

MEN WHO WOULD BE "KINGS"

by John M. Bland

PREFACE

by Frank Daniels

The Kingless Christianity, or “Christian Equality,” movement began in Gainesville, Florida, in 1991, but for its impetus I must begin my own story in 1988. Early that year, Mark Miller showed me an issue of a magazine called the *Examiner*, published by Charles A. Holt. Holt’s central inference from the Bible seemed to be that there was no clearly defined “pattern of worship,” nor were denominations authorized by God. I read the magazine but was basically disinterested in its contents. Miller moved from Gainesville to Boston that summer, leaving me to study the Bible with a group of eager truth-seekers. That fall, we began to work on 1st Timothy together. I quickly realized that I needed to learn Greek.

In November that year, Robert Hach visited Gainesville. He was an English instructor from Miami who had departed from the so-called Boston Movement in the churches of Christ. Hach had gone on to become part of what others termed a “house church movement,” but that day he did not speak much about movements. His talk concerned God’s use of rhetoric – a topic worthy of a professor. Not long afterward, however, the classics instructor who had taught Greek to Mr. Hach moved to Gainesville. Bruce Wood had begun teaching at the University of Florida and had access there to a computerized database of Greek and Latin literature. I brought him into our exegesis study group, and he offered to provide us a formal class in ancient Greek at the UF campus.

After that course was complete, I continued to learn Greek from Bruce in private study and started to translate the Book of John – almost as an exercise. He provided handouts on root words and related grammatical forms, took me through studies in culture and ancient customs, and discussed issues in translation with me. I purchased the Gramcord software and began reading lexica, the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, the *Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, and every book in the library that concerned Greek translation.

Bruce wound up leaving Gainesville, but he left an indelible mark. While I studied with him, he produced his own translation of John’s first letter. I visited his office at the university nearly every day, and we discussed his research and his ideas about bias in translation. Now more interested in the idea of restoration, I subscribed to the *Examiner*. At just the right time, along came John Bland.

John was basically a retired minister who had moved to town along with his friends, Eddie Howard and Paul Silvestri – themselves ministers. John was a serious, scholarly person. At the time, I would also best describe him as intolerant. It was John who had suggested to Eddie that they lock the building when services started, presumably to encourage people to arrive on time. His style then was somewhat confrontational. About Christians who understood salvation

differently, he once said to tell anyone who asks about them that they're all doomed. "Once you let one get in the door, they all get in." When someone else gave his opinion on an issue, John meant to say that we all need to search for what God intended to communicate. This came out bluntly as, "Your opinion doesn't matter."

Yet John was the one there who seemed to have the best background knowledge. By this time in 1991, I had worn out the pocket New Testament that I used. I was in the middle of translating Matthew from Greek into English and stopped at chapter 23. I asked John to read the first twelve verses and tell me what they meant. I was convinced that nothing I had heard previously was correct, and the passage was intriguing. We agreed that there were several other passages that read similarly, and John said he'd take a look at them all in context. On a later day, he returned to me. "Did you figure out what this means," I asked. "Yes," he replied, "It means that our churches and denominations have **no right to exist!**" That was the moment that the Kingless movement began.

John had come from an entirely different direction from my own, but he and I were about to arrive at the same destination together. I had been studying Greek for several years by then, and John was an avid reader and thorough researcher with a strong background. Together we went from passage to passage and book to book, reading everything in its context and comparing our ideas. John Bland went through a rapid metamorphosis; the more he learned, the more Christ-like and laid back he became. Soon, he thought to compile these ideas about the nature of the first-century assembly into a single thesis. John viewed the issue of Bible-based equality as a central rationale for unity among believers. Like a modern Martin Luther, John Bland explains in "Kings" that all Christians should necessarily accept one another as honest scholars searching for God's Truth. As for our human organizations, John maintains that they "have no right to exist," according to the Bible. Read his thesis, and see what conclusion you reach.

FOREWORD

There have been many reformation movements within the context of Christianity throughout its long history. If one espouses the need for reformation, it is naturally implied that there has been a departure from the original or Biblical pattern. This thesis not only challenges Roman Catholic claims and all Protestant denominations, but also is a direct challenge to believers that have deep roots in the so-named restoration movement that was basically endemic to the United States.

Though the seeds of this movement had already been planted in Europe, they found the necessary nourishment to blossom in 19th century America. Men of various denominations – called "parties" at that time – were convicted that their sects were guilty of diluting scriptural precepts by their catechisms, creeds, and human tenets. Thus was ushered in a new age of individual responsibility to know God's will. Personal Bible study was urged upon the "laity". A call went out to all those who would follow Jesus to reject all anti-Biblical precepts. "Lay aside your creeds and use the Bible only," was the challenge. "Cease the use of denominational names," was the dare. "Erect no orthodoxy based upon arguments from silence," was the admonition. New definitions were called for. "Call Bible things by Bible names," was the plea. Challenges for public discussion were issued and accepted. Debates took place in town halls, church buildings, open squares and countless milieus across this great land. Millions answered the call. Even more were influenced by the logic and purity of the "restoration plea". Restoration leaders were so sanguine regarding the ultimate results that some believed that the "millennium" would be ushered in as a result of progress made.

Unfortunately, like all other movements in history, it died. It can be said to have ended in 1866 with the death of Alexander Campbell, one of its strongest proponents. The offspring begotten from restoration zeal lost their focus as they gained recognition with the community at large. They were deceived into believing that they had arrived; that Biblical Christianity had indeed been restored. Instead of continuing to maintain an atmosphere of healthy Biblical discussion and debate, they instead defended their own brand of orthodoxy.

Since the attitude of entrenchment has always rung the death knell to mental expansion and Biblical growth, David Lipscomb felt compelled to remind all truth seekers that, "To suppress discussion is to deprive truth of all its vantage ground". Even though the Truth has nothing to fear by open discussion, dissension was discouraged by mainstreamers.

Eventually the movement became a monument; as immovable and inflexible as those that their forefathers had attempted to destroy with the light of Biblical teaching. Dissenters in their midst were suppressed, silenced, or ousted. "Heretics" were burned at the stake of mainstream disapproval and rejection. As an ultimate result, full-blown denominationalism occurred as corporations were formed, cathedrals were built at every street corner and ministerial schools and colleges were planted to train the defenders of their orthodoxy. The intellectual power of mainstream thought was harnessed as countless tomes were filled with "correct" Biblical exposition and commentary. "If a brother didn't write it, it couldn't be right" was the subliminal message.

Instead of continuing along the trail blazed by the restoration fathers and away from the mind restricting confines of Romanism and ecclesiastical officialdom, this new denomination backslid towards "popery", leaving restoration principles squashed in its wake. Much backsliding was already occurring during the heyday of the restoration and there were elements of the denominational apostasy that had gone unaddressed altogether.

It is to this tendency towards apostasy that the author wants to direct this study. His call is for renewal:

- the renewal of Biblical discussion and debate;
- the revival of the challenge to orthodoxy everywhere;
- the rekindling of the desire to "throw down the gauntlet" to every theory that would oppose the teachings of Jesus, the Anointed One; and
- the invitation to believers and skeptics alike to enter the fray as challenges to institutional "Christianity" are examined.

Will you join in this quest for the unbridled examination of ecclesiastical religion in a desire to learn more about true freedom found in Jesus and in Biblical Christianity?

OUTLINE

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INTRODUCTION

We have been guilty in the church of zealous dedication to traditionalism, and defending traditional views with as much fervor as if they were divine edicts. With this process we have created a definite ... theology, some of which may have but flimsy foundation in Scriptural fact. The conclusion is drawn that our conventional interpretation of some passages and practices

must in FACT be New Testament Christianity. Because a viewpoint has been held in our brotherhood for an extended period of time, however, no more authenticates its truth than a tradition held in any other church. God's Word alone is ultimate truth, and our interpretation of it may be very faulty.

Martin Luther, the best known reformer and the major catalyst of the Great Reformation movement that took place in Europe in the 16th century admonishes all those that would be Biblical scholars with these words:

"O that God should desire that my interpretation and that of all teachers should disappear, and each Christian should come straight to the Scripture alone and to the pure Word of God!... Go on to the bible itself, dear Christians, and let my expositions and those of all scholars be no more than a tool with which to build aright, so that we can understand, taste, and abide in the simple and pure Word of God; for God dwells alone in Zion." (1522)

Luther's colleagues also said:

"First we affirm that we desire to follow Scripture alone as rule of faith and religion, without mixing it with any other thing which might be devised by the opinion of men, apart from the Word of God, and without wishing to accept for our spiritual government any other doctrine than what is conveyed to us by the same word without addition or diminution, according to the command of our Lord." (Geneva Confession, 1536)

Having been raised a child of the restoration makes questioning the foundational traditions of our fellowship unsettling, to say the least. However, it has become necessary to question many of the "givens" from time to time. It is with concern for restoration principles and the continual propensity towards apostasy that I approach the subject of this thesis.

Human nature has shown a continual gravitation toward shifting away from responsibility. This tendency is revealed for what it really is in Biblical writings. Bible history reverberates with those who "would be kings" and those who would – admittedly with some trepidation – give up their prerogatives to those who "would be kings".

As the author mulls over the idea of returning to Biblical Christianity established by Jesus, he has found it necessary to challenge the human tendency to shift responsibility already firmly entrenched in our practice, if not in our theology. Many of us who deny the authority of the "clergy/laity" system in Roman Catholicism and most Protestant denominations are blinded by bigotry and self-righteousness as we disregard our own. As we continually "compare ourselves by ourselves" we prove that – like the Corinthian body – we are equally unwise (2 Corinthians 10:12).

This, of course, is the nature of tradition. It becomes a paradigm, a way of looking at the world. Problems are easily overlooked as we carry on the heritage. Our intellects are continually narrowed as we study the Scriptures with the blinders of our paradigm.

It is the purpose of this brief work to challenge the entire organizational tradition of our church structure. From the concepts of ministry to the perpetuation and maintenance of the corporation with its board of directors and real estate holdings. As the author embarks upon the course of criticizing the ecclesiastical religious system inherent today in Christendom, he is reminded of the words of Robert Richardson, one of the Restoration Movement spokesmen. Encouraging individual study as well as the willingness to express one's convictions he writes:

"For my part, I shall ever claim the right of thinking and judging for myself, and of fully and freely expressing my views, whether these correspond with those of others or differ from them. This I conceive to be a high and holy privilege, and its exercise a sacred duty." (*Millennial Harbinger*, Vol. IV, No. 6, June, 1847, p. 350)

The author challenges all those who are interested in truth to remove their blinders as we together engage in this most sacred duty and study the scriptures together.

THE INTELLECTUALLY COMPROMISING NATURE OF TRADITIONS AND PARADIGMS

"Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him, 'Why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?' He answered and said to them, 'Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: 'This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. And they worship me worthlessly, **teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.**'" (Mark 7:5-7, emphasis mine)

The above Scriptures illustrate very well the intellectually crippling nature of traditions. As we can see, these Jewish leaders were not accusing Jesus of breaking God's commandments but the "tradition of the elders." This "paradigm" had reached a position of supremacy. Its importance had blinded them to the God's authority. It brought on the accusation by Jesus that their tradition had caused them to violate the law of God. Their strict adherence to their paradigms had caused them to overlook the anomalies (things that contradict the accepted view). The consequences were dire. Their worship was vain. Traditions were taught as God's will. Jesus accused them of

"... annulling God's message for your tradition which you have handed down. And you do many such things." (Mark 7:13).

They constantly found themselves *defending their traditions* rather than accepting the Messiah. This human propensity towards tradition caused them to multiply their mistakes. It caused them to lay the wrong foundations. It ultimately resulted in their rejection of the Anointed Jesus.

We offspring of restoration principles often look with disdain upon a people who could be so obtuse. We could never be like them! However, we have accepted numerous traditions without a peep of protest and, as the quote from Waymond Miller states, have vigorously defended them. Again, this is the nature of paradigms.

The "restoration father" Barton W. Stone had this to say when commenting on this human tendency buried deep in the heart of us all:

"A creed, or confession of faith, is considered both as a summary of doctrines taught in the Bible and an explanation of them. If it were left in its own place, to occupy the low ground of human opinion, it might do some good. But the moment it is received and adapted as a *standard*, it assumes the place of the Bible...." (Stone, et. al., *Apology*, 1804)

It is not enough to deny the existence of creeds within one's own theology. If they exist in the heart and make themselves known in practice, they are just as much creeds as if they were written and engraved in stone.

Stone went on to explain the necessity of distinguishing between our individual or collective views of Biblical truth and our general propensity to defend our orthodoxies.

