to this event. Therefore, they seek to interpret Jesus' words,

"This generation shall not pass away until all these things take place."

(*Matthew 24:34b*)

I recall one group convinced Jesus would return in 1988, based on a rigid interpretation of a generation as forty years. They were obviously mistaken, but their error does not diminish the importance of watching the restoration of historical Israel.

However, an understanding of the *parabolic images* of the Old Testament Prophets sheds new light on the subject of the restoration of Israel. (See *Not All Israel Is Israel*, and future volumes in *The Resurrection Theology Series*.) For the Believer who wants a faith that will endure the catastrophic events of these End Times, an understanding of the Truth is critical. The hallmark of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ is widespread unbelief as well as belief in a lie. (See "The Demons Also Believe (Poor Devils!)" in this issue.) *The Voice of Elijah* will continue to present evidence concerning the Truth to convince all who will listen. Meanwhile, keep the faith (whatever that means to you) because you will be judged in accordance with what you believe. ■

Michael L. Clary

Demons Also Believe

From page 1

The difficulty with which these men wrestled boils down to “proof” of the existence of God. Does the God of miracles exist, or does He not? Obviously, if that God exists, reason tells us the miracles reported in the Scriptures could have been the logical work of the metaphysical Being described there.

“Evidence is objective because it exists. Proof, however, is completely subjective. Proof exists only in the mind of the individual.”

The skepticism these theologians voiced, however, was against the view that reason could “prove” the existence of the God of the Bible. They rejected the postulate of God’s existence as a basis on which to construct rational arguments.

In response, the conservatives offered rational arguments—based on what they viewed as convincing evidence—to prove the existence of God. To counter liberal arguments, most conservative seminaries now offer courses in *apologetics*. The English term *apologetic* comes from the Greek word *apologia*, which means “defense.” Through *apologetics* the conservatives seek to defend the rational basis for faith.

Popular speakers in conservative circles speak in terms of “*defense of the faith*.” Under this rubric, they offer various arguments for the existence of God, trying to provide a logical basis for faith.

Cosmological and ontological arguments are just some of the specific grounds given as “proof” of the existence of God. The *ontological* argument draws on an analysis of the nature of being for “proof.” The *cosmological* argument does much the same thing, except it uses specific characteristics of the uni-

verse to “prove” that God exists.

Conservatives and liberals do not actually argue with one another. Neither side would be convinced by any of the arguments or evidence offered by the other side anyway. Consequently, each side tailors its message for its own audience.

The liberal view remains dominant in most public institutions of higher education and in many theological seminaries. There, professors still teach theories about the Scriptures developed by proponents of the theory of evolution in the latter half of last century.

For example, liberals do not believe Moses wrote the Pentateuch. They claim that an unknown editor put it together hundreds of years later by extracting and merging stories from four (or five) different sources. Students in liberal seminaries still master this theory as the basis for further theological discussion. It doesn’t seem to bother them that their own scholars have methodically discarded much of the evidence and disproven many of the arguments that were originally used to “prove” the theory. The theory has long since become fact, superseding the need for “proof.”

How Does One Believe?

Two difficulties face the participants in this controversy. The first of these is the fact that *proof is not objective*. Evidence is objective because it exists. Proof, however, is completely subjective. *Proof exists only in the mind of the individual*. The adage, “One person’s junk is another person’s treasure,” illustrates the point. That is exactly how it is with proof. One person’s “proof” is another person’s foolishness.

“For example, liberals do not believe Moses wrote the Pentateuch.”

Absolute proof is also largely the consensus of the majority. Therefore, it is elusive. It is difficult to achieve even with the best of tools, as any lawyer can

“Non-existence, on the other hand, cannot be apprehended by the senses. Something that does not exist in one place may well exist in another. Therefore, you cannot show that something does not exist simply by proving absence.”

tell you. In a court of law, lawyers present evidence followed by arguments based on that evidence. Arguments that convince a panel of jurors “prove” guilt or innocence. But good lawyers know they don’t win cases solely by *proving* their case with *objective evidence* and *rational arguments*. They win by *convincing subjective* jurors.

Jurors selected to hear legal arguments are presumed to be unbiased. But that is largely a fiction. Two juries hearing the same evidence may or may not reach the same verdict. That is why lawyers don’t seek just to “prove” their case with evidence. They do whatever is necessary to *convince the jurors*.

The best lawyers know that people who are unswayed by convincing arguments will often be influenced emotionally. That is where the subjective nature of “proof” enters the picture. It is also the reason you hear successful lawyers accused of *playing to the jury* instead of sticking to the objective facts of the case.

A valid definition of *proof* is “convincing arguments based on evidence.” So when I use the terms *prove* and *proof*, I am referring to such convincing arguments. But I realize that what is proof to one person will not be proof at all to someone else.

You can see then, that conservative religious leaders have been presenting arguments that conservative individuals will accept as “proof.” Those arguments

will not convince everyone, however, since proof is a personal matter. If you are convinced something is true, you believe it. If you aren't convinced, you don't believe it. That is the way it should be. Everyone is responsible for what they *choose* to believe. That is why God is going to judge everyone *individually*—according to their own beliefs.

The second difficulty with “proof” is similar to the first, in that it involves an evasion of certainty. That is, *one cannot prove non-existence*. Existence is usu-

ally easy to prove. Simply let somebody see, hear, taste, touch, or smell something, and a rational person will be convinced it exists. It may not even have a name but, as they say, “I’ll know it when I see it.” So proof of existence begins with arguments based on evidence.

Non-existence, on the other hand, cannot be apprehended by the senses. Something that does not exist in one place may well exist in another. Therefore, you cannot show that something does not exist simply by proving ab-

sence. Absence of presence is not the same as non-existence.

For example, we all know that carrots exist. We know that, however, only because we have seen, touched, and/or tasted them. But we cannot prove that twenty-five-foot-long carrots do not exist because we have no hard evidence to present. The best we can do is offer rational arguments why they *should not* exist.

At best, proof of non-existence begins with convincing arguments based on probabilities and circumstantial evidence. It does not begin with arguments based on concrete evidence.

You can see from this that the liberals faced a Herculean task. They could not produce the required “convincing arguments based on evidence” that would *prove* the God of the Bible does not exist. Subconsciously, they must have known that. Consequently, they *chose* to *assume* He didn't exist because they were not *willing* to believe the miracles recorded in Scripture.

These theologians also made a further error. They confused the terms *normal* and *rational*, making them synonyms. For them, the *normal* expectation of *natural* phenomena became the only *rational* expectation. Therefore, *supernatural* phenomena (miracles) could never, from their perspective, be a *rational* expectation.

Instead of making a clean break with the historic Christian tradition, however, liberal theologians simply *changed the meaning of faith*. For them, faith became a completely irrational step. To become a Christian, one simply had to believe with no rational basis for doing so.

Do You Believe?

By the end of last century, the liberals' devaluation of the *meaning* of faith was total. If faith were irrational to begin with, it didn't matter *what* you believed. The only important thing was *that* you believed.

The *logical* result of their *illogical* position should have been obvious even to them. It has certainly “proven” itself within their own constituency. If it does not matter *what* you believe, you might

Parables and Prophecy

Do You Believe the Gospel of Jesus Christ?

Most Christian Believers would agree that *what* they believe is the *Gospel*. That is a generally understood biblical Truth. It comes directly from the statements made by the Apostles of the Early Church:

And after there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, “Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe.”
(Acts 15:7)

The Greek term translated *gospel* in this passage and throughout the English New Testament is *euangelion*. It simply *means* “good news.” The Greek verb of the same root is *euangelizomai*. This word *means* “to proclaim/preach good news” as it has been translated in the following statement by the Apostle Paul:

“And we preach to you the good news of the promise made to the fathers.”
(Acts 13:32)

Clearly, *what* one must believe to be saved is the Gospel. But that doesn't reveal much because Believers today have various opinions regarding *the content of the Gospel*. So one must do a bit more digging to discover the Truth.

The Apostolic Gospel

The Apostles who taught the Early Church had no such doubts concerning the Gospel. They understood it to have a *specific* content. Paul alludes to that content in the quotation above. The Gospel is “the good news of *the promise* made to the fathers.” By contrast, the Church today understands the Gospel message as not much more than a simple statement of Truth similar to that summarized by the Apostle Paul:

the word of faith which we are preaching, that if you confess with your mouth Jesus [as] Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved
(Romans 10:8b-9)

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“The biblical view of faith is straightforward. If you haven’t been convinced by the evidence you have seen, heard, or otherwise apprehended, you don’t really believe.”

just as well be a Muslim, a Buddhist, or a Jew. That is why mainline denominations have seen declining memberships for decades; they stand for nothing that sets them apart from any other religion.

Conservatives, however, immediately recognized the fallacy in the liberals’ position. They understood that *what* you believe is every bit as important as *that* you believe. Therefore, some conservatives responded with a forthright definition of what they thought were the essentials of the Christian faith.

Between 1910 and 1915 a group within the conservative wing of Christian Protestantism published *The Fundamentals: A Testimony of the Truth*. In these volumes they set forth the core content of *saving faith*. These conservative Believers claimed that if one did not believe these essentials, he could not possibly be saved.

“Conservative attempts notwithstanding, the liberal definition of ‘faith’ has permeated the conservative Church.”

The conservative response to the liberal position was the only real option available to them. Any other response would have meant total loss of everything gained during the Protestant Reformation. Had they not challenged the liberals, salvation by faith as the basic Truth of the Gospel would have been diluted to the point of being nothing more than empty words.

Therein lies the difficulty we face when we *talk about* “faith” today. Conservative attempts notwithstanding, the liberal definition of “faith” has permeated the conservative Church. The conservative layperson’s attitude toward “faith” is currently not much different

from that of liberal scholars. They no longer consider *what* you believe to be a matter of any great *significance*. The important thing is *that* you believe in God.

But the average layperson does not understand the high stakes involved in this matter of “faith.” Most would not be too concerned even if they did. Unfortunately for them, however, God is the ultimate rational being. He considers “faith”—*what* one believes—to be of the utmost importance. So important, in fact, that He made it the basis of salvation.

Why Do You Believe?

The conservatives who sought to circumscribe the boundaries of faith by defining its essential content were absolutely correct in their conclusions. If it matters *what* one believes, the next logical step should be the delineation of the content of saving faith. Therefore, I want to carry the logic of this position to its ultimate conclusion.