"We must carefully distinguish between believing fundamental scripture truths and any explanation of them by fallible men." (*Biography*, 1844)

In looking at this idea of paradigm, the author will compare it to the humanistic view of the Theory of Evolution. Scientists who espouse this theory point to the "fact of evolution" to sweep away all arguments to the contrary. They do this "pontifically." The theory "must" be true because, in their paradigm, there simply is no alternative. A quote attributed to the Nobel Prize winner in science Dr. George Wald is a great example of the strength of paradigms in affecting one's interpretations.

"When it comes to the origin of life on this earth, there are only two possibilities: creation or spontaneous generation (evolution). There is no third way. Spontaneous generation was disproved 100 years ago, but that leads us only to one other conclusion: that of supernatural creation. We **cannot accept that** on philosophical grounds; therefore, **we choose to believe the impossible**: that life arose spontaneously by chance." (emphasis mine)¹

When you approach science in this way, you certainly have no fear of the evidence. Any anomalies that might arise, therefore, are explained away and/or incorporated within the parameters of the paradigm itself.

¹ Note by Frank Daniels: This is actually a "phantom" quote created by Creationists; Wald never said it. The quote was a corruption of statements by Wald such as this one from *Scientific American*, September, 1958, p. 100, "Throughout our history we have entertained two kinds of views of the origin of life: one that life was created supernaturally, the other that it arose "spontaneously" from nonliving material. ... This great controversy ended in the mid-19th century with the experiments of Louis Pasteur, which seemed to dispose finally of the possibility of spontaneous generation. For almost a century afterward biologists proudly taught their students this history and the firm conclusion that spontaneous generation had been scientifically refuted and could not possibly occur. Does this mean that they accepted the alternative view, a supernatural creation of life? Not at all. They had no theory of the origin of life, and if pressed were likely to explain that questions involving such unique events as origins and endings have no place in science." Their paradigm shift made the issue impossible to discuss.

Karl Popper believed that a theory or hypothesis was scientific only to the extent that it was capable of being verified or falsified viz reproduced in the laboratory or disproven. The problem with this criterion is that it is impossible to test every important scientific proposition in isolation. Background assumptions have to be made so that detailed statements can be tested. The paradigm, then, is made up of the background assumptions that define the current scientific world view.

Berkeley law professor Philip E. Johnson, in his book entitled *Darwin on Trial*, explains the all-pervasive nature of the traditional paradigm like this:

"A paradigm is not merely a hypothesis, which can be discarded if it fails a single experimental test. It is a way of looking at the world, or some part of it, and scientists understand even the anomalies in its terms. According to Kuhn, anomalies by themselves never falsify a paradigm, because its defenders can resort to ad hoc hypotheses to accommodate any potentially disconfirming evidence. **A paradigm rules until it is replaced by another paradigm...** Kuhn described experimental evidence showing that ordinary people tend to see what they have been trained to see, and fail to see what they know ought not to be present. The finest scientists are no exception. On the contrary, because they are dependent upon inferences and upon observations that are difficult to make, they are particularly prone to paradigm-influenced misperception." (emphasis mine)

Johnson is explaining the difficulty the disputer of Darwinism has when dealing with the "experts". He goes on to say that this tunnel vision of scientific paradigm increasingly narrows as it becomes sophisticated. When you include the compensatory relationship of public funding and grants, researchers have no alternative but to pursue their research within the boundaries of this all encompassing paradigm or risk losing their grants.²

In making spiritual application, one must also examine the boundaries of his own paradigms to see whether they encompass Biblical truth or exclude it. The paradigm of the Pharisees referred to in Mark 7, restricted the Jewish orthodoxy from accepting their Messiah. Jesus never fit their paradigm. He looked nothing like their Messiah. He was the "stone that the builders rejected" (Matthew 21:42).

² Frank Daniels adds, Thomas Kuhn himself wrote, "Why should a paradigm change be called a revolution? What are the functions of scientific revolutions in the development of science? A scientific revolution is a non-cumulative developmental episode in which an older paradigm is replaced in whole or in part by an incompatible new one. A scientific revolution that results in paradigm change is analogous to a political revolution. Political revolutions begin with a growing sense by members of the community that existing institutions have ceased adequately to meet the problems posed by an environment that they have in part created. The dissatisfaction with existing institutions is generally restricted to a segment of the political community. Political revolutions aim to change political institutions in ways that those institutions themselves prohibit. As crisis deepens, individuals commit themselves to some concrete proposal for the reconstruction of society in a new institutional framework. Competing camps and parties form. One camp seeks to defend the old institutional constellation. One (or more) camps seek to institute a new political order. As polarisation occurs, political recourse fails. Parties to a revolutionary conflict finally resort to the techniques of mass persuasion." (Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolution*)

This example shows the extremes that a paradigm can take you. Even the testimony of miracles could not replace their own idea as to what the Anointed One was supposed to be. The scientific paradigm of Darwinism has caused many intelligent men to reject God, the Creator. The religious paradigm of the Jewish leaders caused them to reject Jesus, the Anointed One. What of our paradigm? Has it caused us to reject plain truths concerning the authority, structure, and organization of the Lord's body?

The author has often wondered why good students of the scriptures can differ so widely in their Biblical interpretations; why some reject many "plain teachings". We can assume they are familiar with the same verses. What is the problem?

As you examine the above definition of a paradigm it becomes obvious. Biblical interpretations are related to the basic paradigms of the individual students. Roman Catholics are going to interpret scriptures based upon Catholic paradigms; Lutherans on Lutheran paradigms; Baptists along Baptist paradigms, etc. Anomalies are explained within the parameters of their paradigms. In order for a person to accept a different interpretation, he must first allow his former paradigm to be compromised – at least.

This, of course, applies to my own Bible studies as well – it being subject to my own paradigm. As Kuhn described, all of us "... are guilty of seeing what we are trained to see, and fail to see what we know ought not to be present." This is bad enough when looking at a scientific hypotheses but it is disastrous if we are interested in treating Biblical writings with the respect that they deserve.

Jesus was hated because he made changing the Jewish and world paradigms a necessity for Kingdom citizenship. He spoke very directly about the difficulty:

"No one puts a piece from a new garment on an old one; otherwise the new makes a tear, and also the piece that was taken out of the new does not match the old. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine will burst the wineskins and be spilled, and the wineskins will be ruined. But new wine must be put into new wineskins, and both are preserved. And no one, having old wine, immediately desires new; for **he says the old is better**. (Luke 5:36-39, emphasis mine)."

We can certainly relate to that! "The old is better!" Jesus is relating how paradigms operate. He explains the pervasive nature of humans to shun change of any kind – even when it's right! Challenge to an old paradigm is unsettling! It makes everyone connected with it uncomfortable.

As we continue to apply the model of Kuhn's paradigm to religious matters we notice that the experts can be much guiltier than the laymen in promoting the existing paradigm. By comparison, the scientist's dependence upon inference and observations become the religionist's arguments from silence, claims of Holy Spirit Leading and pastoral interpretation of difficult scriptures. The aforementioned admonition that Martin Luther gave to those seeking enlightenment to "Go on to the bible itself, dear Christians, and let my expositions and those of

all scholars be no more that a tool with which to build aright" is forgotten as the fine nuances of theological orthodoxy are carefully defined to protect the "laity" from heresy.

When you couple this with the pecuniary interest of accepting a living from the ministry – the pressure to maintain the paradigm becomes overwhelming to all but a few. From this perspective, religious leaders are much less objective in dealing with truth than the led. Jesus told the religious leaders of his day, "you are blind guides" (Matthew 15:14). The compromising relationship between the minister and material compensation makes any serious challenge to the paradigm a threat to his chosen profession. Few have the courage to bite the hand that feeds them!

Trying to arrive at truth within the framework of sectarian paradigms relegates the "clergyman" to continual (even if unwanted) blindness. Robert Richardson put it this way:

"A sectary, who looks at the scriptures through a restrictive system of doctrines and opinions, called a creed, is like one who is incarcerated and fettered, and permitted to gaze upon one particular landscape only, from the single window of his gloomy and unwholesome prison." (*Millennial Harbinger*, July, 1847, p. 1)

The purpose of this thesis is not to look at the Pharisees or other Denominationalists but to examine our particular fellowship. To look intently at our paradigms and compare them to the Biblical truth. As we can plainly see, paradigms can make intellectual cowards of us all if we fail to take the challenge.

Have we been guilty of making all anomalies fit our paradigm? Truth should fear no challenge. Alexander Campbell, in his debate with the agnostic Owen asked this question at the end of his opening remarks. After defining the ageless presence of truth's enemies and demonstrating how the truth had triumphed under fearful odds, he asked. "... and shall the advocates of such a cause fear the contest now?"

The need for a social paradigm shift was also recognized by Karl Marx. Although there are many things with which one might disagree with Marx, his recognition of the state of the social paradigm cannot be ridiculed. It is not known whether Marx recognized this as also being the state of the religious paradigm, but his reference to the religion of his day as being "the opiate of the people" lends toward this conclusion. Marx wrote to Ruge in 1843:

"The advantage of the new movement is that we do not want to anticipate the world dogmatically, but only to discover the **new by way of the criticism of the old** world. Until now, philosophers kept the solution of all mysteries inside their desks, and the stupid uneducated world merely had to open its mouth and the fried dove of absolute knowledge would fly in.

"Philosophy is now secular, for which the best proof is that philosophical consciousness itself feels the pain of the struggle not merely externally, but also internally. It is not our task to construct the future and to deal with everything once and for all, but it is clear what we have to do at present – I am thinking of the **merciless criticism of everything that exists** – merciless criticism in the

sense that it is not afraid of its findings, and just as little afraid of conflict with the existing powers... It will be found that humanity does not start a new task, but consciously carries through the old (emphasis mine)."

Marx realized that new ideas were being derived from former ones and that only through honest inspection of the old paradigm can progress be made. Reader, have you ever entered into a study where you were afraid of the findings? It is a normal fear for all who want to be right.

The contest recognized by Marx and championed in Christian circles by those in the American Restoration Movement is taken up today by those interested in the restoration of Biblical Christianity. You can only be classified in either of two camps. Those who are interested in examining the scriptures to see for themselves the nature of Jesus' community or those who are satisfied with the status quo regardless of whether it can be Biblically defended. John Milton's comments about those that would accept the word of their pastor or denomination without question are apropos.

"Well knows he who used to consider, that our faith and knowledge thrives by exercise, as well as our limbs and complexion. Truth is compared in Scripture to a streaming fountain; if her waters flow not in a perpetual progression, they sicken into a muddy pool of conformity and tradition. A man may be a heretic in the truth; and **if he believe things only because his pastor says so, or the Assembly so determines, without knowing any other reason, though his belief be true, yet the very truth he holds becomes his heresy.** There is not any burden that some would gladlier post off to another than the care and charge of their religion. There be, who knows not that there be, of Protestants and professors who live and die in as errant an implicit faith as any lay papist of Loretto . . . (*Areopagitica*, 1644, emphasis mine)"

As Milton has so aptly described, many today have espoused the idea that the church of our choice would correspond to the church of God's choice. Which camp are you in? Paul said, "Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Prove yourselves...." (2 Corinthians 13:5).

THE HUMAN TENDENCY TOWARD IRRESPONSIBILITY

"Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah, and said to him, Look, you are old and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now make for us a king to judge us like all the nations.... And the Lord said to Samuel, Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for **they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me**, that I should not reign over them (1 Samuel 8:4-5,7, emphasis mine)."

The above scripture is an excellent illustration of the human tendency to ascribe to someone else one's own God-given responsibilities. Yahweh had founded a theocratic (God ruled) nation of priests. He had chosen them to be special. He had delivered them from the rule of Pharaoh and given them equality under His reign as defined below.

"You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagle's wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, **if you will indeed obey** my voice and keep my covenant, then you will be a special treasure to me above all people; for all the earth is mine. And you will be to me **a kingdom of priests** and a holy nation (Exodus 19:4-6, emphasis mine)."

History shows they were faithful to God for only a short period of time. They failed to obey God in driving out the inhabitants of the land. They quit inquiring into the will of God from the Levitical priests. The comment in Judges 17:6, is this. "At that time there was no king in Israel and everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (emphasis mine). Because they had rejected God's rule, He sold them into the hands of oppressors. From time to time, God found it merciful to raise up a deliverer. They would rally around this judge and with God's help conquer the enemy. Generally, they were called to personally participate in the war.

This was the background of things when Samuel, the last judge, was enfeebled with age. Israel was still surrounded with enemies. The people were weary of their responsibilities to confront these adversaries. They gave two reasons for their request for a king. The first is stated in the above introductory verse – that they could be like the surrounding nations.