If one wants to understand the nature of Christian faith as God intended it, the first place to look is in the New Testament. The English word *faith* comes from the Latin *fides*, which *means* “trust.” But the Greek word translated *faith* in the English New Testament is *pistis*. It not only *means* “trust,” it also *means* “confidence” and “belief.”

Pistis is a noun. Its *meaning* is derived from the action of the verbal root to which it is related. That Greek verb is *peitho*. *Peitho* *means* “to persuade” or “to offer evidence.” You can see from this how the *meanings* of the two words are linked. One who has been persuaded by the evidence has confidence, trust, and belief.

The biblical view of faith is straightforward. If you haven’t been convinced by the evidence you have seen, heard, or otherwise apprehended, you don’t really *believe*. That flies right in the face of the liberals’ concoction. It is also a position that leaves many “Christians” today with

little or nothing to anchor the “faith” they claim to have.

By now you should be able to see the relevance of the issue over which the conservatives and liberals took sides. The liberals’ effort to reconcile reason and faith (belief) resulted in their conclusion that faith (belief) was irrational. Therefore, it didn’t matter *what* one believed. The sole essential requirement was *that* one believed in God. Taking that position, the only individual they would exclude from salvation would be an atheist.

Conservatives, however, realized the liberals’ definition of faith robbed it of all *significance*. So they held to the biblical definition. Faith (belief) was saving faith only if one had been persuaded by convincing arguments based on the evidence. They understood that the evidence and convincing arguments that persuade are *what* one believes. And they knew that *what* one believes is absolutely essential to salvation.

Are You Convinced?

The Scriptures clearly state that “without faith it is impossible to please” God (Heb. 11:6). They also represent the Gospel message of the Old Testament as the source of the evidence on which that faith (belief) should be based. (See “Do You Believe the Gospel of Jesus Christ?” in this issue.) Paul said that:

“The liberals’ effort to reconcile reason and faith (belief) resulted in their conclusion that faith (belief) was irrational. Therefore it didn’t matter what one believed.”

“That you believe has no value in God’s sight if what you believe is a half-truth or lie.”

“faith {comes} from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.”
(Romans 10:17b)

We know, therefore, that faith (belief) should be the result of a logical sequence of progressive activities. It begins with the *evidence* of the Gospel (“the word of Christ”), continues with *persuasion* (the “hearing”), and results in “faith” (belief), as stated above.

It only makes sense then that the more convincing the arguments, the stronger the resultant faith (belief) will be. That is precisely the case. Paul tells us that Christians can be “weak in faith.” They reveal that weakness by limiting their own freedom in Christ and wanting to limit others also:

Now accept the one who is weak in faith, {but} not for {the purpose of} passing judgment on his opinions. One man has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables {only}. Let not him who eats regard with contempt him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats, for God has accepted him.

Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and stand he will, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

One man regards one day above another, another regards every day {alike}. Let each man be fully convinced in his own mind. He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God. For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if

we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord’s.
(Romans 14:1–8)

Those who are “weak in faith” can escape that condition, however, because “faith grows”:

For we are not overextending ourselves, as if we did not reach to you, for we were the first to come even as far as you in the gospel of Christ; not boasting beyond {our} measure, {that is}, in other men’s labors, but with the hope that as your faith grows, we shall be, within our sphere, enlarged even more by you, so as to preach the gospel even to the regions beyond you, {and} not to boast in what has been accomplished in the sphere of another.
(2 Corinthians 10:14–16)

“A faith based on guesswork and tradition will not survive the delusion that is already underway.”

Just as faith comes by hearing and believing the Gospel message, so also the growth of faith comes by hearing and believing even *more* of the Gospel message. The one who does not fully understand the Gospel message remains weak in faith and lives with undue restriction. That agrees with what Jesus said:

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

One gains salvation by believing the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The New Testament Scriptures clearly say that we are “sanctified by faith” (Acts 26:18). We are “justified by faith” (Rom. 3:28; 5:1; Gal. 2:16; 3:8, 24). And faith is our

“righteousness” (Rom. 4:5; 9:30; 10:6; Phil. 3:9). Paul emphasizes that fact:

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, {it is} the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast.
(Ephesians 2:8–9)

In spite of all this, even conservative theologians approach the issue of faith as though the central concern is *that* you believe. Calvinist theology currently tends toward that position. Some would have us believe that the establishment of faith is a once-for-all-time event instead of a growth process.

One should have no major disagreement with the basic Christian Truth that Calvinist theology has perceived and sought to defend regarding the security that faith provides. But neither should one ignore the variable introduced by the *what* aspect of faith. *That* you believe has no value in God’s sight if *what* you believe is a half-truth or lie.

In that regard, Paul encouraged the early Christians to “stand firm in the faith” (1 Cor. 16:13; 2 Cor. 1:24). So also did the Apostle Peter:

Be of sober {spirit}, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in {your} faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.
(1 Peter 5:8–9)

It would make little sense for these two Apostles to encourage someone to stand firm in faith if it were not possible for a Believer to change his mind concerning what he believed. That is exactly what the Scriptures tell us is possible.

“Those who are ‘weak in faith’ can escape that condition, however, because ‘faith grows.’”

James mentions it as though it were a common occurrence:

*My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth, and one turns him back, let him know that **he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death, and will cover a multitude of sins.***
(James 5:19–20)

Paul also points out that some in his day had “gone astray from the truth”:

*Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, {men} who have **gone astray from the truth** saying that the resurrection has already taken place, and thus they upset the faith of some.*
(2 Timothy 2:17b–18)

Since *what* one believes is so important, those individuals who have strayed from the Truth of the Gospel have given up that by which they would have been saved. More importantly, however, Paul understood many will “turn away their ears from the truth” in these Last Days:

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but {wanting} to have their ears tickled,

they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths.

(2 Timothy 4:3–4)

Would you know the Truth if you heard it? Or would you be content to believe only what you have heard taught as *tradition*? If the Spirit of God resides within you, you will know the Truth. *The* one true *Teaching* of the Gospel has characteristics that will identify it to those who seek God’s will. It is as Jesus said:

*“My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me. If any man is willing to do His will, **he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or {whether} I speak from Myself.**”*

(John 7:16b–17)

Jesus also said,

*“And the Father who sent Me, He has borne witness of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form. And you do not have His word abiding in you, for you do not believe Him whom He sent. **You search the Scriptures, be-***

“Since what one believes is so important, those individuals who have strayed from the Truth of the Gospel have given up that by which they would have been saved.”

cause you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that bear witness of Me; and you are unwilling to come to Me, that you may have life.”

(John 5:37–40)

James made the following point in another connection, but it applies here as well.

You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder.

(James 2:19)

These are the Last Days. Therefore, one should not be reluctant to examine thoroughly everything that he believes. For centuries a basic knowledge of what God accomplished through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ has been sufficient to produce a faith (belief) strong enough to save. The day is soon coming when that will no longer be.

A faith (belief) based on guesswork and tradition will not survive the delusion that is already underway. Only a faith based on knowledge of the complete plan and purpose of God as described in the *Gospel of Jesus Christ* will deliver one from that delusion. If you believe the Truth of the Gospel, you will endure to the End. If you believe a half-truth or a lie, ...?

Having said all this, I now come to a point I treat elsewhere in this issue. (See “Do You Believe the Gospel of Jesus Christ?”) The logical question one should ask regarding *pistis* (belief) is, “persuaded by *what* evidence?” The answer found in the New Testament is other than one might expect. ■



Raphael (1483–1520) “The Miraculous Draught of Fishes.” The miracles recorded in Scripture became a stumblingblock for liberal scholars. Not being able to bring themselves to believe these fantastic reports of God’s supernatural intervention in the realm of the natural, they simply changed rules, redefining faith so that it became an irrational **leap of faith**. Unfortunately (for them), God continues to play by the rules. To be saved, you still have to examine the evidence, assess the logic, repent, and believe the Gospel of Jesus Christ. ■



The Voice of Elijah includes this column in each issue to show you how some of the underlying parabolic images of the Gospel message of the Old Testament speak to the times in which we find ourselves. There are a variety of weather images to be found in the parables of the Gospel. Most are associated with the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

Cloudy: The *parabolic imagery* of the *cloud* in which Jesus said He will return “with power and great glory” (Lk. 21:27) is the same *cloud* into which He disappeared on the Mount of Olives. The text says that when He ascended, “a cloud received Him out of their sight” (Acts 1:9b). The two messengers who appeared to those who saw Jesus disappear on that day told them,

“This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.”
(Acts 1:11b)

The key to understanding this *parabolic imagery* lies the fact that Jesus was, in *parabolic pantomime*, mocking the ancient Israelite belief that the Canaanite god Baal was the *rider of the clouds*. (See “The Parabolic Pantomimes of Jesus Christ,” *The Voice of Elijah*, January 1991.)

The “clouds” in which Jesus will return are linked to the *parabolic image* of Him as the true God of the Storm. That *parabolic image* originates in the Prophets’ message concerning Jesus Christ as the Messiah of Israel. The Prophets compared the First and Second Coming of the Messiah to the annual resurrection of the mythological Canaanite storm god Baal.

The idolatrous Israelites thought Baal was the god who provided the rain for their crops after his triumph over death and his resurrection from the dead. These apostates believed Baal mounted the clouds after his resurrection and went riding through the heavens bringing rain to the Earth.

The message hidden in the *parabolic imagery* of the Prophets to which Jesus pointed in His *parabolic pantomime* is a divine mockery of human religiosity. The taunting

laughter of God can still be heard today, echoing in the *parabolic imagery*. The false piety and pomposity of theologians who speak from the vanity of their own minds has never pleased, and will never please, the angry God of Israel. Their stupidity serves only to stoke the hungry fires of hell that even now lick the lip of that awesome pit, eagerly anticipating their arrival.

Rain: The *parabolic image* under which this ministry has been called to conduct itself is the *parabolic image* of the Prophet Elijah. (See “Do You Believe the Gospel of Jesus Christ?” in this issue.) Under direct orders from God, Elijah summoned the *latter rain* for the benefit of God’s People in his day. He did so only after sarcastically challenging the prophets of Baal to do what was impossible for them to. After they had proven they could not *awaken* Baal from his sleep of death, Elijah called on the true God of the Storm, thus bringing an end to the three-and-a-half-year drought that had deprived ancient Israel of both the *early* and *latter rains*.

So it is today as well. False prophets whom God has not called are everywhere in the Church. But none of them can bring forth the divine “rain” that will soak the “ground” in God’s “garden” and cause His “plants” to “grow.” So they remain blissfully unaware that the Gospel message of the Hebrew Scriptures is the *parabolic* “rain” which will enable the *parabolic* “plants” in God’s *parabolic* “garden” to grow in their knowledge of the Truth.

These false prophets prance around behind their pulpits or in front of television cameras like the prophets of Baal in ancient times, thundering on with pious-sounding words and thinking the god they proclaim will accept them for all their efforts. But they are not speaking the Word of God at all. They have no comprehension of what Jesus *meant* when He said, “Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me ...” (Matt. 11:29a). They cannot logically show anyone how, as Jesus said, Moses “wrote of” Him (Jn. 5:46). So most don’t even try. They cheerfully vomit up whatever they have “eaten”—that is, what others like themselves have said or written about the fictitious god they worship.

Jesus Christ and the authors of the New Testament frequently used the *parabolic images* associated with the *parabolic image* of the Word of God coming down like *rain*. You can find those *parabolic images* especially in the parables of Jesus, where they occur with specific reference to Hebrew idioms used by the Old Testament Prophets. His statements apply just as well today as when they were spoken. Jesus said, for example,

“Every plant which My heavenly Father did not plant shall be rooted up. Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. And if a blind man guides a blind man, both will

fall into a pit.”

(Matthew 15:13b–14)

Jesus wasn't *talking about* the obvious sinner, the one who makes no pretense about his lack of spirituality. He was *talking about* religious leaders and their followers. What He said is good advice for True Believers even today.

Answer a fool according to his folly, and you become like him. That's a paraphrase (Prov. 26:4), but it still applies. No amount of religious discussion will benefit those who have nailed down every possible eschatological loose end so that they already "know" exactly what God has in store for these Last Days. Such individuals are best ignored simply because they are unteachable. Let God deal with them.

Paul also used the *parabolic image* in which the Word of God is depicted as "rain," but he went further and combined it with the *parabolic image* of the Word of God as the "Seed" that is "planted" in the True Believer on which the "rain" falls:

*And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to babes in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able {to receive it}. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men? For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not {mere} men? What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave {opportunity} to each one. **I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth.** So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth. Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are God's fellow workers; **you are God's field, God's building.***

(1 Corinthians 3:1–9)

The complete *parabolic image* Paul had in mind depicts the True Believer as *ground*. Here, Paul uses the image to say he was the one who first "planted" the Word in this *ground*. But after the Word sprouted, causing belief in the Believer, Apollos came along to provide much needed *rain* by teaching these new Believers even more of the Truth of *The Teaching*.

Paul's argument to the Corinthians is simple. He and Apollos aren't at all significant. The Truth of the Gospel concerning Jesus Christ that they heard preached *from the Old Testament* is what produces invincible belief in the True Believer. Therefore, it shouldn't matter to them from whom they heard the message, because Paul and Apollos both preached the same Gospel. (See "Do You Believe the Gospel of Jesus Christ?" in this issue.)

Finally, the author of the Book of Hebrews used the *parabolic image* in which the Word of God is depicted as *rain* to issue what is perhaps the most sternly worded warning to be found in all the New Testament. In the process, he lets us know that elementary concepts of *The Teaching* that are found in the Church today aren't at all what God had in mind. He first refers to the *parabolic image* of the priest Melchizedek, and then he says:

Concerning him we have much to say, and {it is} hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes {only} of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is a babe.

But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil. Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of instruction about washings, and laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.

And this we shall do, if God permits. For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and {then} have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God, and put Him to open shame.

For ground that drinks the rain which often falls upon it and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is also tilled, receives a blessing from God; but if it yields thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being cursed, and it ends up being burned. But, beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you, and things that accompany salvation, though we are speaking in this way.

(Hebrews 5:11–6:9)

May those "plants" our Heavenly Father has "planted" read these words and find encouragement. God has not abandoned us to the confusion that prevails all around us. On the contrary, He intends to use that confusion in these Last Days to demonstrate the awesome power of His Word. May the precious "Seed" of the Gospel that is hidden in the Hebrew Scriptures "take root" and "grow" within you, producing its bounteous "fruit" of love, peace, and joy in your life. ■

Gnostic Beliefs

From Page 1

everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace {and} everlasting contempt. **And those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.** But as for you, Daniel, **conceal these words and seal up the book until the end of time; many will go back and forth, and knowledge will increase.**"

Then I, Daniel, looked and behold, two others were standing, one on this bank of the river, and the other on that bank of the river. And one said to the man dressed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, "How long {will it be} until the end of {these} wonders?" And I heard the man dressed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, as he raised his right hand and his left toward heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever that it would be for a time, times, and half {a time}; and as soon

"As the Truth of the Gospel spread rapidly through the civilized world, so also did heretical beliefs based on distortions of its Truth. Gnostic doctrine was only one such belief system."

as they finish shattering the power of the holy people, all these {events} will be completed. As for me, I heard but could not understand; so I said, "My lord, what {will be} the outcome of these {events}?"

And he said, "Go {your way}, Daniel, for {these} words are concealed and sealed up until the end time. Many will be purged, purified and

refined; but the wicked will act wickedly, and none of the wicked will understand, but those who have insight will understand."

(Daniel 12:1-10)

Gnosticism and Christianity

As the Truth of the Gospel spread rapidly through the civilized world, so also did heretical beliefs based on distortions of its Truth. Gnostic doctrine was only one such belief system. There were others as well. The Church's vehement rejection of this divergence from the Truth, however, appears to be the major reason it lost knowledge of the fact that God had hidden His *mystery* in the Hebrew Scriptures. It is a classic case of tossing the baby out with the bath water.

I have already explained how the Church corrupted *The Teaching of Jesus* shortly after the Apostles died. (See "Where Are Jesus' Disciples?" *The Voice of Elijah*, April 1991.) The principal reason why the Church lost an understanding of *The Teaching* and fell into confusion was because of doctrinal controversy. Theological disputes raged between various elements within the Early Church throughout much of the second century. But the Gnostics were the faction of the Early Church that posed the

greatest threat to, and thus drew the most vitriolic condemnation from, the segment of the Church that ultimately became orthodox Christianity.

Scholars knew little about the Gnostics before 1945. In that year, however, grave robbers in the Nag Hammadi region of Egypt happened upon a large, sealed earthenware jar. Inside the jar, protected from the elements for nearly two thousand years, was a collection of

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Gnostic writings. Ironically, the grave robbers, who had been searching for treasure, didn't realize what they had found. They received little for the treasure they discovered, and reportedly even burned two of the volumes as fuel in a cook stove.

Before 1945, most of our knowledge about Gnostic beliefs came from what others had written about them. For example, the second-century writer Irenæus vigorously refuted the Gnostic teaching in his work, *Against Heresies*. Hippolytus, Tertullian, and other Church Fathers down to the time of Augustine (ca. A.D. 400) also described the heresy. None provided anything comparable to the Nag Hammadi texts, however. These texts suddenly provided us a wealth of information about the Christian Gnostics from the literature of the Gnostics themselves.

The word *Gnostic* derives from the Greek word *gnosis*, which simply means "knowledge." The term aptly describes this specific Early Church teaching because the Gnostics believed a true knowledge (*gnosis*) of God came only through a revelation of that knowledge by God Himself.

The Nag Hammadi texts reveal that, to the Gnostics, knowledge of the true teaching was essential to salvation. An individual could be saved only through "knowledge" of the Truth revealed by Jesus Christ. The texts declare this in

“Eventually, the Church rejected anything tainted by the Gnostics’ heresy. With that, the Early Church turned away completely from the Truth concerning The Mystery hidden in the Hebrew Scriptures.”

parabolic imagery similar to that in The Parable of the Sower (Matt. 13):

*For the word is like a grain of wheat; when someone had sown it, he had faith in it; and when it had sprouted, he loved it because he had seen many grains in place of one. And when he had worked, he was saved because he had prepared it for food, {and} again he left {some} to sow. So also can you yourselves receive the kingdom of heaven; **unless you receive this through knowledge, you will not be able to find it.***

(The Apocryphon of James, 8)

Another text continues the same thought:

*Therefore, **if one has knowledge, he is from above.... Having knowledge, he does the will of the one who called him, he wishes to be pleasing to him, he receives rest.... He who is to have knowledge in this manner knows where he comes from and where he is going.***

(The Gospel of Truth, 22)

To better explain their beliefs, Gnostic theologians manufactured additional doctrine. Like other Pretenders in the Early Church, they had not received that doctrine from the Apostles. But unlike the doctrine of their more moderate counterparts, some of this new Gnostic dogma was clearly heresy.

The Gnostics maintained that a lesser god had created the material world we see. During creation, however, the true God managed to infuse His Spirit into this creation. He then sent Jesus Christ to awaken this Spirit within men through knowledge (*gnosis*).

Although the Gnostics believed true knowledge was essential for salvation, they also believed not everyone could comprehend this knowledge. Either spirit, soul, or body dominated each individual. The *spiritual* could obtain the true

knowledge that restored him to oneness with the true God. The general populace of the Church, however, had belief without true knowledge, because they were dominated by the *soul*. The rest of the world fell into the category of the *body* and were under the control of the flesh.

Since the Gnostics believed the flesh was evil, they also believed one must overcome it to achieve oneness with God. In this, they agreed with mainstream Christianity; but they took asceticism to extremes. Some think Paul was warning the Colossian Believers against these Gnostic extremes in the following passage:

If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, “Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!” (which all {refer to} things destined to perish with the using)—in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men? These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, {but are} of no value against fleshly indulgence.

(Colossians 2:20–23)

Other Gnostic sects, however, advocated total indulgence in sensual de-

“To better explain their beliefs, Gnostic theologians manufactured additional doctrine. Like other Pretenders in the Early Church, they had not received that doctrine from the Apostles.”

lights instead of self-abasement. Even in this misbegotten endeavor, they sought to free the individual from domination by the flesh. The Early Church rejected both of these extremes. Some scholars argue that Jesus’ condemnation of the Nicolaitans (Rev. 2:6, 14, 15) was most likely addressed to one such Gnostic sect.