It takes courage and fortitude to be different. It takes commitment to an ideal to take a stand. It requires sacrifice to battle. From this perspective, you can understand their insistence on having a king even after the negatives were iterated. We want a king anyway, they said,

"...that we may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us and go out before us and **fight our battles** (1 Samuel 8:19-20, emphasis mine)."

Now we're getting to the most important reason for their insistence. They were tired of fighting. They were glad – with some hesitation – to let others carry their responsibilities. God had warned them about the nature of kings. "They will tax you." "They will make servants out of your children." "They will take your sons for soldiers." "They will make your daughters perfumers and cooks." Etceteras! "Yeah," they replied, "we can understand that but what is that to us?" "Give us a king!" (paraphrase mine)

Who were these responsibility shirkers? These were the elders, the older people. These were the ones whom God wished to be shepherds of His citizens: those that had the weight of age and experience. It was going to be their sons who would end up paying the cost of their folly. It was their daughters that would be tyrannized by the kings that would follow. It was the issue of their loins that would have to give up their hard earned money to the king and his court. It was their offspring who would weep and toil in a land of captivity while they "rested with their fathers." The consequences of their demand was far reaching and enduring and they had no Scriptural right to relinquish their responsibilities to those "who would be kings". In doing so, God accused them of rejecting Him.

This Old Testament passage illustrates the constant human disposition to make excuses and avoid personal responsibility. Adam was the first to blame someone else for his rebellion. He ended up blaming both God and his wife. In the instance of Israel, after God gave in to their wish

and granted them a "substitute", their first king Saul "shirked" his responsibility to carry out God's desire and then blamed the people (1 Samuel 15).

In modern day vernacular we would say "let George do it". Well, you say, that was then and this is now. Are we, the heirs of New Testament Christianity, guilty of the same? Let us examine the answer in the next chapter.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH AND THE SEEDS OF APOSTASY

"And Simon Peter answered saying, 'You are the Anointed One, the Son of the living God.' Jesus answered saying to him, 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my community (ἐκκλησία), and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it' (Matthew 16:16-18)."

Most Bible students who are concerned with restoration principles are familiar with this statement by Jesus. The author wants to reiterate and emphasize that Jesus intended to build His assembly (literally, the "called out"). This assembly was going to be son-established, son-redeemed and son-ruled.

He spoke as he commissioned his apostles, "**All** authority in heaven and on earth has been given to **me**" (Matthew 28:18, emphasis mine). How much authority belongs to Jesus?

Yet, as early as the middle of the second century, Jesus' authority was being granted to human beings ... men who would be kings. Just as the Israelites failed to listen to Samuel, Christians failed to listen to Jesus and the apostles. They preferred instead to select "church" officers to mediate their discipleship.

Immediately after the onset of this departure, their leaders began to "pass legislation." An early Christian document called the Didache – usually dated to the second century – comments on this tendency:

"Do not let your fasts be held in common with the hypocrites. For they fast on the second day of the week and on the fifth. But you fast during the fourth day and the preparation day...."

"And every apostle who comes to you, let him be received as the Lord. But he will not remain but one day. However, if there is a need, then he may remain the next day. But if he remains for three days, he is a false prophet. "Now when the apostle leaves, he should take nothing except enough bread to last until he lodges again. But if he asks for money, he is a false prophet...."

"Now hand-pick for yourselves overseers and servants worthy of the Lord... they too render you the service of the prophets and teachers. Therefore, do not despise

them, for they are the ones who are honored of you, together with the prophets and teachers."

As the reader can easily discern, humanity's continual tendency toward legalism was already being exercised. They had designed a system for appointing "officers" whom they held equal to the prophets and teachers. The seeds of ecclesiastical corporate Churchianity were being sown.

Historically, we've seen many establishments in the overall context of Christianity. Most would insist that Jesus was the founder of their movement. Most would agree that all are reliant upon the redeeming blood of Jesus for salvation. But many would claim that the authority of Jesus rests with them or with their church officers. They would claim that Jesus has delegated this authority to them by various means.

The Roman Catholic Church and mainstream denominations all claim "apostolic succession" to one extent or the other for the authority they exert over their parishioners. This can be summed up by the following excerpt from the *Confraternity Edition* of the Bible.

"The commission (transmission of Divine revelation) was fulfilled, too, by those apostles and apostolic men who under the inspiration of the same Holy spirit committed the message of salvation to writing. But in order to keep the gospel forever whole and alive within the Church, the apostles left bishops as their successors, "handing over their own teaching role" to them... And so the apostolic preaching, which is expressed in a special way in the inspired books, was to be preserved by a **continuous succession of preachers until the end of time**... This tradition which comes from the apostles develops in the Church with the help of the Holy Spirit... This happens through the contemplation and study made by believers, who treasure these things in their hearts, through the intimate understanding of spiritual things they experience, and through the preaching of those who have received through Episcopal succession the sure gift of truth... To the successors of the apostles, sacred tradition hands on in its full purity God's word, which was entrusted to the apostles by Christ the Lord and the Holy spirit. Thus, led by the light of the Spirit of truth, these successors can in their preaching preserve this word of God faithfully, explain it, and make it more widely known. Consequently, it is not from sacred Scripture alone that the Church draws her certainty about everything which has been revealed. Therefore both sacred tradition and sacred Scripture are to be accepted and venerated with the same sense of devotion and reverence... The task of authentically interpreting the word of God, whether written or handed on, has been entrusted exclusively to the living teaching office of the Church, whose authority is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ... It is clear, therefore, that sacred tradition, sacred Scripture, and the teaching authority of the Church, in accord with God's most wise design, are so linked and joined together that one cannot stand without the others, and that all together and each in its own way under the action of the one Holy Spirit contribute effectively to the salvation of souls... For all of what has been said about the way of interpreting Scripture is subject finally to the judgment of the Church, which carries out the divine commission and ministry of guarding and

interpreting the word of God.... Catholic exegetes then and other students of sacred theology, working diligently together and using appropriate means, should devote their energies, under the watchful care of the sacred teaching office of the Church, to an exploration and exposition of the divine writings. It devolves on **sacred bishops**, "who have apostolic teaching," to give the faithful entrusted to them suitable instruction in the right use of the divine books, especially the New Testament and above all the Gospels, through translation of the sacred texts. It is his (the bishops) constant occupation. Moreover, in virtue of his ordination he has a special grace enabling him to proclaim God's word properly (emphasis mine)."

Whew! What a mouthful! If you desired a definition of "apostolic succession", "Divine Leading", and continued revelation in the twentieth century, the above quote should have given it for you. It was quoted in length because it is representative of the full range and scope of the subject under discussion. Every claim – from the claims made by the modern prophet and revelator and pretenses erected by institutional ecclesiastical authority – to those whose only pretense is that the Holy Spirit leads them in various, mysterious ways, is encompassed by the claims of the Roman Catholic Church.

Within the fellowship of the restoration churches, brethren have debated for years whether the "elders" had authority to dictate policy to their charges. An example of this "authoritarian view" was stated by H. E. Phillips.

"The authority of the eldership in the church is the authority of Christ. To rebel against the scriptural eldership is to rebel against Christ." (*Scriptural Elders and Deacons*, Cogdill Publications, 1959, p. 45)

Thus, we can easily observe, whether Catholic, Protestant, or restorationist, claims of authority come from the argument that Jesus – in one way or another – delegated his authority to church leaders.

The purpose of this thesis is not to debate the authoritarian view of elders. In the author's view, the practical problem runs much deeper than their authority. The aim is to examine the foundational basis for the "authority" paradigm. How did this view arise and is it indeed Biblical? Since Jesus had plainly said that all authority was his, proponents of the authoritarian view must give "chapter and verse" to support their claims.

The "delegated authority" view has laid the foundation of abuse and departure from the beginning. It is directly counter to the instructions of Jesus to his envoys (apostles). Restorationists have absolutely rejected the claims of the Roman Catholic Bishop of possessing authority through apostolic succession via Peter. However, both paradigms receive their authority from misapplied scriptures and the great explanatory powers of "necessary inference" while rejecting the clear statements of Jesus. This view of "delegated authority" has been instrumental in leading to the highly developed ecclesiastical organizations, the sacerdotal system, church buildings, and other anti-Biblical corporate structures seen today. After all, what's a king without the "trappings"?

Jesus took a group of social nobodies and endued them with the gospel message. They were a ragtag group at best. They were obviously a great contrast with the pomp and "holy" demeanor of the Scribes and Pharisees. Human nature, being what it is, seduced even them with a desire to be greatest in the Kingdom.

Jesus, while continually challenging the bigotry and self-righteousness of the Jewish leaders, insisted that things were going to be different in his community. When His disciples came to him and asked who would be greatest in the Kingdom, Jesus answered:

"Assuredly, I say to you, unless you turn³ and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 18:3-4)."

"Hold on boys," says he. You need to change your paradigm. You are looking at things through 'old' eyes. You must change your attitude or you will not enter the kingdom at all." (paraphrase mine)

Does this sound like the chosen apostles were going to receive even a hint of position, title, and ecclesiastical authority? If you're thinking it's still hard to tell, then let's press on. In Matthew 20:20ff, Jesus was "assaulted" by the mother of James and John wanting, what else, for her sons to be greatest in the kingdom.

"Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one on your right hand and the other on the left, in your kingdom (verse 21)."

Of course, the other disciples made great show of indignation as though they had not wanted the same honor for themselves. So Jesus expounded on the forthcoming body structure. The kingdom leadership would be unlike worldly authority and the ecclesiastical order represented at that time by Jewish Scribes and Pharisees, the Jewish Sanhedrin (elders), and Roman secular rule. Jesus rejected the authoritarian structure of his own religious heritage as well as anything that would approach the empires and kingdoms of men. Jesus explains this plainly as he continues.

"You know that the rulers of the Gentiles are lords over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet **it will not be so among you**; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave – just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many (verses 25-28, emphasis mine)."

"Greatness is attained through service NOT position or titles." "You want to attain greatness in my kingdom then serve." "Those desiring esteem in my assembly must set the example in serving!" "You will not exercise authority over my people!" (paraphrase mine)

³ i.e., from the attitude of superiority

If that left the disciples in doubt about what positions they were to enjoy in the Anointed's kingdom, he certainly cleared it up by attacking the prevailing paradigm of Jewish religious imperialism and love of titles and position in Matthew 23.

"Then Jesus spoke to the multitude and to his disciples, saying: 'The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do. For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do to be seen by men. ..They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, Rabbi, Rabbi.

"But you, **do not be called Rabbi**, for One is your Teacher, the Anointed One, and you are all brothers. **Do not call anyone on earth your father**; for One is your Father, who is in heaven. And **do not be called leaders**; for One is your leader, the Anointed One. but those who are great among you shall be your servant. And whoever exalts himself will be humbled and the one who humbles himself will be exalted (verses 1-12, emphasis mine)."

In these few sentences, Jesus is making it very plain what the nature of leadership in his assembly was going to be. His leaders would NOT assume titles or positions. "But you, do not be called Rabbi"! They were not to assume the title or position of Rabbi (master, teacher). As if this was not basic enough to persuade them, he continues in this vein by saying, "And do not be called leaders ". Even though the "authorized version" translates the word "leader" master, the correct translation could actually render the Greek "guide". Vine gives it this definition.

"**Καθηγητης** is properly a guide (akin to **καθηγηομαι**, to go before, guide; kata, down, **εγηομαι**, to guide), translated master, a teacher, Matt. 23:10 (twice)."

Jesus emphasizes this very point while instructing those who would later be called apostles. Don't even let someone saddle you with the position or title of leader "guide". Don't be called Preacher Jones. Don't be called Evangelist Smith. Don't be called Pastor James. Don't be called Minister Johnson. Don't be called Elder Church. Is this not a true application of what Jesus was saying? If not, why not?

The only reason we find difficulty in application is because of our paradigm. Most restorationists would have no problem condemning someone for accepting the term reverend as a title of respect. They would correctly point out that reverend is used only one time in the KJV and applies to God. We can easily see that it is wrong to wear special clerical garbs to set ministers apart in the assembly of saints, while we have ordained – by our practice – "fathers", Rabbis, and leaders to serve within our "sanctuaries" and ride herd upon saints. It's easy to apply this teaching of Jesus to them. But our paradigm, our system, allows these things, not because they are scriptural but because they have been passed down from traditions and paradigms that our forefathers were either ignorant of or too cautious to reject.

There have always been men around "who would be kings". Paul warned that this human tendency was right around the corner. Speaking to the "elders" (literally, old people) of the Ephesian community of believers, he warned:

"Pay attention to yourselves and to the flock in which the Holy Spirit placed you, to feed the assembly of God which he has purchased with his own blood. For I know that after my departure, fierce wolves will come in among you who will not spare the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking distortions, to draw away students after themselves (Acts 20:28-30)."