Paul warned the Church against all such erroneous teachings in his first letter to Timothy:

If anyone advocates a different doctrine, and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, he is conceited {and} understands nothing; but he has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words, out of which arise envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions, and constant friction between men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain.

(1 Timothy 6:3–5)

In spite of Paul’s warnings, Gnostic beliefs and practices became a growing menace to the Early Church. Although Gnostic dogma and practice were extreme, in the light of the message hidden in the Hebrew Scriptures Gnostic teaching stands as just one among many Early Church deviations from the Truth.

Mainstream Christianity roundly denounced the Gnostic heresy. Unfortunately, all Gnostic teaching, including the Truth they sought to promote, became suspect because of their gross distortion of the Truth. Eventually, the Church rejected anything tainted by the Gnostics’ heresy. With that, the Early Church turned away completely from the Truth concerning *The Mystery* hidden in the Hebrew Scriptures. That was disastrous. For, although they later twisted it to further their own ends, some

“It is obvious that parts of the Gnostic message originated in The Teaching of the Apostles.”

early Gnostic leaders sat under *The Apostles' Teaching*.

It is obvious that parts of the Gnostic message originated in *The Teaching of the Apostles*. Consequently, we can still find in the Gnostic writings remnants of the Truth available to the Early Church. The doctrines of interest to us here are those that represent the message of the Hebrew Scriptures as a mystery, conveyed to the Church in *parabolic images*, and understood by just a few.

The Mystery Hidden

One Gnostic text refers to the hidden message of the Scriptures using the interesting *parabolic image* of a sealed testament (will). The Gnostics evidently derived their understanding of this *parabolic image*, at least in part, from the statements concerning the scroll opened seal by seal in Revelation 5:1–8:1. The *parabolic image* of the sealed testament relates to a fundamental characteristic of the message hidden in the Hebrew Scriptures:

*Just as there lies **hidden** in a will, before it is opened, the fortune of the deceased master of the house, so it is with the totality, which lay **hidden** while the Father of the totality was invisible....*

(The Gospel of Truth, 20)

I have already explained the *significance* of this *parabolic imagery*. (See “Did Jesus Leave a Will?” *The Voice of Elijah*, July 1991.) The Gnostic writer was referring to the fact that true knowledge of God, “the Father of the totality,” remained concealed in the Hebrew Scriptures before Jesus Christ came. That agrees with *The Teaching of Jesus*. (See “Jesus Talks About the Mystery,” *The Voice of Elijah*, January 1991.)

The Gnostics also claimed that Jesus Christ revealed to the Apostles the knowledge required for salvation:

*Then the Son who is perfect in every respect—that is, the Word who originated through that Voice; who proceeded from the height; who has within him the Name; who is a Light—he (the Son) revealed the everlasting things and all the unknowns were known. And **those things difficult to interpret and secret, he revealed**, and as for those who dwell in Silence with the First Thought, he preached to them. And he revealed himself to those who dwell in darkness, and he showed himself to those who dwell in the abyss, and to those who dwell in the hidden treasures **he told ineffable mysteries**, and he taught unrepeatable doctrines to those who became Sons of the Light.*

(Trimorphic Protennoia, 37)

To the Gnostics, the true knowledge was “the gospel.” They also called it “the hidden mystery”:

*Through this, **the gospel** of the one who is searched for, which {was} revealed to those who are perfect through the mercies of the Father, **the hidden mystery**, Jesus, the Christ, enlightened those who were in darkness through oblivion. He enlightened them; he showed {them} a way; and the way is the truth which he taught them.*

(The Gospel of Truth, 18)

Statements made in this quotation parallel the Apostle Paul’s description of “the word of God” as “the mystery”:

“One Gnostic text refers to the hidden message of the Scriptures using the interesting parabolic image of a sealed testament (will).”

“To the Gnostics, the true knowledge was ‘the gospel.’ They also called it ‘the hidden mystery.’”

*Of {this church} I was made a minister according to the stewardship from God bestowed on me for your benefit, **that I might fully carry out the {preaching of} the word of God, {that is,} the mystery which has been hidden from the {past} ages and generations; but has now been manifested to His saints.***

(Colossians 1:25–26)

The quotation above also agrees with Paul’s assertion that “God’s mystery” is Christ Himself:

*a true knowledge of **God’s mystery, {that is}, Christ {Himself}**, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*

(Colossians 2:2b–3)

The Role of Parables

I have already shown that Jesus taught the hidden message of the Hebrew Scriptures in parables during His ministry. (See “Jesus Talks About the Mystery,” *The Voice of Elijah*, January 1991.) He then gave His Apostles a supernatural understanding of that *mystery* right before His ascension (Lk. 24:45).

The Gnostics agreed. But they did not believe it was possible for the fleshly person to comprehend true knowledge:

The Savior said to them: “I want you to know that all men born on earth from the foundation of the world until now, being dust, while they have inquired about God, who he is and what he is like, have not found him. Now the wisest among them have speculated from the ordering of the world and (its) movement. But their speculation has not reached the truth.”

(The Sophia of Jesus Christ, 92)

“Like other religious sects in the Early Church, the Gnostics claimed to have complete understanding of the Truth.”

They claimed that Jesus had to present the Truth in parables and images:

Truth did not come into the world naked, but it came in types and images. The world will not receive truth in any other way ... The lord did everything in a mystery.
(*The Gospel of Philip*, 67)

Other Gnostic writers concurred. For example:

And he will reveal to them the truth in proverbs.... at first in parables and riddles.
(*Melchizedek*, 1, 2)

Consequently, the Gnostics stressed the *secret* nature of the true *knowledge* that Jesus revealed in His parables. An appropriate example is the Gospel of Thomas, a Gnostic tractate containing a collection of one hundred fourteen sayings of Jesus. Many of the parables and prophecies in this text have parallels in the synoptic gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke. The text begins with this affirmation:

These are the secret sayings which the living Jesus spoke and which Didymos Judas Thomas wrote down. And he said, “Whoever finds the interpretation of these sayings

“The Gnostics believed that once a person gained insight into the mysteries of God, they were not free to openly proclaim their new-found knowledge.”

will not experience death.”
(*The Gospel of Thomas*, 1)

Like other religious sects in the Early Church, the Gnostics claimed to have complete understanding of the Truth. But they emphasized the hidden, mysterious nature of the true *knowledge* that Jesus taught. One Gnostic text, which purports to record a conversation between Jesus and a disciple named Judas Thomas, refers directly to the hidden teaching:

“So then, you, my brother Thomas, have beheld what is obscure to men, that is, what they ignorantly stumble against.” Now Thomas said to the lord, “Therefore, I beg you to tell me what I ask you before your ascension, and when I hear from you about the hidden things, then I can speak about them. And it is obvious to me that the truth is difficult to perform before men.” — Now Thomas answered and said to the savior, “Tell us about these things that you say are not visible, but are hidden from us.”
(*The Book of Thomas the Contender*, 138)

Understood by Few

Passages like the one above reveal that the Gnostics believed they derived their knowledge (*gnosis*) of *The Mystery* hidden in the Hebrew Scriptures from *The Teaching of Jesus Christ*. Compare the passages above with what Jesus said to his disciples:

“To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted.”
(*Matthew* 13:11b)

At that time Jesus answered and said, “I praise Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou didst hide these things from {the} wise and intelligent and didst reveal them to babes. Yes, Father, for thus it was well-pleasing in Thy sight. All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son, except the Father; nor does

anyone know the Father, except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal {Him}.”
(*Matthew* 11:25–27)

All these things Jesus spoke to the multitudes in parables, and He did not speak to them without a parable, so that what was spoken through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, “I WILL OPEN MY MOUTH IN PARABLES; I WILL UTTER THINGS HIDDEN SINCE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD.”
(*Matthew* 13:34–35)

“The Gnostics misrepresented the secret nature of the true knowledge of The Mystery.”

These passages all agree that Jesus revealed the Truth of His message to just a few. He revealed it to His disciples. But the Gnostics misrepresented the secret nature of the true knowledge of *The Mystery*. They maintained that it continued to be a secret revealed only to them. This claim found its twisted corollary in their assertion that only they understood the Truth:

And he said to me, “Be strong, for you are the one to whom these mysteries have been given, to know them through revelation.”
(*Apocalypse of Peter*, 82)

This statement divulges the source of their distortion of *The Apostles’ Teaching*. It came from their belief that they continued to receive supernatural revelation.

Jesus said, “It is to those who are worthy of my mysteries that I tell my mysteries.”
(*The Gospel of Thomas*, 44)

A further error was that their understanding of the revelation they supposedly received did not necessarily have any basis in the Scriptures:

Jesus said, “He who will drink from my mouth will become like me. I my-

self shall become he, and the things that are hidden will be revealed to him."

(The Gospel of Thomas, 50)

I will speak my mystery to those who are mine and to those who will be mine.

(A Valentinian Exposition, 22)

One Gnostic text contains a parable about a "householder" who has responsibility to feed animals, servants, and children. The writer compares this person to a disciple of Jesus Christ who knew what to feed them:

There are many different animals in the world in human form. When he [the disciple] identifies them, to the swine he will throw acorns, to the cattle he will throw barley and chaff and grass, to the dogs he will throw bones. To the slaves he will give only the elementary lessons, to the children he will give the complete instruction.

(The Gospel of Philip, 81)

Obviously, the food in this parable represents knowledge. Consistent with Gnostic belief, only the children of God could receive knowledge in "complete instruction." Another writer takes up the same theme:

But those who are to receive teaching [are] the living who are inscribed in the book of the living. It is about themselves that they receive instruction, receiving it from the Father, turning again to him.

(The Gospel of Truth, 21)

Not Available to All

The Gnostics believed that once a person gained insight into the mysteries of God, they were not free to openly proclaim their new-found knowledge. In this, they were like the sect at Qumran that many think were Essenes. (See "Apocalyptic Beliefs and the End of This Age," *The Voice of Elijah*, April 1991.) Both were circumspect toward outsiders.

The author of *Allogenes* (a title that means "stranger") claims to have re-

Did the Gnostics Really Know?

The Gnostic controversy roiled the Early Church for about thirty years, from A.D. 135 to A.D. 165. It was a syncretistic movement that seems to have originated outside Christianity and infiltrated the churches, adapting Christian beliefs to meld with its own doctrines. It was not the only threat confronted by the Early Church. During that same time frame Christianity was beset by two other major threats.

Marcion

A wealthy ship-owner named Marcion joined the congregation at Rome about A.D. 139. He was incensed by the legalism and Judaistic influences that he found dominating there. So he assailed them, contending that Paul alone, of all the Apostles, completely understood the Gospel. The others had been overcome by the error of Judaism. He went so far as to deny a real incarnation and reject completely the Old Testament and its God. His theology in this regard appears to have been influenced by the Gnostic teacher, Cerdo.

Marcion's endeavor brought about his own excommunication around A.D. 144. He then founded a separate church which eventually spread throughout the Orient, surviving alongside orthodox Christianity until well after A.D. 400. His one positive contribution was to compile an authoritative canon of New Testament writings. It is the earliest known attempt to do so. He obviated the benefit of such a collection, however, by purging it of any passage that implied Jesus Christ considered the God of the Old Testament to be His Father.

Montanus

Around A.D. 156 a converted priest of Cybele, Montanus, announced that he was the mouthpiece of the Holy Spirit. He declared the dispensation of the Holy Spirit had begun. Two prophetesses, Prisca and Maximilla, soon joined him. They predicted the end of this age was imminent and the Return of Christ would soon see the establishment of the New Jerusalem in Phrygia, their own locale.

The Montanists required a strict asceticism—fasting, celibacy, and abstinence from meat. In reacting against the increasing worldliness of the Church, many Christians found Montanism an attractive alternative. That resulted in the bishops in Asia Minor beginning to feel their authority threatened. Shortly after A.D. 160, they convened the earliest known Synods of the Church to deal with the perceived danger. Although they condemned the movement, it continued until after A.D. 400. It was, however, gradually driven out of mainstream Christianity.

Summary

Can it be said, then, that Christianity has ever been without its sects and cultic outgrowths? Hardly. Paul himself knew of some in his own time who taught false doctrine (2 Tim. 2:17–18). The issue is not whether Gnostic teaching was heresy. Clearly it was. The Synods of the Church declared it to be so. The issue is whether there are, within the wealth of information now available to us in the Gnostic literature, traces of Apostolic doctrine that can be confirmed by statements made in the New Testament and the *Apostolic Fathers*. Indeed there are. ■

“Clearly the Gnostics strayed far from the Truth of the Gospel. Yet a remnant of Truth concerning The Mystery of the Kingdom still remains in their writings.”

ceived divine visions and instructions that required him to impart knowledge to others. Some things that he claims to understand, however, were not for the ears of “an uninstructed generation”:

Since your instruction has become complete and you have known the Good that is within you, hear concerning the Triple-Powered One those things that you will guard in great silence and great mystery, because they are not spoken to anyone except those who are worthy, those who are able to hear; nor is it fitting to speak to an uninstructed generation concerning the Universal One that is higher than perfect.
(*Allogenes*, 52)

The “Triple-Powered One” is evidently a title for the triune God. The ones who will hear about Him are “those who are worthy.” These knowledgeable people are contrasted with the “uninstructed generation” from whom the author of *Allogenes* believed he was required to

And a foolish man does not guard against speaking a mystery. A wise man, however, does not blurt out every word, but he will be discriminating toward those who hear. Do not mention everything in the presence of those whom you do not know.
(*The Teachings of Silvanus*, 97)

Another text repeats the sentiment:

He who speaks the word of God to those for whom it is not lawful, he is the betrayer of God. It is better for you to be silent about the word of God than to speak recklessly.
(*The Sentences of Sextus*, 32)

Summary

The Gnostics believed that a true knowledge (*gnosis*) was essential for salvation. In this, they agree with the Scriptures. In his writings, Paul frequently stated the necessity for belief based on knowledge of the Truth. He warned of the possibility of believing a lie:

Jesus talked about *The Mystery* in the presence of those who were not His disciples, He spoke in parables.

The Gnostics, however, believed that those who knew the Truth were to keep their understanding of the Truth to themselves. They could *talk about* it only with others who had *received* the same knowledge. In this they contradicted *The Teaching of Jesus*:

“Therefore do not fear them, for there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known. What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light; and what you hear {whispered} in {your} ear, proclaim upon the housetops.”
(*Matthew 10:26–27*)

Clearly the Gnostics strayed far from the Truth of the Gospel. Yet a remnant of the Truth concerning *The Mystery* of the Kingdom still remains in their writings. Their belief in the existence of *The Mystery* is not unique to this particular Early Church aberration of the Truth. As I will show in the next issue, it also held an important constituency within mainstream Christianity itself. The belief that the Hebrew Scriptures contain a hidden message abounds in other Early Church writings, perhaps equally as much as in the Gnostic writings.

It is easy to research the Gnostic heresy and identify the doctrinal errors. But it is fallacious to assume that recognition of their errors *means The Mystery* of the Gospel message to which they allude does not exist in the Hebrew Scriptures. In that regard, this passage from the Gnostic literature may be applicable:

Some who do not understand mystery speak of things which they do not understand....
(*The Apocalypse of Peter*, 76)

The one who has ears to hear will hear. ■

“But it is fallacious to assume that recognition of their errors means The Mystery of the Gospel message to which they allude does not exist in the Hebrew Scriptures.”

“guard” the Truth “in great silence.”

A Gnostic apocalyptic writing attributed to Peter agrees with the above, containing much the same instruction:

“Now then, listen to the things which they are telling you in a mystery, and guard them. Do not tell them to the sons of this age.”
(*The Apocalypse of Peter*, 73)

The prohibition against speaking openly also applied to the ordinary recipient of knowledge:

And for this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they might believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.
(*2 Thessalonians 2:11–12*)

The Gnostics believed that God had hidden the true knowledge (*gnosis*). This also agrees with *The Teaching of Jesus*. (See “Jesus Talks About the Mystery,” *The Voice of Elijah*, January 1991.) They make much of the fact that when

Q & A nswers

The Voice of Elijah publishes articles based on the findings of *The Elijah Project*, a private research group headed by Larry D. Harper. In this column we seek answers to general-interest questions concerning the findings, purpose, and philosophy of this project.

Editor: A common interpretation of Ezekiel 38 and 39 predicts an invasion of Israel by a great army from the North. Many believe this army to be Russian, accompanied by a confederation of lesser nations hostile to Israel. Given the current disintegration of the Soviet Union, with individual republics declaring independence almost weekly, how does this "invasion from the North" figure with your understanding of the Scriptures?

Elijah: That's a hard one to answer without going too far afield. There is an immense amount of information in the message of the Hebrew Scriptures that must be mastered before one can read those chapters with understanding. I am aware of only enough of that information at this point to know that the "common interpretation" you speak of has gone far wide of the mark. Beyond that I can't say much at all.

But let me try to clear up what appears to be a point of confusion. The Gospel message of the Hebrew Scriptures is a single message, but it has seven parts. I tend to call those seven parts "messages" also, for lack of a better term. Since 1974, three of those messages have been "unsealed" one by one just as John saw in his vision. [Editor: Revelation 5-10.]

Being unsealed is not the same as being understood, however. Right now, I understand much of the first message, which I have titled "*The House*," for reasons that will become obvious once one understands the message. I un-



derstand less about the second message, "*The Way*," and even less about the third, "*The Light*." But I believe Jesus may have been alluding to three of the seven messages when He said, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life." [Editor: John 14:6.] I say that only because the second message details "*The Way*," and because Jesus said on another occasion, "I am *The Light*." [Editor: John 8:12.] I don't know that for certain because I have no idea what any of the other messages are beyond the first three. It makes sense to me only because each of the messages to this point simply explains another facet of the Person and work of Jesus Christ. He is *The House* of Israel, as I have tried to explain in *Not All Israel Is Israel*. He is also *The Way* and *The Light*, just as He said.

I'm fairly sure the Apostles and the Early Church understood the Gospel message of the Hebrew Scriptures as a series of seven messages also. One of the Christian Gnostic writings says,

It was enough for some {to listen} to the teaching and understand "The Shepherds" and "The Seed" and "The Building" and "The Lamps of the Virgins" and "The Wage of the Workmen" and "The Didrachmae" and "The Woman."

(The Apocryphon of James, 8)

All three of the messages I mentioned before are in this quotation. The message I have titled "*The House*," the writer has called "The Building." That's fairly close. What I have titled "*The Way*," he has called "The Woman." That's not so close. But his title refers to another important *parabolic image* that is explained in that message—the *parabolic image* of the "Harlot Woman." I explained a bit about that *parabolic image* in an article I wrote for the January 1991 issue. [Editor: See "Is Iraq Mystery Babylon?"] He has called another message, "The Lamps of the Virgins." That is an accurate representation of the content of the third message as I understand it so far. It details how God used (and intends to use in these Last Days) the Canaanite "sacred marriage" ritual as a *parabolic pantomime* to mock pious religious leaders. It also explains what many call "The Marriage Supper of the Lamb."

As you may be able to deduce from the quotation, each message in the Hebrew Scriptures explains a specific *parabolic image* that the Prophets used. But the in-

formation regarding each *parabolic image* is voluminous. Most of what I have written so far pertains just to the first message, "*The House*." Even the first volume in The Resurrection Theology Series, *Not All Israel Is Israel*, explains but a small part of that message. There may ultimately be four or five volumes in the series that deal with just that one message.

Consequently, it is ridiculous for anybody to think they can read what the Prophets wrote and interpret the *meaning* of any given passage without an understanding of what God has done in hiding the Gospel message of Jesus Christ in the Hebrew Scriptures. God knows all too well the arrogance and stubbornness that drives us. He knew the Early Church would fail to follow His plan, just as He knew the sons of Israel would go astray even before they left the Mountain of God.

That's why He provided a "*Way*" for the Gospel message of the Hebrew Scriptures to be understood by any generation. He hid it in parables that use timeless symbols for their *parabolic imagery* and simple Hebrew idioms to conceal the *meaning* of those symbols. The seven messages of the Hebrew Scriptures are invisible to even the most astute scholar of the Word. That's why those who have sought to understand it for the past two thousand years have failed. Once the *parabolic images* and Hebrew idioms have been explained, however, anyone can read the *parabolic statements* of the Prophets and marvel at the clarity with which they spoke concerning Jesus Christ. For example, many find mention of the Virgin Birth of Jesus Christ only in Isaiah 7:14. Yet the Hebrew Scriptures contain a complete, detailed explanation of not only the circumstances of Jesus' birth, but also how those circumstances provided the basis for God's redemption of mankind.