Notice the specific nature of these people who would draw disciples away from Anointed Jesus. They would "rise up" among the shepherds. They wouldn't appear from outside their ranks. They would speak perverse things. They would draw away disciples after themselves. The focus was going to be removed from Jesus and be placed upon themselves.

Diotrephes was a great example of this kind of mentality. He rejected the apostle John and others that he didn't approve. John describes the arrogance of this man in his third epistle.

"I wrote to the assembly, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us (3 John 9)."

This tendency toward exercising "Gentile" authority will result in these kinds of heresies every time to one extent or the other. Men who would assume positions and titles abound in every group. Men who would receive acclaim without service. Men who become intoxicated with the lust for power. Men who would gladly earn a living pontificating on religious matters. Now we can see why Jesus said that those in His kingdom are expected to reject titles and positions – even the title or position of guides.

Alexander Campbell said 150 years ago that the clergy – the two-caste system present in denominationalism and Romanism, "is the gravest error that the religious world has ever fallen into." Continuing along this vein Campbell opined:

"To employ men to preach the gospel in a Christian congregation is a satire upon that congregation which employs them. But if it be the duty of every Christian...to proclaim the word to those ignorant of it..., it is the duty of the whole congregation... to put forth all their talents and enterprise for the conversion of those without." (*Millennial Harbinger*, Vol. II, No. 5, 1831, p. 237)

That any man is to be paid for preaching, i.e., for making sermons and pronouncing them; or that any man is to be hired for a stipulated sum to preach and pray, and expound scripture, by the day, month, or year, I believe to be a relic of popery." (*Christian Baptist*, Vol. III, No. 9, 1826, p. 231)

Craig S. Rogers, in an article published in the *Examiner*, stated it like this:

"We have seen that the clergy-laity system prevents the believer from functioning in his full capacity as a priest because these privileges are retained by the Presider." (*Examiner*, Vol. 8, No. 4)

In Matthew 23, Jesus once and for all time instructed those who would lead, not to assume or allow themselves to be saddled with positions and titles. Leadership would come through service, NOT through positional status or nomen.

It is very easy for us to see the tendency in men "who would be kings". However, it is often easy to overlook the presence of the masses who would be "king makers". This religious horde would gladly delegate their personal responsibilities to others. In pursuing this direction, certain prerogatives must be given up to those to whom they have appointed in their stead. They must give up – along with their personal responsibilities as priests – their hard earned money to the clergy. Because of this tradition, the true intent of congregational giving as described in 2 Corinthians 8:12-14, goes unheeded. Examine the purpose of giving closely.

"For if there is a willing mind, it is accepted according to what one has, and not according to what he does not have. for I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened; but for an **equality**, that now at this time your abundance may supply their lack, that their abundance also may supply your lack – that there may be equality (emphasis mine)."

Instead of monies being collected for the needy, which fulfills the purpose of congregational giving, it is spent on a group of professional ministers who have been empowered by the laity to assume responsibilities that are obligatory on all the saints. Instead of God given resources advancing the goals of "equality", they are diverted to a professional, ministerial class and – by necessary inference – to all the trappings essential to support this class.

One of the most apparent amenities of ecclesiastical "kings" have been the multiplication of church buildings. The cathedral type church buildings became one of the central trappings used to adorn and propagate ecclesiastical orthodoxy as Christians moved toward greater apostasy.

Jesus talked about the meeting places which were sacred to the Jews in John 4. When he was asked whether the Temple in Jerusalem or Mount Gerizim is the proper "place of worship," Jesus surprised the woman by replying that neither place is correct. On the contrary, says Jesus,

"An hour is coming when you will worship the Father **neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem...** An hour is coming, and **is now here**, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit; that is, truth. For the Father is also seeking those who worship him that way. God is a spirit, and it is necessary for those who worship him to worship in spirit; that is, truth (John 4:21-24, emphasis mine)."

Jesus took the entire paradigm of "places of worship" and scrapped it. The TRUE place of worship is internal. The Temple (or church building) is not a "place of worship." Hebrews 9:1

expressly says that rituals of worship and "the earthly sanctuary" were facets of the Old Covenant: facets which had been made obsolete by the New Covenant.

This is echoed in Acts by both Stephen and Paul. In Acts 7, even though Solomon made a "house" for God, the scriptures teach:

"The Most High does not dwell in handmade places, as the prophet says, 'The sky is my throne. Now the earth is my footstool. What house will you construct for me?', says Yahweh. 'Or what is my place of rest? Hasn't my hand made all of these things?'" (Acts 7:48-50)

Paul echoes this theme in the hearing of those Athenians that were wont to believe that the "gods" lived in man-made temples:

"Therefore, since you do not know whom you are worshipping, I announce this to you: The God who made the creation and everything in it, the one who is Lord of Heaven and Earth, does not dwell in handmade temples, nor is he served by human hands (as though he lacked something) (Acts 17:24-25a)."

If "God does not dwell" in our buildings and if they are NOT "places of worship," why is it that people today DO call church buildings "places of worship" and DO claim that they are "houses of God?"

Justin Martyr, writing in the 2nd century, makes it plain that church buildings were nonexistent in his day and that the saints were not accustomed to meeting at any particular time or in any place. When Martyr was asked where he assembled, he answered thus:

"Where each one chooses and can; do you suppose that we all are accustomed to meet together in one place? Quite otherwise, for the God of the Christians is not confined by place, but being invisible, He fills the heaven and the earth, and the faithful everywhere adore Him and sing His praise." (*The Martyrdom of Justin*, chapter 2)

Robert Hach, in a private pamphlet written and circulated among his fellowship, recognized the all pervading tendency in modern Christendom to equate the church experience with worship. His commentary on the practice of entempling religion deserves repeating here.

"It is difficult to deny that organized religion, or 'the church', is perpetuated by temples of worship, typically called 'churches.' Though some assert that 'church' is actually people, they still 'go to church to worship God,' which, in reality, means going to a religious building to perform religious rituals administered by religious professionals."

In fact, the earliest "house church" building is dated circa 250 AD at Lullingstone Park near Eynsford in Kent. Even this date is considered an early dating. That is, the actual date cannot be earlier, but may be considerably later.

"The one at Kent, built before 250 AD, has rooms for instruction, a place for baptism and the Lord's Supper. It consisted originally of two rooms which were later converted into a single rectangular hall with a raised platform at the narrow east end. This is the sole survivor of this kind."

As the ecclesiastical paradigm became entrenched, church leaders found it necessary to herd the laity under one roof. This was desirable so that they could be guarded against "heretical" teachings of those that weren't approved by the clergy. It was not until after the reign of the emperor Constantine (307-337 AD) that Christianity was publicly recognized and sanctioned by the state. By this time a clear class of "church officials" had evolved. It was Constantine that gave legacies (money) to church leaders and begin to erect cathedral type buildings.

"When the emperor Constantine came to the throne (307-337 AD), he was eager to provide buildings for Christians equal in magnificence to the old basilicas and temples. He built 7 in Rome (at least), and others in Italian cities, in Africa, Syria, and Asia."

Since there was now a well defined distinction made between the clergy and laity, sacerdotal clothing, titles, and duties evolved that could only be performed by these elitists. This group now decided who could speak, teach, and be added to their clergy group. These leaders gathered together to decide issues and plans. They regularly discussed personal matters of the laity that in other contexts would be considered gossip. And all this was accomplished for the good of the laity. These were the self-appointed "watchers" that insisted on submission. Can the reader describe one attribute mentioned above that is NOT present within Denominations of all stripes – restoration corporations included?

Robert Hach describes how this situation has been carried into modern practices.

"Though these religious professionals may or may not be called 'priests,' it is difficult to deny that they perform a priestly function not performed by others. They mediate 'the word of God' to the congregation from a pulpit which symbolically elevates them to a position between God and humanity. They often mediate 'communion' and other religious rituals. Their words are often revered as 'the word of God,' which excuses members from the necessity of coming to their own understanding of and conviction about spiritual truth. And they are expected to live up to a higher standard of morality and ethics than the 'lay' persons to whom they 'minister.' It is difficult to deny that the religious system of the church, in addition to its temples of worship and its official priesthood, consists of sacrificial offerings on which the survival of the organization depends...."

This system evolved and survives because of the clergy makers – those who would gladly be laity. Jesus addresses them also in Matthew 23. "Do not call anyone on earth your father" (verse 9). Now the shoe is on a different foot! those of you "who would be kings" don't assume title or position.. And those of you that would set up kings, don't do it! God's kingdom is a kingdom of priests (1 Peter 2:9); a kingdom of Firstborn ones (Hebrews 12:23); a kingdom of saints; and a kingdom of sons and daughters of equality.

"For you are sons of God through the faith of Anointed Jesus, there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no 'male and female'; for you are all one in Anointed Jesus (Galatians 3:26, 28)."

This kingdom is going to be responsible to GOD alone through His message. This ekklesia (called out, assembly) would be ruled by no one but Jesus. This community would be LED by the examples of those whose lives were worth emulating (1 Corinthians 16:15-16). Let me reiterate. In this body, there are to be no positions or titles given or accepted, either theologically or in practice. Diotrephes, who is mentioned in third John, didn't hold a gun to anybody's head when he assumed a position of eminence. He had his band of followers. They may have followed him for a variety of reasons but they followed him just the same. John describes the situation further.

"Therefore if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, talking trash against us with evil words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and casts (from the assembly) those who wish to receive them (3 John 10)."

Where did Diotrephes get this authority to exclude believers from their fellowship – even John? Think about it! He didn't get this authority from Jesus even though he may well have claimed so. His real authority came from all those who would give him position and / or title: those who had no scriptural right to do so. They may have not "called him father" in theology but did so in PRACTICE. Like Israel of old, they gave up their priestly function to a king and then were tyrannized by him. The supporters of Diotrephes, either positively or by their cowardice, shared responsibility for this situation by not obeying the injunction of Jesus against appointing clergy.

How many churches exist that allow the presence of some Diotrephes because he holds the key to the corporate finances? Most believers are familiar with such a situation but will themselves continue to give position and title to "elders", "preachers", or some other special minister who would assume their responsibilities. Denying the reality of a clergy-laity system theologically is meaningless if it exists in practice. AND if the PRACTICE is present, the degree is unimportant.

If we are guilty of giving title or position to an "elder", "preacher" or "minister", we are guilty of violating the teaching of Jesus. If not, why not? If we accept title or position as "minister", "elder", or "fill in the blank", we are in violation of Jesus' mandate. Are we really interested in restoration or has it become hollow, empty rhetoric and a theater for bigotry and denomination bashing? Paul warned Timothy of this human tendency.

"For there will be a season when they will not endure the wholesome teaching, but **according to their own desires**, they will heap up for themselves **teachers who will tickle their ears**, and they will turn their ears away from the truth and be turned aside to fables (2 Timothy 4:3-4, emphasis mine)."

We who are heirs of the restoration movement have denied for years that we are a denomination. We have, using a prominent teacher's term, denied it with "great circumlocution." However, we have all the attributes. Charles Holt, the editor of the *Examiner*, has repeatedly challenged

members to name even one attribute of any denomination that is not present in the so-called restoration churches. He is still waiting and so am I. Describing this anti Biblical, denominational structure Mr. Holt waxes eloquent.

"It should be obvious to all honest hearts that there is no **pattern** in the scripture for setting up a church institution of any kind. The pattern followed today by all brands of churches... is borrowed from the organizations and corporate structures in today's business world. The organization provides the mechanism for controlling the people and keeping them in submission to the institution, its rulers and clergy. The church organization today provides these clergymen with employment and a livelihood! They are employed, with a job description, just like the employees of any other business or organization. The Eldership, the rulers or corporate officials, sets the conditions of their employment, their duties, and pays their salary. Few, if any, will "bite the hand that feeds them." (*Examiner*, Vol. 7, No. 4)

The devastating result of this preacher / corporate system is also alluded to by Alexander Campbell.

"No class or order of men that ever appeared on earth have obtained so much influence, or acquired so complete an ascendancy over the human mind, as the clergy. The Christian clergy have exercised, for about fifteen hundred years, a sovereign dominion over the Bible, the consciences, and the religious sentiments of all nations professing Christianity." (*Christian Baptist*, Vol. 1, No. 3, 1823, p. 18)

These things happen to those who demand a "church of their choice". Those interested in pursuing their religion in their own way. However, if we want to be a part of the ekklesia that Jesus established, we must do it his way. And his way means the individual responsibility of priesthood.

THE ECCLESIASTICAL PARADIGM AND THE NEW TESTAMENT

"**Obey** them that have the **rule** over you, and be submissive, for they watch for your souls, as those who must give account, Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable to you (Hebrews 13:17 KJV)."