But, to get back to your question, I can only comment on my own expectations. First, as far as Russia is concerned, I wouldn't count it out. Hitler's Third Reich rose out of the devastation imposed on the German economy by other nations after World War I. Russia currently has no such circumstances inflicted on her. She still looms large in the final events of this era.

In the short term, you can expect civil war to continue to spread throughout Eastern Europe and the Republics of the Soviet Union. As I said long before the current fighting in Yugoslavia began, civil war is inevitable in that area of the world. [Editor: See "Questions & Answers," *The Voice of Elijah*, January 1991.] Civil war is the order of the day until stability is imposed by force. How and when that happens will be determined by political and economic events just now beginning.

Secondly, the "common interpretation" of the chapters you mentioned and many other prophetic passages in

the Old Testament will appear to be validated by future historical events. That will happen, not because those interpretations have anything to do with the one true *meaning* of those passages, but because God in His wisdom plans to "put hooks in the noses" of all those who have no real love for the Truth.

Most "churchgoers" are Pharisaic. They will avoid going too far astray from the Truth of the Gospel message simply because they have a great concern for pious appearances. The force of tradition alone is sufficient to hold them within the bounds of basic Christian Truth. Consequently, God will allow Satan to use their own tradition to lead them astray. They will even go as far as to accept the incarnation of the Antichrist as though he were Jesus Christ Himself returning again. [Editor: See "Do You Believe the Gospel of Jesus Christ?" in this issue.] When Jesus Christ finally returns, they will be left without excuse.

Editor: *How does the upcoming Middle East Peace Conference fit into the scheme of the End Times? Israel seems reticent to make concessions on certain issues, for example, the settlements on the West Bank and East Jerusalem. What would they be likely to concede in any peace agreement?*

Elijah: I see the nation of Israel stonewalling for as long as possible. Ultimately, the most they will allow is some sort of Palestinian self-government in the occupied territories. Even in that they will insist on strong Israeli involvement, probably in tandem with United Nations participation. Their short-term attempts to put off the inevitable will work against them in the future, however. Opinion polls in the United States are already showing reduction in support for the nation of Israel because of their hard line. That drift will continue, not just in the U.S., but throughout the world.

Eventually, xenophobic caution will probably cause the very thing the Israelis most fear. The armies of the world that are spoken of in connection with the Battle of Armageddon will come against the nation of Israel to impose the will of the nations of the world on that country. That's when things will become extremely interesting. Only those who understand the parables of Jesus will know the Truth. As He said, "Behold, I have told you in advance." [Editor: Matt. 24:25.] Unfortunately for the many, He spoke in parables when He told them what they needed to know.

Editor: *On the subject of parables, in the past three issues of the newsletter, you've written articles devoted to one aspect or another of the Old Testament parabolic message con-*

cerning Jesus Christ. You have shown how certain parabolic images are associated with Ancient Near Eastern mythology. [Editor: See "The Parabolic Pantomimes of Jesus Christ," The Voice of Elijah, January 1991; "The Image of the King as a Tree," The Voice of Elijah, April 1991; and "The Passover Parable," The Voice of Elijah, July 1991.] Please make clear for our readers why an emphasis on ancient Near Eastern "heathen" religions is so important for an understanding of the Gospel message of the Hebrew Scriptures.

Elijah: God hates the lies and the liars who spread lies about Him. His hatred burns with such an intensity against them that He made His Own Gospel message a mocking *parabolic pantomime*—a ritual re-enactment of the first mythology that pious religious leaders foisted off on the world after the Flood. The Prophets used images and idioms from the religions of the "heathens" around Israel because those images and idioms were throwbacks to the earlier, one-world religion practiced at the Tower of Babel. The atavistic nature of the Canaanite religion made it especially ideal for God's use in the Old Testament. Canaanite religion was, in large part, a carryover from an older, nomadic Amorite religion. That religion reflects the original nomadic ideas that were held by the wandering people who first built the city of Babylon.

Editor: *I understand you have begun writing an autobiography. Tell us more about that.*

Elijah: I've been working on several projects simultaneously for the last year or so. What you have mentioned is one of them. But it isn't really an autobiography. It's more of an explanation of why I am doing what I am doing. I have titled it, *God Called. I Answered*. The calling of God has dominated my life for more than a quarter of a century now, and I think people should have something that explains why I do what I do.

It was a challenge to recall specific events since my calling in 1966. Just looking back over the past years has been helpful. The more I understand about what God has done in hiding the Gospel message in the Hebrew Scriptures and what He plans to do by revealing it publicly now, the more I realize why the Spirit has driven me constantly for over twenty-five years to do what I am neither fully capable of nor naturally inclined to do.

Editor: *What do you mean?*

Elijah: Just that it requires greater powers of concentration than I have to take input from Ancient Near Eastern literature, including all the necessary passages in the Scriptures, and perceive their simplest logical association. Having said

that, however, I also must admit that I realize God's calling on my life has provided all that is necessary for me to accomplish the work He has called me to do. How He has done that I haven't yet understood, so I can't expect anyone else to understand it either.

Secondly, I have always enjoyed physical labor and working outside. Working at a desk or computer ten to twelve hours a day is not, and has never been, what I enjoy most, although I must admit it is by far the most rewarding. Yet even now I am too easily tempted to spend time doing things that take me away from researching or writing. That temptation has almost disappeared since I started writing for your newsletter, however. I can feel the urgency of the time in which we live now that God is allowing others to hear what only the few volunteers of The Elijah Project knew before last August.

Your readers' positive response is a great motivator, especially since they have heard and seen but a fraction of what God has said in the hidden message of the Hebrew Scriptures. That makes me realize, just as God has indicated in His Word, we are not alone in our love for Him and the Truth of His Word. Others will hear and believe just as Daniel said they would 2500 years ago. God's Word will accomplish the marvelous work He intends in these Last Days.

I have to apologize to those who are still waiting for the publication of *Not All Israel Is Israel*. I have struggled with that volume for more than a year now. When I started, I thought it would be a snap, six months at the most. I've known the information I intended to include in the work for well over fifteen years. What could be easier? But the larger it got, the more unwieldy it became and the more slowly it progressed. Now I'm just hoping I can finish it so that we can get the master to the printer by the end of October. If all goes well, you should have the copies you need to ship to your readers by the first of December.

I would like to say one other thing. Jesus could have died on the cross long before He did. Jewish leaders would have killed Him earlier, had they been able to find Him. But John tells us He left Jerusalem to avoid them. [Editor: John 11:53-12:1.] Jesus carefully chose the time, the place, and the circumstances of His death. He returned to Jerusalem and let them kill Him as the Passover Lamb in an elaborately planned *parabolic pantomime* God had already described in the Prophets. The same concern for timing applies now with regard to the *parabolic pantomime* of "Elijah" bringing the "rain." There are lots of things I would have done long ago but couldn't because it was not in God's time. To those who hear and believe, I say but one thing: Be patient. God has a plan. All He requires is belief anchored in the Old Testament Gospel message of Jesus Christ. ■

Do You Believe?

From Page 5

Paul's statement is true. But what evidence and convincing arguments brought the Believer to that point of confession and belief? Those are the essentials of faith (belief) that concerned the Early Church. [See "The Demons Also Believe. (Poor Devils!)" in this issue.]

The use of the term *Lord* in the passage above is specific. Paul says you must "confess Jesus as *Lord*" and believe in His resurrection. Included in his use of the one term *Lord*, however, are all the implications of the fact that Jesus is *the Christ*. He is *the Messiah*. That is the message the Early Church preached:

And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus {as} the Christ.
(Acts 5:42)

"The Early Church's reliance on the Old Testament stands in stark contrast to the role the Old Testament plays in the Church today."

There is no difference in meaning between the two terms *Christ* and *Messiah*. *Christ* is a transliteration of the Greek word *christos*; *Messiah* is a transliteration of the Hebrew word *mashiach*. Both words mean "anointed." The question is, "Anointed by whom? Anointed for what?" The Gospel message answers those questions and much more. The source of that Gospel also contains the evidence that persuaded Early Church Believers to believe.

The missionaries of the Early Church sought to prove to unbelievers that Jesus was the Messiah. Luke tells us that, after Saul's conversion on the road to Damascus, he immediately began preaching. Notice what he says:

Now for several days he was with the disciples who were at Damascus, and immediately he {began} to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God." And all

those hearing him continued to be amazed, and were saying, "Is this not he who in Jerusalem destroyed those who called on this name, and {who} had come here for the purpose of bringing them bound before the chief priests?" But Saul kept increasing in strength and confounding the Jews who lived at Damascus by proving that this {Jesus} is the Christ.

(Acts 9:19b-22)

When God called Paul, He commissioned him as the Apostle to the Gentiles. Nevertheless, it was Paul's custom to preach first to the Jews in every city he visited. In doing so, he used their own Scriptures—what are normally called "the Old Testament" and what I call "the Hebrew Scriptures"—as evidence to persuade them to believe:

Now when they had traveled through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they

came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. And according to Paul's custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and {saying}, "This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ." And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, along with a great multitude of the God-fearing Greeks and a number of the leading women.

(Acts 17:1-4)

Those who believed did so because of the evidence they heard presented from the Hebrew Scriptures. Therefore, Luke included in his work an account describing the important role of the Hebrew Scriptures in convincing Believers of the Truth of the Gospel message:

"Christian theology comes mainly from statements found in the New Testament."

And the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea; and when they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, {to see} whether these things were so. Many of them therefore believed, along with a number of prominent Greek women and men.

(Acts 17:10-12)

It is apparent that these Early Church Believers were convinced by a coherent body of evidence in the Hebrew Scriptures. The Apostles used this evidence to prove to unbelievers that Jesus was the Messiah. The message of the Hebrew Scriptures they understood was so detailed, in fact, that they even used it to win public debates with the Jews:

Now a certain Jew named Apollos, an Alexandrian by birth, an eloquent man, came to Ephesus; and he was mighty in the Scriptures. This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he was speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus, being acquainted only with the baptism of John; and he began to speak out boldly in the synagogue. But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. And when he wanted to go across to Achaia, the brethren encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him; and when he had arrived, he helped greatly those who had believed through grace; for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, demonstrating by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.