The above scripture is the favorite of those who labor under the anti-Biblical authoritarian view of church officialdom. Instead of reconciling this scripture by the limits Jesus placed upon his disciples that have been previously discussed in Matthew 20 and 23, they modify the plain paradigm of Jesus to fit their ecclesiastical bias. When you change the rules to such an extent, you make void the continuation of restoration to Biblical Christianity. It also proves that the call for restoration is nothing more than empty rhetoric.

It is no wonder that reformers have had difficulty in understanding the nature of New Testament structure. The authorized version known as the King James Version was translated by men with a

very definite ecclesiastical paradigm. They were members of the Church of England. This denomination had its own sordid history of persecuting and torturing heretics (those who disagreed with the "powers that be"). They were also under certain strictures of the King of England.

They had little notion of the apostolic dispensation that will be discussed later in this work. As if this wasn't compromising enough, they had no personal experience of any other form than sacerdotal hierarchy. Because of this, they translated scriptures that had to do with leadership and "followership" in the strongest English terms. The above scripture is a perfect example so we will look at it first.

There are several words in the Greek language for "obey", but the one translated "obey" in Hebrews 13:17, is NOT one of them. For an example, ὑπακούω, hupakouo, is usually translated obey in Matthew 8:27, ..."the winds and the sea listen (obey) to him." This word, which itself never implies unwilling obedience, is never used in regard to obedience to congregational leaders.

Πειθω, peitho, the word translated "obey" in Hebrews 13:17, is translated 23 times "persuade", 10 times "trust", and one time "agree". It is translated 5 times "obey," but only in Hebrews 13:17, 21, does it refer to obedience to another person (See Acts 5:36,37; Romans 2:8; Galatians 3:1; James 3:3). Don't you think it just a little strange that it is translated "obey" when speaking of "leadership" in this place? Of this interesting point of ecclesiastical bias, Dusty Owens wrote:

"I am convinced that the King James Translators, laboring under an 'institutional church' mentality, selected the strongest words possible which conveyed the idea that the people must submit to the authority of the Clergy. In this way King James could control the people through the Church, of which he was Supreme Ruler."
(*Examiner*, Vol. 2, No. 4)

Although the problem began long before King James, Owens' observations are valid indeed. The word πειθω is related to the Greek word πιστεύω, which means trust. Vine defines its use as such:

"PEITHO, to persuade, to win over, in the Passive and Middle voices, to be persuaded, to listen to.... (Acts 5:40, Passive Voice, "they agreed"); The obedience suggested is not by submission to authority, but resulting from persuasion."

Just the fact that the KJV Greek scholars translated the word peitho "obey" only in this context calls into question their objectivity in seeing leadership outside the paradigm of their ecclesiastical experience and bias.

In Acts 5:40, peitho is used identically to what is suggested in Hebrews 13:17. The Jewish rulers were thinking of killing Peter and John because they were preaching Jesus. Gamaliel, a respected teacher of the law, argued persuasively against this purpose. He was so "persuasive" in his apology that the scripture says,

"And they were persuaded by (πειθω) by him... they gave word that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go."

The Sanhedrin was under no obligation to "obey" Gamaliel. He had no arbitrary authority over them. They did, on the other hand, respect and trust his judgment. So they "were persuaded by" and "agreed with" him.

This is the exact use of peitho in Hebrews 13:17. The disciples were to be "persuaded", to "agree with", or to "trust" their guides. In this text, it was those who had spoken the word to them. Most likely this is a reference to the apostolic messengers – the "them that heard him" of Hebrews 2:3, i.e., those whom they were instructed to imitate in faith (Hebrews 13:7). The admonition had nothing to do with those with whom they had no relationship and it is questionable as to whether it even referred to anyone of the local congregation. There was no office they were obligated to respect. The ecclesiastical structure we see today was simply nonexistent then.

The word translated "rule" in this verse is the Greek word ἡγεομαι, hegeomai. It is not translated "rule" in any other like context in the New Testament. Are you surprised? Are you starting to see the translators' bias and paradigm? It actually means lead or guide. There are several Greek words that deal with Lordly rule in the New Testament. This is NOT one of them. The verse could actually be translated such:

"Be persuaded by those who are leading you and be submissive."

It makes a world of difference, doesn't it? Remember! Whether you agree with my Greek exposition or not, Jesus had already said to His apostles, "You will not exercise authority over them..." (Matthew 20:26, paraphrase mine) Therefore, whatever was meant by the Hebrew writer MUST agree with the standard that Jesus had already set. If not, why not?

Another scripture that is a blatant example of ecclesiastical bias is found in 1 Timothy 3:1-2. The King James renders it thus:

"This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the **office of a Bishop**, he desires a good work. A Bishop then must be blameless..."

The translators, under the king's injunction to keep the main terms of the Church of England's ecclesiastical form, make two main errors. The first is adding a word to the text that doesn't appear in the Greek, i.e. "office". There is neither a word in the text for office NOR the idea of office outside their own paradigm. The second is an error in translation. The word translated "Bishop" is επισκοπος. The word means to "oversee", to "tend". Vine defines it thus:

"EPISKOPOS, lit., an overseer (epi, over, skopeo, to look or watch), whence Eng. "bishop"..." The passage in 1st Timothy actually reads,

"If a man wants to oversee, he desires a good work."

Can you see the difference? I might as well say here that I am NOT a Greek scholar. I can,

however, read what the scholars have written. They all agree with that rendering. They agree even though many have strong ecclesiastical biases of their own! Look for yourself!

Again, let me say this. Even if the KJV was translated correctly, our view would have to be reconciled according to the model given by Jesus on the exercise of authority. "You will not be called Rabbi or leaders." "You will not give title or position" (Matthew 23, paraphrase mine). Do you remember his injunction?

An additional favorite of those espousing the authoritarian view of leadership is found in the KJV translation of 1 Timothy 5:17. It says this.

"Let the **elders** who **rule** well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine."

Of course, emphasis is placed by proponents on the word translated "rule". They would argue, "how can one rule without authority?" Good question, but I would have to remind them of the words of Jesus. "You will not exercise authority over them" (Matthew 20:26, paraphrase mine). According to Jesus, there must be a way. If you keep the word "rule", then the leader will rule by his service, says Jesus. He will "rule" by being a slave to all, by example. He will not "rule" by "dictation".

The New International Version has become the new standard for those who "would be kings". It translates the verse in Hebrews 13:17,

"Obey your leaders and submit to their **authority**."

It translates 1 Timothy 5:17,

"The elders that **direct the affairs of the church** well are worthy of double honor."

Unfortunately, at times the NIV is more interested in paraphrasing than translating. In Hebrews 13:17, there is no Greek word for "authority" in the text. We've already seen that "obey" means to persuade. In 1 Timothy 5:17, the words "affairs of the church" are completely missing. Both texts in the NIV also show a strong ecclesiastical paradigm.

In 1 Timothy 5:17, the elders (Greek **πρεσβυτεροι**, "old people") are described as laboring and teaching the message. The fact is this. The word translated in this place "rule" is **προιστημι**, *proistemi*, which means literally to stand in front of. Vine defines it in the following way.

"PROISTEMI, literally, to stand before, hence to lead, attend to, indicating care and diligence."

It is translated "maintain" in Titus 1:3, as "maintain (*proistemi*) good works".

The *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, writing of the usage of this word in 1 Thess. 5:12, says,

"The emphasis is not on their rank or authority but on their efforts for the eternal salvation of believers."

The *Dictionary of NT Theology* opines,

"The present writer believes that there were as yet no institutionalized or precisely differentiated offices in the church known to Paul."

In a Christian context, it could be easily defined here as to be an outstanding example. The same word group is also used in reference to Phoebe in Romans 16:1-2. These verses are worthy of a special look within the context of this thesis. Paul introduces Phoebe to the Roman assembly with this description:

"I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant (διακονος) of the church in Cenchrea, that you may receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and assist her in whatever business she has need of you; for indeed she has been a helper (προστατις, from proistemi) of many and of myself as well (emphasis mine)."

Liddell and Scott's Lexicon says that *prostatis* could be rendered "guardian", "protector", or "champion." Why didn't the scholars translate proistemi "ruler" or even "leader" in this verse? I'll tell you why. Phoebe was a woman and they had a well defined bias concerning a "woman's place" in the congregation. Not only did they fail to translate προστατις "ruler" or leader but they went against their general practice and translated διακονος (diakonos) "servant" instead of "deacon" or "minister" which was their common exercise and would have fit the context perfectly! Can you see their paradigm at work? Women can "serve" but not be a deacon or a Minister.

A literal translation of 1 Timothy 5:17 would approach something like this.

"Let the old people who are outstanding examples be counted worthy of a double honorarium, especially those who are working in the message and teaching."

Within this Timothy context it seems that both old men and women are in view. As common in the New Testament, men and women, as in the case of Phoebe, are worthy of emulating for their work's sake, NOT from their position. This was also said of the "household of Stephanos" (1 Corinthians 16:15-16) and to all "such" that work and labor. About the translation of the preceding terms Hach wrote,

"The tendency of English translations of the Bible to translate these leadership-terms with words like 'rule', 'ruler', or other words denoting positional authority, has obscured the teaching and example of Jesus and upheld authoritarian structures and styles of leadership which characterize religious organization."

The strong terms for leaders and leadership are not used of the Christian form of "rule". These include *archwn*, translated "ruler" in Mark 10:42, referring to world sovereigns. This word is used 37 times in the NT. A related word, *archisunagogos*, meaning "synagogue ruler," occurs nine times. All nine occurrences of *archisunagogos* are about Jewish positional leaders. Of the 37 uses of *archwn*, three of them are about Satan, fourteen of them are about Gentile leaders, and the majority – eighteen occurrences – are about Jewish positional leaders. NONE of the occurrences of either word are about Christians.

Another often used word denoting position is *κυριευω*, "be lord," which appears in Luke 22:25 and in Matthew 20. Of its use in Lk 22:25, where Jesus forbids being lord, Foerester writes,

"The reference here is to the use of power as such (not its misuse), and to the associated outlook."

Anyone who occupied a superior position was commonly referred to as lord (*kurios*). But again, this is not used of Christians, who have only one Lord.

Another, *κατεξουσιαζω*, is translated "exercise authority over", and is spoken against by Jesus (Matthew 20:25) and later by Peter when referring to the oversight by old persons, i.e. "elders" (1 Peter 5:3). The word group to which *exousiazō* and its allies belong relates to the decision making process. The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament refers to *exousia* as "the power that decides." Having authority over someone, as in Matthew 20, is having the ability to make decisions for that person. Christians are forbidden from this.

The strongest word used of any Christian regarding a relationship involving other Christians occurs in 1 Timothy 5, where younger widows are told to marry and "rule the house." The verb here, *οικοδεσποτεω*, means literally "house rule" and comes from *δεσποτεω*, "be despot, rule" and is the source of the English word "despot."

As before mentioned, Jesus explicitly forbade titles, both the giving and the receiving of them in Matthew 23. One word that has become a title is the word "elder". It comes from the Greek word *presbuteros*, which simply refers to an older person. Within their culture, they were worthy of respect and deferment simply because of their age. In Leviticus 19:32, the scriptural background is given for this respect.

"You shall rise before the gray headed and honor the presence of an old person, and fear your God: I am the LORD."

Concerning elders in general: The term was only used to describe elderly people. In the cultural usage in the time of Jesus, it meant people who are at least (about) age 60. The Hebrew word refers to those who were able to grow beards which were fully white. The "beard" stipulation was contingent on having Jewish racial stock, but the age stipulation was not.

The Hebrew word *zāqen*, old person, comes from a word meaning "beard" and is related to the Aramaic and Akkadian terms for the same thing, which comes from the Semitic root for "be hoary" (literally, white with age). The Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament says that the

term "always refers to old men (once to an old woman)" or to a subgroup of those elderly people. The Greek term "prebus", "presbutes", "presbuteros" was used in the Septuagint as a rendering of the Hebrew term (zaqen) given above. These are the terms which are used in the New Testament.

The old person was not only revered in Jewish culture, but with this respect came grave responsibilities. Because of their age and assumed wisdom, they were expected to guide those who were younger. This leadership was not something they could relinquish since they never asked for it. They received it because they grew old. The same principles could be applied to fathers. Fathers have the responsibility to raise their children in the training and discipline of the Lord. This is not a responsibility they have any right to shirk. They have no right to give this responsibility to others. This responsibility was not earned or asked for but came through the natural process of parenthood.

As old people, the presbuteroi became the prime group for the overseer to be "appointed" from among the disciples if they were "blameless". The weight of age coupled with an exemplary life was worthy of emulation. These were the "elders" mentioned in the New Testament. Also, there is good reason to believe that these "elders" were gifted men and probably women who were chosen for purposes that are not altogether clear. "Gifted" Christians will be discussed at length later in this thesis.

Another word that has become a title is "minister". This word is taken from the Latin translation of the Greek word *diakonos* meaning "servant," or properly "table servant." The word group is translated 38 times "minister" by the KJV. It is translated "ministry" 16 times, "ministering" 3 times, and "ministration" 6 times. It is translated "serve", "servant", and "service" 21 times. It would be proper and much more correct to translate it the "serve" and its derivatives every time.

The King James translators, as previously mentioned, were well acquainted with "ministers" within the Church of England hierarchy. They consistently translated the word "minister" when referring to a worker of the congregation except when it came to Phoebe, then they translated it "servant" (Romans 16:1-2). Are you surprised? By the way, Phoebe is the only person in the entire New Testament who is referred to as a *diakonos* of a specific church and yet her "position" is purposefully diluted by the KJV translators and most others that have followed suit.

THE CHURCH AND THE EKKLESIA

Another word that has been grievously mistranslated is *ἐκκλησία*, *ekklesia*. The KJV translators, following the injunction of the King of England to retain certain ecclesiastical nomenclatures, translated this word "church" every time but thrice. In Acts 19:32,39,41, it is translated correctly "assembly", all in the same context. Since that *ekklesia* didn't refer to believers, the KJV scholars translated it correctly.

In fact, "church" is not a translation at all! It is an adoption from the Latin and its roots are hard to trace. It is thought that the word derives from *cirice*, meaning circle. Others speculate that its roots are in the Greek *kuriakon*, meaning "of the Lord." The KJV paradigm of "church" was well

established in the ecclesiastical orders and offices of the Church of England. So they followed the instructions of the noble King James who held many titles, one being "Defender of the Faith".

The *Theological Dictionary* gives us a short background of ekklesia.

"From the time of Thuc., Plato, and Xenophon, and especially inscriptions, **ἐκκλησία** is the assembly of the **δῆμος** [populus] in Athens and in most *poleis* [cities]. The etymology is both simple and significant... At least in the classical period, the **ἐκκλησία** in the sense of a popular assembly is not without a religious undertone and is one of the main institutions of the divinely given polis and its order. We can see this from the prayers which were usually offered by the **κηρυξ** [herald] before the **ἐκκλησία** and then each individual speaker before the assembly."

Regarding Old Testament (Septuagint) usage, TDNT has this to say:

"In the LXX, **ἐκκλησία** is a wholly secular term; it means 'assembly', whether in the sense of assembling or of those assembled. (III, 527)"

Charles Holt, in commenting upon the concept of "church" had this to say by way of challenging the thinking of modern Christians:

"You are aware, I hope, that the word ekklesia is the English spelling of the Greek word for what Jesus said He would build. Jesus said: "upon this rock I will build My ekklesia..." (Matt. 16:18). What He said was that upon the great truth confessed by Peter, that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the Living God, Jesus would build His assembly, congregation, gathering, or redeemed people. **Jesus did NOT say that He would build a church and He did not do such a thing!** The ekklesia of Christ is NOT a church! All churches are the works and creations of men. Jesus did not set up a religious institution of any kind. The ekklesia is His called out, obedient people, wherever they are! The ekklesia is NOT an organization or institution (emphasis mine)."

M.C. Kurfees, in his *Biographies and Sermons*, says follows this same theme:

"Any assembly of citizens in Athens, whether political or otherwise, even a mob, would have been called an 'ekklesia,' signifying that such persons had been called out from homes and congregated in one place ... The word continued to have this meaning in the time of Christ (p.383)."

Restoration leader Benjamin Franklin adds: "The word simply means 'assembly' or 'congregation.'" (*Gospel Preacher*, 1899, p. 476).

The *Dictionary of New Testament Theology* adds a facet unknown in today's church meetings:

"Every citizen had the right to speak and to propose matters for discussion."

This last comment is worthy of special attention. The character of the ekklesia was related to the goal the Greeks were striving for within their assemblies (ekklesia) – freedom of speech. Since the exercise of free speech was so important within the Hellenistic culture, the ekklesia was often identified with another significant Greek term, **παρρησια**."

Παρρησια (parresia) is a word that literally means "freedom of speech". It is translated "waxed bold" by the KJV in 1 Thess. 2:2 and Acts 13:46. The Revised Version renders it "spoke out boldly". In Acts 9:27 and 29, it is rendered "preached boldly". In Acts 26:26, it is translated "speak freely".

Norman M. DeWitt, writing of classical usage of this important parrhesia concept, says that it was:

"The right of every citizen to stand up in the public assembly and express his honest opinion."
(*Epicurus and his Philosophy*, 1954, p. 298)

Its opposite was given the name "sycophancy" or shameless assent. Allowing someone to have their way without speaking up and supporting your view was viewed as a great fault. Outside the assembly (ekklesia) DeWitt explains that,

"... *parresia* signified the expression of the speaker's opinion without regard for the feelings of others, and it might mean defiance." (Ibid.)

Παρρησια was crucial in every good relationship and indeed, "freedom of speech toward God" is referred to several times in the New Testament, although the word is usually translated "confidence" in that context. Epicurus opined thus:

It is better to have **παρρησια** 'even if not a soul shall understand' what one is saying than to fall 'into step with popular opinions, to harvest the lush praise that falls from the favor of the multitude.' (Ibid.)

This was the essence and character of the Greek ekklesia. Thus parresia is isolated to represent the freedom of speech common to the Greek citizen within the confines of their ekklesia. Demosthenes wrote, "There is no greater loss than to lose it (freedom of speech)."

It needs to be emphasized here that Jesus used the term ekklesia when describing what he intended to build rather than the Greek term **συναγωγη** which he was both familiar with and could have been logically expected to use. Colin Brown emphasizes this very idea:

"It is striking that Jesus' followers did not describe their meetings and the community represented by them as a synagoge (with the single exception of Jas. 2:2). For the word would have been natural for a group which sprang from Jewish roots...."

Jesus' penchant for teaching the equality that he intended to be present within the confines of his community is demonstrated in his choice of the Greek term *ekklesia*. Currently, there is no greater inequality demonstrated within modern Christendom than the repression of speech. Remember again the words of David Lipscomb: "*To suppress discussion is to deprive truth of all its vantage ground.*" (1930)

Authority to speak within the orthodox assemblies is granted exclusively by the clergy – those that "would be kings" among the saints and it is given only to those that will stay within the boundaries of their particular orthodoxy. This current practice is totally foreign to the essence and spirit of *parrhesia* and against the will of the Savior for his *ekklesia*. Speaking from a context of controversy and persecution, the Hebrew writer admonishes the brethren,

"Do not cast away your freedom of speech (*parrhesia*), which has a great reward." (Hebrews 10:35)

The principle found in the above verse teaches us to maintain our freedom of speech even in the face of persecution. Open discussion was highly prized in the New Testament assembly as it had been in Greece.

In fact, discussion (as in the Greek *ekklesia*) was employed as the Christian method of learning. The Greek word *διαλεγομαι*, the common Greek word for "discuss," is the word used during Christian meetings.

"The meaning of *dialogomai* in classical and Hellenistic Greek is expressed by our loan word dialogue; it means hold a conversation, chat. It was used by the poets with a neutral sense, but in the philosophers it came to mean conversation with teaching as its object: one debates and learns in so doing."

Unfortunately, the true meaning of *dialogomai* is sometimes hidden by the KJV and others that have followed suit. For example, a favorite text of modern "preachers" is found in Acts 20:7. The KJV renders it thus:

"And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached (*dielegeto*) unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight."

As the reader can conclude, by translating *dielegeto* (a derivative of *dialogomai*) "preach" rather than "held a discussion" which one translator properly renders it, and then continuing in this vein by saying he "continued his preach until midnight" – it would certainly be easy to get the idea that this was a speech or lecture rather than a discussion.

Though the modern practice of "pulpit preaching" is universal among moderns, the word group for "lecture" or "give sermons" is never found within the New Testament *ekklesia*. However, instead of "discuss" or "start a discussion," the Greek word is commonly rendered "preach" by translators... conforming with medieval and modern practice.

Personal study of the character of the early Christian assembly and of the Greek ekklesia shows another similarity between the two. In the Greek assembly, a citizen would introduce the topic for discussion, perhaps with a brief presentation. Then every citizen would exercise his/her parrhesia and express his honest opinions before the assembly. By hearing and comparing viewpoints and by asking questions knowledge would be gained.

There is one place where "lecturer" occurs in the New Testament. This is in Acts 24:1, where an orator (ῥητωρ) is hired by the Jewish leaders to speak against Paul. The word group (ῥητωρ, rhetor, from which we get "rhetoric") is never found in reference to Christians lecturing Christians. Hmm... discussion is found but lecturing is never found. Obviously, this runs contrary to the modern practice of "Sunday morning sermons."

I've spent quite some time dealing with the original Greek and translation problems. There is certainly much more that could be said, but this should suffice. The purpose in looking at the Greek was to prove both the innate difficulty of translation and the strong bias of the translators toward the ecclesiastical and sacerdotal church format. If we dig behind their paradigm, we see that the ekklesia of Jesus was vastly different from their experience.

Many ask why the new versions seem to follow the KJV lead so often. The answer is that marketability often dictates the translation. The KJV enjoyed unprecedented popularity for decades. Untold thousands memorized countless scriptures from this translation. Many "preachers" have gone so far as to pronounce that God intended the English populace to possess the "Authorized Version". This popularity has doomed translations that appear too "foreign" to oblivion, resulting in few sales and loss of money to the publishers. Few, if any, translate the original languages without a thought to the marketability factor.

Apostolic "Authority"

From the vantage point of authority, let's look at some examples to show that even the apostles – the twelve and Paul – held no church office and assumed no titles. They could be challenged by any and all disciples of Jesus. They never pulled rank and never lived economically above the other believers.

One could expect that if there ever was a group of men who could have claimed position or title it would have been the "apostles". Notwithstanding the translator bias, the term "apostle" (Greek apostolos) was never a title, position, or church office. The word simply means, "one sent", therefore an emissary or envoy. Vine defines it like this.

"APOSTOLOS is, literally, one sent forth apo, from, stello, to send, i.e., an envoy."

It does have reference in a specific way with those who were eyewitnesses of Jesus (Acts 1:21-22), but was never given to them as a title. The use by "preachers" in introducing Biblical texts have added to this confusion. They say, "the apostle Paul wrote...." and many such things as this. The allusion is to the authority of the Biblical scriptures and not to the position or office of apostle.

Paul, when speaking of the "apostles" and other brethren of repute in Jerusalem, described them in no official way. Listen to his benign references.

"Then, fourteen years later, I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking along Titus also. Now I went up according to a revelation and communicated to them the good message that I am heralding among the Gentiles. I did this by myself to those who were of reputation, lest by any means I might run, or had run, in vain... But **those who seemed to be something** communicated nothing to me. **Whatever they were, it means nothing to me:** God does not accept personal appearance (Galatians 2:1,2,6, emphasis mine)."

We can clearly see by the above verses that there existed no church institutionalized clergy in the mind of Paul. It was normal that the "apostles" in Jerusalem would be considered "men of repute" by means of their prophetic gift – detailed in the next chapter – and by those who would set up kings, but we have the inspired man's word on it that it was not so.

The calling together of all the disciples at the bequest of the "apostles" in Acts 6:1-6, also shows that they enjoyed no official capacity. We can see from what ensued that the "apostles" persuaded the disciples to choose men who would feed the Grecian widows.

Notice the nature of the event. "The twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples" (verse 2). Observe, they didn't meet privately behind closed doors. They summoned the ekklesia, the multitude of disciples. Then they persuaded them.

"It is not desirable that we should leave the message of God and serve tables. Choose out from among yourselves... (Verses 2-3)."

It seems to me that the multitude may have been attempting to saddle the twelve with this administrative responsibility and they would have none of it. They did not, however, pull rank on the multitude and order them to do anything. They persuaded them. The result was effective. "And the saying pleased the whole multitude..." (verse 5). Doesn't this remind you of the true translation of Hebrews 13:17, "Be persuaded by your guides, and be submissive." In the case of Acts 6, the twelve persuaded and the multitude listened and submitted. They could have chosen another way. The twelve exercised no lordship over them.

The "apostles" could also be challenged by any disciple. An example of this is found in Acts 11. Following Peter's trip to the Gentile Cornelius, he was castigated by certain brethren "of the circumcision" (verse 2). It says they "contended with him". They accused him of unauthorized conduct. Peter's reaction was not, "who do you think you are? Don't you know that I am an Apostle?" On the contrary, he again persuaded them by explaining the circumstances. After hearing Peter's apology, they were persuaded.