(Acts 18:24-28)

The Gospel of Truth

Contrary to common belief, the New Testament's message is mainly supplementary. God inspired the authors of the New Testament to produce their writings as evidence that He had *fulfilled* the things He promised in the Gospel message of the Hebrew Scriptures, just as Peter says:

"But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ should suffer, He has thus fulfilled."
(Acts 3:18)

The New Testament, therefore, contains only the conclusion to the Gospel message. But there should be no doubt that the Gospel the Apostles preached can be found as a detailed *promise* somewhere in the Old Testament:

Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called {as} an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures,
(Romans 1:1-2)

The Early Church's reliance on the Old Testament stands in stark contrast to the role the Old Testament plays in the Church today. Many Christians read only the New Testament if they read the Bible at all. Most of the sermons one hears are based on New Testament texts that were originally written in Greek. That is not surprising, since the ministers preaching the sermons were probably educated at seminaries that place far more emphasis on a mastery of the Greek of the New Testament than the Hebrew of the Old.

That emphasis is also understandable. Christian theology comes mainly from statements found in the New Testament. With few exceptions, the Church finds *The Teaching* concerning Jesus Christ only in those Old Testament passages that are quoted in the New Testament. But even then, an understanding of what the writer *meant* by those quotations has long since been lost.

Christian scholars working in the area of biblical theology cannot agree

A Long and Checkered History

The Church today is fractured and splintered beyond any hope of reconciliation. The Protestant Church has, since the Reformation, become a ludicrous caricature and the absolute antithesis of "the unity of the faith" envisioned by the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 4:13. The Roman Catholic Church, by and large, remains one umbrella, sheltering various individual movements, but still retaining the façade of "one faith." There are, for example, still many priests in Latin and South American countries firmly committed to the concept of "Liberation Theology." Among their ranks they count the now-deposed President of Haiti, Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

There is a tendency among Protestants to regard the Roman Catholic Church as only gradually degenerating into the indulgence-selling, iron-fisted monstrosity against which Martin Luther stood firm in his conviction that salvation came solely by faith. (See "The Authority of Scripture," *The Voice of Elijah*, January 1991.) That is hardly the case. A study of the history of the Christian Church during the "catholic" era discloses an ebb-and-flow pattern of serious misadventures into superstition, mysticism, and sensuality; hardly the kind of stuff any devout Christian would hasten to defend. That's why Protestants, Luther being the first, appeal to the writings of Augustine. He offers a much more untarnished spiritual basis on which to build. Hence, Protestants tend to gloss over the fact that the Christian Church existed in a serious state of limbo for over a thousand years between the time of Augustine and the time of the Reformation.

Protestants read the writings of St. Augustine because he agrees with Luther. He should, because Luther got from him the notion to pay more attention to the concept of salvation by faith. But nobody pays much attention to whether the Church might have strayed from the straight-and-narrow before the time of Augustine.

Nearly four hundred years of Church history preceded Augustine's go at the definitive last word. That provided lots of time for all sorts of egocentric creativity. Modern contrivances have nothing on these early fabrications. Today we call them cults. Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Christian Science are all widely recognized as deviations from Christian Truth; and the Church can easily identify them as such. How? By looking back at the decisions of the various *Councils of the Church* that were assembled before Augustine.

During the formative years of Christianity, such deviations from the Truth would have begun as just another segment of Christianity, as a sect. At that time, it took the decree of a Church Council to determine whether something was heresy. Once decided, however, the Council's decision classified as heretical anyone who believed otherwise on a particular issue; and the Church excommunicated heretics.

The Church Councils made decrees concerning the nature of the Trinity, the nature of Jesus Christ, and the nature of man. In some cases—for example, the Synod of Orange regarding predestination—a Church Council refused to make a definitive statement.

The lesson to be learned from the actions taken by these Early Church leaders is obvious: Historic Christianity has held from the outset that *what one believes is absolutely essential to salvation*. For one to believe otherwise is contrary not only to the evidence to be found in the New Testament, but also to the message of the Old Testament and historic Christian belief. ■

“It is not surprising, therefore, that the Gospel Paul preached agreed with what the other Apostles preached. They gained their understanding of the Gospel message by revelation just as he did.”

on how the Old Testament relates to the New Testament. Most see no easily definable connection between the two Testaments. Therefore, they relegate the Old Testament to a bygone era, relying on the New Testament for their knowledge of the Gospel message. For most, the Old Testament merely provides background material.

The Hidden Gospel Revealed

The confusion in the Church today regarding the Gospel message would have been completely foreign to the Apostles. The New Testament had not yet been written. So they had no other source of evidence to confirm the Gospel they preached. Their evidence was in the Hebrew Scriptures, and they knew it contained but one Gospel message.

In the first two chapters of Galatians, Paul argues that the Gospel he preached differed not at all from that preached by the other Apostles. He begins his argument by warning his readers against anyone who preached a different “gospel”:

there are some who are disturbing you, and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is

“The Gospel message of the Hebrew Scriptures had been hidden there long before before the First Advent of Jesus Christ.”

preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed.

(Galatians 1:7b–9)

Paul continues by saying he eventually went up (fourteen years after he was called) to meet with the Apostles in Jerusalem. At that time he “submitted to them the Gospel which I preach among the Gentiles” (Gal. 2:2). Those Apostles agreed that Paul’s Gospel was exactly the same as their own. Paul informs us they accepted him as the Apostle to the Gentiles because of this. But he steadfastly maintains he did not obtain the Gospel he preached from them:

But from those who were of high reputation (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)—well, those who were of reputation contributed nothing to me. But on the contrary, seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter {had been} to the circumcised (for He who effectually worked for Peter in {his} apostleship to the circumcised effectually worked for me also to the Gentiles), and recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we {might go} to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised.

(Galatians 2:6–9)

How did Paul gain his understanding of the Gospel message if he didn’t get it from someone else? By revelation:

For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but {I received it} through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

(Galatians 1:11–12)

It is not surprising, therefore, that the Gospel Paul preached agreed with what the other Apostles preached. They gained their understanding of the Gospel message by revelation just as he did. (See “Where Are Jesus’ Disciples?” *The Voice of Elijah*, April 1991.) So everyone got it from the same source—from Jesus Christ.

One simple fact made revelation of the Gospel message necessary. Paul stresses it several times in his letters: The Gospel message of the Hebrew Scriptures had been hidden there long before the First Advent of Jesus Christ. (See “Jesus Talks About The Mystery,” *The Voice of Elijah*, January 1991.)

“Christian scholars working in the area of biblical theology cannot agree on how the Old Testament relates to the New Testament.”

Paul mentions the Gospel message hidden in the Hebrew Scriptures in his letter to the Ephesians. He also reiterates his claim that he attained his understanding of that Gospel message through revelation. Then he calls the Gospel “the mystery of Christ” and points out that it also had been revealed to all the other “apostles and prophets”:

For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles— if indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God’s grace which was given to me for you; that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief. And by referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it

“The Church today no longer understands all the details of the Gospel message that Paul and the Early Church leaders preached.”

has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit.
(Ephesians 3:1–5)

Paul goes on in that letter to confirm why the Gospel had to be revealed. It had “been hidden.” He says it was:

the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God,
(Ephesians 3:9b)

Later in the same letter, he mentions “The Mystery” again when he asks the Ephesians to:

{pray} on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel.
(Ephesians 6:19b)

Paul also identifies the Gospel as “The Mystery” in his letter to the Romans. From this text we learn that Paul believed the Gospel he preached had “been kept secret for long ages past, but now is manifested”:

Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, {leading} to obedience of faith;
(Romans 16:25–26)

Again, in his letter to the Colossians he refers to the Gospel message as “the mystery which has been hidden”:

Of {this church} I was made a minister according to the stewardship from God bestowed on me for your benefit, that I might fully carry out the {preaching of} the word of God, {that is}, the mystery which has been hidden from the {past} ages and generations; but has now been manifested to His saints, to whom

God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.
(Colossians 1:25–27)

This passage parallels the quotation above from Paul’s letter to the Ephesians. But here he changed the phrase “revealed to His holy apostles and prophets” to the more general statement, “manifested to His saints.” That change reflects the fact that the leaders of the Early Church gained their understanding of the Gospel by revelation. The average Believer, however, gained his understanding of that message only through the ministry of the Church leaders.

Finally, in his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul compares the wisdom of the Gospel message to the wisdom of the world. He again mentions “The Mystery” of the Gospel:

And my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God. Yet we do



Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475–1564) “The Creation of Adam,” Conservative Christianity appears to have fallen for one of the oldest ruses in the book. While Believers have been distracted by the issue of evolution vs. creation, the master of all pickpockets has lifted their spiritual wallet. One could conclude from the current state of affairs that the touchstone of historic Christian belief is belief in the Creation Account. The tacit understanding of the layperson in conservative circles is, “believe anything you will, but you cannot believe in evolution.”

While evolution was becoming the single most important battle in the conflict, conservatives lost sight of why they engaged in the conflict. Defense of historic Christian doctrine was the original reason for the conservatives’ dispute with advocates of evolution. To have faith did not simply *mean* that you believed in the Bible as the inspired Word of God. It *meant* that you believed the Gospel message of the Scriptures. Recent decades have seen increased concern for peripheral issues and a corresponding diminishment of concern for eternal truths. ■

“God has far greater things planned for the Redeemed of the Lord in the coming days than one would have ever imagined.... Paul infers, however, that scoffers will dismiss it as ridiculous.”

speaking wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away; but we speak God’s wisdom in a mystery, the hidden {wisdom}, which God predestined before the ages to our glory; {the wisdom} which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.
(1 Corinthians 2:4–8)

The Hidden Gospel Restored

The Church today no longer understands all the details of the Old Testament Gospel message that Paul and the other Early Church leaders preached. The Early Church lost its understanding of most of that Gospel message during the doctrinal controversies that tore the Church asunder soon after the Apostles died. (See “Where Are Jesus’ Disciples?” *The Voice of Elijah*, April 1991.)

The only insight into the Gospel message available to the Church in the intervening years has been its bare outlines as revealed in scattered mentions in the New Testament. But God will soon change all that.

The New Testament references to the Old Testament Gospel message are but a few tidbits of an incredibly detailed explanation of God’s purpose in His incarnation as Jesus Christ, the Messiah of Israel. That is, the Hebrew Scriptures explain exactly what God intended to accomplish through the Person and work of Jesus Christ.