"When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life (verse 18)."

In Acts 15, the apostles, elders, and the entire assembly were all involved in settling the question of legalism. It ended in a letter being sent representing the whole ekklesia in Jerusalem.

"Then it pleased the envoys and old people, **with the whole assembly**, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas... (verse 22, emphasis mine)."

As we can see from these examples, all the saints were involved with the affairs of the ekklesia. These did not meet behind the closed doors of ecclesiastical officialdom to decide important questions. It was not until apostasy entered the ranks that the ekklesia of Christ became tyrannized by the emergence of ecclesiastical "kings". Isn't it amazing that we can examine the structure of the New Testament ekklesia and still fervently defend our orthodoxy?

The "long and short" of it is that even modern restoration church leaders exercise more authority while denying it than the apostles of the first century ekklesia ever exerted. I dare anybody to prove that untrue. When is the last time you heard an "elder" admit that he was lording it over God's charge? Try getting a "preacher" to admit that he is accepting title or position after you have pointed out Jesus' injunction against it. However, many continue to keep their whole body wrapped in traditionalism while paying lip service and tribute to the principles of restoration with their mouths. Entrenched paradigms have always led – even unintentionally – to hypocrisy. Jesus, speaking of the hypocrites of his day, said,

"Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. And in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrine the precepts of men (Mark 7:6-7)."

It's easy to fault the Pharisees and overlook the hypocrisy of our own paradigm. When will the ekklesia of God take this situation seriously? How about you reader? Will you begin to exercise your responsibilities of the Priesthood of God? Will you turn your back upon human traditions, titles, and positions? Will you insist upon your right to free speech within the framework or your particular fellowship? Will you encourage others to do likewise?

Along this vein, it becomes necessary to look at the uniqueness of first century Christianity and the apostolic dispensation that ushered in this new age.

BIBLICAL DISPENSATIONALISM AND THE "LAST DAYS"

"Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a son, whom he appointed heir of all things, on account of whom he also created the ages (Hebrews 1:1-2, emphasis mine)."

If the above verse teaches nothing else, it teaches us that dispensationalism is not a fancy in the mind of those that would deny "Jesus delegated authority", latter day prophecy and other manifestations of the Holy Spirit in the twentieth century. It details the speaking to the ancestors (the prophets) at various times and ways.

There has never been – in the long Biblical history of man – a continual stream of revelation from God. There were often long periods in which there were no prophets. prophets appeared at various times, with God speaking to them in "various ways." Though the Bible records and identifies these various ways and times, it is not the purpose of this work to explore them but rather emphasize that the above verse teaches us that there is a dispensation called the "last days" (literally, the end of the days). In this era, God spoke to us by his Son – identified many times as Jesus, the Anointed.

The Hebrew writer is making a clear distinction between those past eras when God spoke to the prophets and the "last days" when God spoke through the Son. Many of those who are willing to grant the above argument would insist that God is still speaking: some opining that all powers available in these "last days" are ongoing. It is this argument that the author seeks to address in this short work as it relates to this human tendency to "be" and to set up "kings".

The *American Heritage Dictionary* defines dispensation as:

"Specific arrangement or system by which something is dispensed or administered. The divine ordering of worldly affairs. A religious system or code of commands considered to have been divinely revealed or appointed."

In the confines of this definition, I would like to look specifically at what I have referred to as the "apostolic dispensation." Actually, it could also be termed the "holy spirit dispensation". It was during the apostle's (apostle is simply defined as "one sent" or an envoy) lifetime that the Christian system was divinely revealed and appointed. This was a specific time in history as follows:

- Referred to as the "last days";
- In the days of the Roman Empire;
- The apostles (those specifically chosen by Jesus and commissioned by Jesus) were eyewitnesses of Jesus, his miracles, his teachings and his resurrection;
- These apostles received specific promises, i.e. the "spirit of truth";
- These apostles were given specific powers;
- All promises given and received by the apostles from Jesus were fulfilled before the destruction of Jerusalem (Circa AD. 70).

One subject that needs close attention is the theology concerning what is called in Hebrews and other places the "last days" or "latter days". Many hold to the view that each time they encounter this phrase or one approaching it, the phrase always refers to the same event or time. This is clearly not the case.

In Genesis 49:1 and Numbers 24:14, for example, it just means later on. It is used several times to refer to the last times of the Jewish commonwealth such as in Micah 4:1; Joel 2:28ff. This would include an overlapping period of Christianity but would not necessarily bleed over into the present. The author believes this is the reference here. In this letter to the Hebrews, there is definitely an event pending. In chapter 10:25b we read, "...and so much the more as you see the

Day approaching." (emphasis mine) In Hebrews 12:27, the writer alludes to the removal of the things that can be shaken so that the things that cannot be shaken will remain.

As you can see, the Christians reading this first century letter were those that saw "the day approaching." It was to these people that the Hebrew writer reminds them that certain things had to be removed in order for those that couldn't be moved would remain.

The things that are to be removed are easily determined to be those things connected with Judaism. In Hebrews 12:18-19, the Hebrew writer introduces the receiving of the law of Moses as:

"You have not come to something that can be touched, a blazing fire, and darkness, and gloom, and a tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that not another word be spoken to them...."

The author then proceeds to describe the things that cannot be shaken.

"But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, **the Heavenly Jerusalem**; and to innumerable messengers in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel (emphasis mine)."

As before mentioned, verse 27 alludes plainly to Judaism and its forthcoming destruction. We read, *"This phrase, yet once more, indicates the removal of what is shaken – that is, created things – so that what cannot be shaken may remain."*

Then speaking to the Hebrew Christians he proceeds,

"Therefore, **since we have received a kingdom** that cannot be shaken, let us give thanks... (Hebrews 12:28, emphasis mine)."

The entire context of Hebrews involves the contrast between Judaism and Christianity. The "created things" are clearly contrasted to the "heavenly things". They refer here to the earthly Jerusalem as opposed to the "heavenly Jerusalem". The earthly temple as opposed to the heavenly tabernacle where Jesus sprinkled his blood (Hebrews 9:11-14).

To make the "created things" that were to be removed the whole earth and the universe as applied by some is to miss the point completely and remove the entire historical setting from the first century to the future. This would make this message of admonition to the Hebrew Christians – to whom the letter was addressed – totally irrelevant.

Thus we see that the theology of the "last days" is completely apropos to the subject under discussion. It is in these "last days" the Anointed appeared. It was in these "last days" that the apostles were chosen by Jesus. It was in these "last days" that Jesus cried,

"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near, repent, and trust the good message (Mark 1:14)."

The "last days" of Hebrews corresponds to the overall New Testament teaching that looks forward to the pending end of Judaism. This pending destruction is described in the text many ways. one, as we've just seen, as the "day approaching" (Heb. 10:25). In Acts 2, Peter, quoting the Old Testament prophet Joel identifies his present time as the "last days" (verses 16-17), then proceeds to describe the coming judgment as "...that great and notable day of the Lord..." (verse 20). John the Baptist had also clearly referred to this coming destruction when he challenged the Jews.

"... when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruit worthy of repentance. Do not presume to say to yourselves, We have Abraham as our ancestor... Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire... His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and will gather his wheat into the granary, but the chaff will burn with unquenchable fire (Matthew 3:7-12, emphasis mine)."

You will notice that the ax was then lying at the root of the tree. Not only was the destruction pending but it would be total – the judged would be completely uprooted. The phrase "unquenchable fire" carries the same connotation.

Jesus had also prophesied in Matthew 24, the pending destruction of Jerusalem. After some had drawn his attention to the temple and its grandiose architecture, he informs his disciples that a time was coming that it would be completely demolished (Matthew 24:1-2). This pronouncement naturally aroused the curiosity of his followers and they asked him what he was talking about and when it would occur (Matthew 24:3).

Matthew uses common Jewish phraseology in recording their question.

"Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age? (emphasis mine)"

Jesus, in Matthew 24:15, finally draws the disciples attention to the prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27, which portends the Prince of the people destroying the city and the temple (Daniel 9:26), and borrows the phrase "abomination of Desolation". Luke, in his parallel, uses a clearer phrase.

"When you see Jerusalem encompassed with armies, then know that its desolation is near (Luke 21:20, emphasis mine)."

Jesus made sure that these men didn't get the idea that this destruction was "futurized". He said,

"Truly I say unto you, **this generation** shall not pass away until all these things be fulfilled (Matthew 24:34, emphasis mine)."

The modern reader runs into problems because of the figurative, Jewish language of the text. The expression "sign of your coming" is especially mysterious if we are unfamiliar with its usage. It is wording borrowed from the Old Testament and did not carry the import to the Jew that it sometimes carries with the modern student. The modern reader not only has the tendency to literalize the language of judgment but is sometimes ignorant of the Old Testament from whence this expression arose.

When the Jew heard the expression "God coming" they did not think of His literal presence. A good example is Isaiah 19:1, which reads thus:

"An oracle concerning Egypt. See, the Lord is riding **on a swift cloud** and comes to Egypt." (emphasis mine)

In this context, the prophet has clearly identified the target of impending judgment – Egypt. He uses two expressions that we find reiterated in Jesus' foreboding in Matthew 24. In Isaiah, the Lord is "coming" to Egypt. In addition, the Lord is riding on a "cloud". In Matthew 24, Jesus is asked what would be the sign of his "coming". While answering the question he says,

"... then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man **coming on the clouds** of heaven with power and great glory (verse 30, emphasis mine)."

As in Isaiah 19, the target of this "visit" is clearly identified – in this case Jerusalem. Can we be sure?

- First, this "coming" was certainly connected with the Jewish temple. Knowing this, some modern detractors – those who teach Jesus was speaking of the literal end of the universe because his words have never been literally fulfilled and thus must be in the future – teach that the temple must be rebuilt before Jesus can "come again". I don't think so!
- Second, this coming was to be at the "end of the age", which we have already examined in some detail. The KJV has caused many problems by translating age "world" which is incorrect.
- Third, the apostles were told they ("you" in the text) would hear of "wars and rumors of wars" (verse 6). Just because we in the twentieth century also hear of "wars and rumors of wars" does not mean he was referring to our time. Almost every generation could say the same. However, at that time, the Roman Empire was in a state of civil war just before the destruction of Jerusalem. It was so bad that many thought that Rome was going to be destroyed from within.
- Fourth, the apostles, themselves, would be handed over to persecution (verse 9).
- Fifth, the "gospel" would be preached to "all nations" and then the end would come. This was fulfilled before the destruction of Jerusalem which occurred in A.D. 70. (See Colossians 1:23 and Romans 10).
- Sixth, those in "Judea" were to flee. If it is the end of the universe Jesus is referring to, where could they flee?
- Seventh, the "tribes" of the earth would mourn. Only the children of Israel were referred to as the "tribes."

- Eighth, those listening to Jesus were going to see the things he was referring to (verse 33).
- Finally, as before mentioned, Jesus made sure that these men didn't get the idea this event was in another era.

He said,

"Truly I say unto you, this generation shall not pass away until **all these things** are fulfilled (Matthew 24:34, emphasis mine)."

It must be reiterated that the Jews were aware of this prophecy. The term the "last days" had a specific significance for they who lived at that time. It is a matter of debate with us. Most New Testament epistles alluded to this coming destruction.

Peter makes the statement in his letter, "The end of all things is **at hand**" (1 Peter 4:7, emphasis mine). Some have tried to convince us that Peter was mistaken: that Peter only thought that the "end of the world" was near. This argument undermines the inspiration of Peter as well as begs the question.

The "all things" of Peter's letter is the "created things" of the Hebrew letter. The whole tenor and context of Peter's missives points to the end of Judaism. Judaism, the persecutor of the church. Judaism, the claimant to God's favor. Judaism, the heirs of the earthly temple, priesthood, and sacrificial system. The Hebrew writer also mentions this "end time" in similar language.

"But as it is, he appeared once for all at the **end of the age** to remove sin by the sacrifice of himself (Hebrews 9:26, emphasis mine)."

It is easy for twentieth century Gentiles to overlook the significance of this "end". To the first century Jew – both Christian and unbeliever alike – it was the happening.

For the purposes of our discussion, the "end of the age" is important as it corresponds to the age of miracles, prophecy, revelation of the good news, the New Testament scriptures and holy spirit witness. In the quotation of Joel, Peter reiterated that it was in these "last days"..., before that great and notable day of the Lord", that the spirit would be "poured out", and tongues, prophecy and other manifestations of God's power would be evident (Acts 2:17-21, emphasis mine).