By the grace of God, the Church has always had enough of the Gospel message for one to be saved. Less than five hundred years ago, however, the Protestant Reformation reclaimed an important part of the Truth by throwing back the heavy veil that for centuries had obscured the most basic tenet of the Gos-

pel message—salvation by faith (belief). (See “The Authority of Scripture,” *The Voice of Elijah*, January 1991.) Since then, the vitality of Christian faith (belief) has shown itself in the life of Protestant Believers time and again.

Yet the total power of faith (belief) to liberate has been held in check by the seven seals that have sealed the Old Testament Gospel message. (See “Did Jesus Leave a Will?” *The Voice of Elijah*, July 1991.) That message has remained hidden according to God’s eternal plan, awaiting the End of the Age. But it will soon become available to all who will listen, providing nourishment so that faith (belief) may grow again to full strength in the “hearts” of Believers everywhere.

In the wisdom of God, the Gospel message of the Hebrew Scriptures agrees completely with the tenets of “fundamentalist” Protestantism. In this way He has managed to invalidate the “cultic” label that false teachers in the Church will inevitably apply to *The Teaching*. Of all the doctrines taught in the various segments of Christianity, “fundamentalist” beliefs most closely represent historic Christian beliefs.

The Gospel message hidden in the Hebrew Scriptures provides compelling evidence and convincing arguments that Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God, came as the Messiah of Israel. And only a complete understanding of that message will produce invincible faith (belief) in the Believer. Before now, such faith (belief) was not required for one to persevere in

Christian faith (belief); but that, too, is about to change.

The beginning of the End is upon us. The time for the “restoration of all things” has arrived. The Apostle Peter affirms it must be so before the End of the Age:

Repent therefore and return, that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, whom heaven must receive until [the] period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time.
(Acts 3:19–21)

Jesus also told His Apostles to expect the same “restoration of all things.” In so doing, He referred to the parabolic image under which this ministry will fulfill its divine calling:

And His disciples asked Him, saying, “Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?” And He answered and said, “Elijah is coming and will restore all things.”
(Matthew 17:10–11)

That time is now. The restoration of *The Teaching* comes first because it provides the basis for rock-solid faith (belief) in the True Believer. It is essential that *The Teaching of Jesus Christ* once again becomes the vitality that energizes saving faith (belief). True Believers will use *The Teaching* to prepare to meet their Lord in the purity of holiness that the Apostle Paul envisioned long ago:

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her; that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Him-

“The true Church is scattered today throughout the world, among the various segments of the Christian Church.”

self the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless.

(Ephesians 5:25–27)

Other restorative events are sure to follow as the Spirit of God works to prepare His Church for the Return of Jesus Christ. God will work through each one of them to accomplish His will in and through those who believe.

“In the wisdom of God, the Gospel message of the Hebrew Scriptures agrees completely with the tenets of ‘fundamentalist’ Protestantism.”

The true Church is scattered today throughout the world, among the various segments of the Christian Church. Most of these True Believers have few, if any, around them who could comprehend the profound emotional *significance* they attach to their relationship to God. But you, if you are one of those for whom this message is intended, have already begun to realize that. You will have felt the stirring within you as you have read this newsletter. You somehow know what you have read is true because the Spirit of God within you has testified to that Truth.

Know this also. God has far greater things planned for the Redeemed of the Lord in the coming days than one would have ever imagined. The Apostle Paul referred to it as something that could have been accomplished in his own day. But it did not happen then. It will happen now. Paul infers, however, that scoffers will dismiss it as ridiculous:

“Take heed therefore, so that the thing spoken of in the Prophets may not come upon {you}:

‘BEHOLD, YOU SCOFFERS, AND MARVEL, AND PERISH; FOR I AM ACCOMPLISHING A WORK IN YOUR DAYS, A

WORK WHICH YOU WILL NEVER BELIEVE, THOUGH SOMEONE SHOULD DESCRIBE IT TO YOU.’”

(Acts 13:40–41)

The Church today is filled with Pretenders whose sole reason for being there is that they were invited to Sunday School. They have never had a personal encounter with the Living God. They have no interest in Jesus Christ and would certainly have no real interest in what you find written here. They see the local church solely as a place for social gathering.

There are others in the Church who began with a sincere desire to know and follow God. These have long since given up that quest. Perhaps they have been tainted by the presence of the multitude introduced to the Church without a proper introduction to God. Paul also speaks concerning them:

But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron, {men} who forbid marriage {and advocate} abstaining from foods, which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth.

(1 Timothy 4:1–3)

The great apostasy of the Church is nearly complete. You can now see the charlatans and Pretenders in the media every day, disseminating their own thoughts and ideas, and insisting God is speaking through them. Don’t be concerned. This secularization of the Church must take place first, just as Jesus said:

And at that time many will fall away and will deliver up one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise, and will mislead many. And because lawlessness is increased, most people’s love will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end, he shall be saved. And



Hans Memling, (1430/40–1494)
“The Last Judgment.”

The wrath of God is not a favorite topic with this generation of Christians. Out of sight and out of mind, hell is still a reality, but one that confronts the soul only after it is too late to do anything to avoid it. Christians today seem unconcerned that Jesus said only a few would be saved and that:

“Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.’” (Matt. 7:22–23)

The only thing that stands between any individual and that horrific place is faith—belief in Jesus Christ derived from a knowledge of the Gospel message. ■

“There is a great delusion coming, one that will leave all but the strongest believing a lie. The Gospel message hidden in the Hebrew Scriptures will soon become essential for True Believers to sustain their faith (belief).”

this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations, and then the end shall come.
(Matthew 24:10–14)

The words “deliver up one another and hate one another” evoke memories of recent legal proceedings and prison terms stemming from accusations between television ministers, don’t they? What has happened so far is nothing compared to what is to come. If the most visible leaders of the Church are involved in such things, just imagine what ordinary ministers must be doing!

It is obvious to all True Believers that Jesus Christ will soon return. But all who believe the Gospel now will not, as Jesus said, “endure to the end.” There is a great delusion coming, one that will leave all but the strongest believing a lie.

The Gospel message hidden in the Hebrew Scriptures will soon become es-

strains him now, so that in his time he may be revealed. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains {will do so} until he is taken out of the way. And then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; {that is}, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. And for this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they might believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.
(2 Thessalonians 2:3–12)

“The Antichrist will appear only after the occurrence of specific historical events that false teachers have been proclaiming for some time.”

essential for True Believers to sustain their faith (belief). It is the sole remaining bulwark that will stand against the delusion that is to come. Paul speaks of these events in his letter to the Thessalonians:

Let no one in any way deceive you, for {it will not come} unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things? And you know what re-

In this one passage, Paul refers to the apostasy of the Church, the delusion, the public restoration of the Truth, and the coming of the Antichrist. Together, these provide the way in which God intends to “gather out” of His Church all unbelievers and “gather in” True Believers (Matt. 13:24–30). He will publicly reveal those who “did not receive the love of the truth” so they have no excuse at His Coming.

The Antichrist will provide all the supernatural signs and wonders that one would expect of the incarnate God, Jesus Christ. When he appears, those who do not understand the Gospel message of the Hebrew Scriptures will accept him as Jesus Christ Himself! That is why Paul wrote, “he takes his seat in the temple of

God, displaying himself as being God.” It is also the reason Jesus warned against the appearance of “false Christs” that would “mislead, if possible, even the elect”:

And unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days shall be cut short. Then if anyone says to you, ‘Behold, here is the Christ,’ or ‘There {He is},’ do not believe {him}. For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. Behold, I have told you in advance.
(Matthew 24:22–25)

The final delusion has already begun. In its first stage, certain events will appear to validate specific lies the Church believes regarding the Return of Jesus Christ. That is, the Antichrist will appear only after the occurrence of specific historical events that false teachers have been proclaiming for some time.

Before the Antichrist appears, I will make a complete explanation of the first sealed message of the Hebrew Scriptures available to all who care to listen. Some who hear will believe, and do what is necessary to prepare themselves for the appearance of the Antichrist. But most will not even bother to listen, much less believe. Paul also mentions why that is:

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but {wanting} to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths.
(2 Timothy 4:3–4)

Let the reader understand. ■

Why Not?

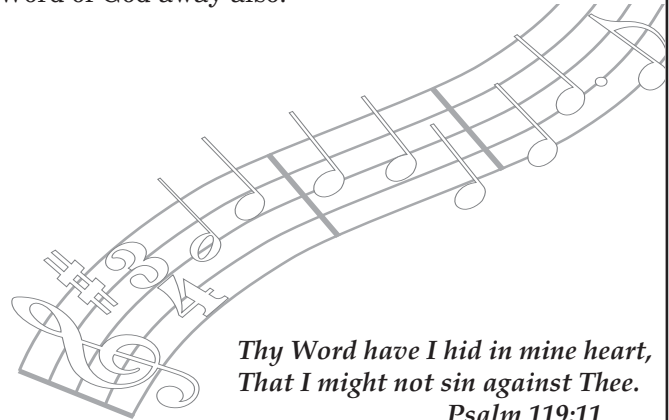
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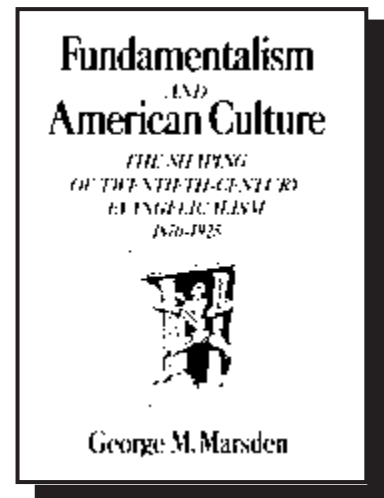


*Thy Word have I hid in mine heart,
That I might not sin against Thee.*
Psalm 119:11

To Order, use the Order Form

Where Did That Come From?

- ❖ How did the novel notion that God loves everybody find its way into fundamentalist beliefs?
- ❖ Where did Dispensationalism originate?
- ❖ How did it come to be a part of fundamental doctrine?
- ❖ How did Fundamentalism become identified with ignorance and narrow-mindedness?
- ❖ What did William Jennings Bryan, former Democratic Party leader, presidential candidate, and Secretary of State for Woodrow Wilson, contribute to the fundamentalist image?



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What if all Israel was “cut off?”

John the Baptist warned it could happen. (Matt. 3:10)
The Apostle Paul said it did happen. (Rom. 11:11–24)

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