This dispensation was to occur before the destruction of Jerusalem, i.e. "that great and notable day of the Lord". The main point is this. If this period occurred and was fulfilled in their generation then it is not now occurring and is not being fulfilled in our generation. The claims of modern day charismatics and "prophets" are both false and spurious. But what about the claims of apostolic succession and Holy Spirit leading by Roman Catholicism and mainstream denominations?

In the first place, when something is fulfilled it means completed. It cannot be fulfilled one time and then continue to be fulfilled in another era. Jesus said, concerning the promised kingdom, that the "time is fulfilled". However, many scholars say that the kingdom has NOT yet occurred. Who are we to believe? In reality, the kingdom that Jesus established simply does not fit their

theology. They are guilty of the same misunderstanding that plagued the Jews. The Jews were expecting a kingdom that looked differently from the one Jesus was preaching. This is the reason Jesus – when asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom would come – told them,

"... God's kingdom is **not** coming with scrutiny. Nor will they say, 'Look, it is here or there.' For look, God's kingdom is **within you**." (Luke 17:20-21, emphasis mine)

In Luke 24:44, speaking of past events, Jesus said,

"These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you – that everything written about me in the Torah of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms must be fulfilled."

No one argues that Jesus would need to die again or be resurrected again since these events had been fulfilled already. However, when it comes to many of the other promises concerning the first century, some deny that they were actually fulfilled by either denying them in their theology or by giving lip service in theory but denying the dispensational aspects by their practice.

The Episcopal Church, Church of England, Greek and Russian Orthodox Churches, Methodist, Presbyterian, and many others also claim that the continuing teaching office of the Holy Spirit is found in their episcopates, synods, or gathering of elders. They all maintain this "special grace" as they pontificate on church matters as was alluded to in the quote earlier from the Catholic Bible. The Holy Spirit must be confused. He is both Catholic and Protestant! Then we have the latter day "prophets".

Mary Baker Eddy claimed that God revealed to her the cure for sin and disease, appointing her the founder of the "true" church. The Church of Christ, Scientist is still with us today.

Herbert W. Armstrong said the living Christ appeared to him in 1928, and gave him the "key" to prophesy. It is with this "key" that you could understand what the Holy Spirit had already "revealed". He also founded the "true" religion (he was before affiliated with the Seventh Day Adventists) known as the Worldwide Church of God.

James White and his seer wife Ellen G., after leaving the "Adventist" movement established by Miller (who claimed the Lord would come again in 1841), commenced to initiate the "true" church known as the Seventh Day Adventists on new revelations Ellen received while falling into a stupor similar to Grand Mal epileptic seizures. She claimed to have been caught up into heaven and there saw the Ten Commandments. The fourth commandment was circled (keep the Sabbath). She received many other "special forms of Grace" during her lifetime.

Joseph Smith claimed an angel appeared to him revealing where the golden plates containing the "fullness of the everlasting gospel" were buried. He was told by the heavenly messenger that great and precious truths had been left out of the Bible. He proceeded to establish another "true" church known as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. There have been countless others.

Then there are those that claim that the Holy Spirit guides them as they study the Bible, enlightening them as they read. Also, many claim the Spirit leads them to this place or that, chooses this person or that, or engages in all kinds of various and sundry, mystical proceedings. You hear "preachers" that claim that God brings a scripture to mind while they "preach" or reveals to them what a certain scripture means.

All the above have one thing in common. If you can prove one claim you can prove any of them. Only the degree is different. Those who claim the Holy Spirit "teaches" them in ways over and beyond the Bible must prove it using the same arguments essentially as the Roman Catholic Church or Joseph Smith. They are claiming special revelation. If the Holy Spirit does indeed enlighten them on a scripture or any verse whatsoever, any who took issue with their opinion would be rightly judged as false and rebellious. If the Holy Spirit reveals to the preacher the meaning of a certain passage, then why do they disagree among themselves? Why does the Holy Spirit reveal one thing to one man and the opposite to another. Both claim the same leading!

Remember this! If the claims of the Catholic Church are true then we are all divinely obligated to be Catholics. If God speaks and moves through the teaching authority of the Roman Bishops then who are we to disagree? If not, then the Roman Catholic Church has no divine sanction within the framework of Biblical Christianity!

If God spoke to Ellen G. White, we are all divinely instructed to be Seventh Day Adventists. If not, then the Adventists have no divine authority within the context of Biblical Christianity. If the living Christ appeared to Herbert W. Armstrong in 1928, and gave him the "key" – we all better join the Worldwide Church of God. If Joseph Smith was indeed a prophet, we had better be "Mormonized" or we are being continually disobedient to Divine directives.

On the other hand, if these people were not prophets and Divinely inspired, then the religions that they inspired have no claim to our life and have no Divine sanction to exist at all within the framework of Biblical Christianity. If this is not true, then why not?

Bringing this argument closer to home, if the Holy Spirit "enlightens" anyone to the meaning of a particular scripture, who has a right to argue with them? There is no essential difference between those who claim the "Spirit leading" than those who claim a special teaching authority, modern prophecy, etceteras. The only difference is in proportion. All these claims make the individual or group that enjoys them more special than the rest of us who don't enjoy these benefits.

All are claiming the "special grace" the Roman Catholic Church claims in the earlier quote and which this author argues was fulfilled in the apostles and prophets of the first century. The claims of both Catholic, Protestant, and those specially led, is that the Bible is a dead letter and therefore needs help to make it pertinent for today. Of course, those so "gifted" can make it pertinent for us. Listen again to the Catholic pretension on this point.

"But in order to keep the gospel forever whole and alive within the Church, the apostles left bishops as their successors, 'handing over their own teaching role' to them..."

Can you really name one essential difference between that claim and the modern day revelator or the person who is simply "Holy Spirit led" over and beyond following the Biblical truth as he or she understands it? And if every Christian is so "led", why the differences of opinion on practically every Biblical subject, this one included?

Practically every group wants to claim a superior Holy Spirit understanding in one way or another. This is one way in which they can be separated from the run of the mill Christian. This gives them a feeling of specialness and gives legitimacy to their money making efforts. One Christian will say things like, "that group doesn't have the Holy Spirit." I've personally been accused of not believing in the Holy Spirit simply because I deny the conclusions that have been drawn by those who are specially "led".

These specially "led" may believe that Christians who clap, sway, sing out, and use other "enthusiasms" "have the Spirit" while those that are not so moved do not. If you have the "full gospel", the Holy Spirit will give you the gift of the quivers, the shakes, or may even "slay you". Such nonsense! You cannot find in the sacred text even a hint that the Spirit of God ever caused any such things! Others simply say that the Holy Spirit caused this or that to occur, led them here or there, into this or that situation. This same Spirit gave insight as they studied the scriptures, and so on.

Yet both extremes point to the same verses in the Bible as their proof texts. Logicians, however, have long known that – "that which proves too much proves nothing"! So it is here. The views stated just above, the Roman Catholic claims, the modern "prophets", et cetera, all use the same proof to one degree or another and all suffer from the same misunderstanding of the "apostolic dispensation".

Many are reaching out for something that they can't explain. They're searching for a feeling that is not provable and for a "possession" which they cannot Biblically describe. Many desire the warm fuzzies of grace. The necessary inference and consequence is that the Bible is incomplete, inadequate and insufficient. Why aren't the plain promises found in the scriptures enough? It has always been the trait of human pride to lust for special treatment, greater honor, authority, and power. No human is immune. But these powers, revelations, and testifying "gifts" of the spirit were reserved for the "last days".

THE APOSTOLIC DISPENSATION

"Therefore we must pay greater attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it. For if the message declared through messengers was valid, and every transgression or disobedience received a just penalty, how can we escape if we neglect so great salvation? It was declared at first through the Lord, and was attested **to us by those who heard him**, while God bore witness to them by signs and wonders and various miracles, and by gifts of holy breath, distributed according to his will (Hebrews 2:1-4, emphasis mine)."

The above quotation from the Hebrew letter addresses powerfully the subject under discussion in this thesis. In a few short verses it runs the gamut of dispensational revelation and the confirming miracles of the Holy Spirit. As you can see, this "gamut" is placed in the past tense.

The Hebrew writer is not drawing the readers' attention to any new revelation but reminding them of what they had already received and witnessed. Not only had they heard this "gospel" they had seen "signs" and "wonders" designed to confirm the veracity of the spoken message.

This verse also points to the fact that the author of Hebrews was not an apostle. He or she makes no apostolic claims but emphasizes the message previously received. This message had first been proclaimed by Jesus and then it was bestowed to the Hebrew Christians by "those that heard him". This is a very clear and distinct allusion to the apostles chosen by Jesus. The tense of the verb throughout this reminder is past. It had been first spoken by the Lord to the apostles. The Hebrews had heard it from "them". The message had also been "confirmed" by miracles.

In reality, the writer is informing them that they were without excuse if they fell away. They couldn't claim that they had received the message second hand or that they had only heard of the miracles. They had received the gospel directly from the eye witnesses and had experienced the confirming power of God (see the description of their conversion in chapter 6:4-5).

These few verses speak volumes about the "apostolic dispensation". First of all, it demonstrates clearly that to the apostles, Jesus entrusted the gospel message. Paul alludes to this in 2 Corinthians 4:7, speaking of his apostolic ministry. "We have this treasure in earthen vessels..." This is an interesting verse because it is one that is often universally applied to all believers and is worthy of greater attention as we proceed.

Calling the Christians of his day into remembrance, Peter also alludes to this "treasure" that was given to him and the other "eye witnesses" of Jesus. He writes,

"His divine power has given us all things which direct toward life and piety, through the recognition of the one who called **us** by his own glory and goodness, through which the valuable and great promises have been given **to us**, so that through them **you** may flee from the corruption that is in the world because of strong desire, and may become partners in the divine nature (2 Peter 1:3, emphasis mine)."

Though the tendency is to make universal application of the "valuable and very great promises" to every believer, past and present, it is clear with only a minimal attention to detail that Peter is claiming apostolic authority for his epistle. In the quoted text he makes distinction between "us" and "you". The "valuable and very great promises" given to the apostles were so that the Christians addressed could escape the world's corruption. The "divine power" bestowed on the "eye witnesses" enabled the apostle's converts to "participate in the divine nature." He underscores this argument as he proceeds.

"For **we** did not follow cleverly devised myths when **we** made known to **you** the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but **we** had been **eye witnesses** of the

majesty. For he received honor and glory from God the Father when that voice was conveyed to him by the Majestic Glory, saying, 'This is my Son, my beloved, with whom I am well pleased.' **We ourselves** heard this voice come from heaven, while **we** were with him on the holy mountain. So **we** have the prophetic message more fully confirmed. **You** will do well to be attentive to this as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. First of all you must understand this, that no written prophecy becomes its own explanation. For at no time was prophecy brought about by human wishes, but people from God spoke as they were carried by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:16-21, emphasis mine)."

Peter continues to contrast his "confirmed" message with the intrusion of false prophets that are continually on the prowl in every generation. Both he and the apostle Paul are – in different degrees – defending their apostolic message against those who would subvert the plain truth of the gospel. In doing so, they both continue to draw attention to the message of Jesus that resided in them. Compare this with the wording about the message by the Hebrew writer. He lends strength to the apostolic claims of inspiration by drawing his reader's attention to the miraculous confirmation of the apostle's gospel by the Holy Spirit.

I would like to interject here the Biblical meaning of the terms "false prophets" and/ or "false apostles". The scriptures clearly indicate that those described consisted of people whose intent was to deceive. Jesus said, in Matthew 7:15, to "beware of false prophets." These same were "wolves" but they dressed like "sheep." They weren't misguided, misinformed, or mistaught, but were "ravenous." The "false apostles" Paul alludes to in 2 Corinthians 11:13 are described in detail.

*"For such are false envoys, **deceitful** workers, fashioning themselves into the envoys of the Anointed One."* (emphasis mine).

These "apostles" were intending to deceive. They fashioned themselves into deceitful "apostles". Their motives and their teaching were in view. Peter adds another long description to these "prophets". "...these privately bring in destructive schools of thought, even denying the Lord" (2 Peter 2:1, emphasis mine). They were "lascivious" (verse 2). They were profit oriented (verse 3). What is my point?

In our twentieth century context and in the past, the label of "false teacher" or "false prophet" is placed upon practically anyone with whom we disagree – especially those who are members of another denomination or who would dare question our orthodoxy. This is another example of using a Biblical term that has a specific application and definition and giving it our own definition and use. Personally, I have been so wrong so often in my understanding of Biblical truths that I'm now extremely hesitant to claim a complete understanding of any subject. There are very few living people that actually would fall into the category of the Biblical "false prophet". We should be willing to study, discuss, and debate any Biblical theme without acrimony and without labeling those with whom we disagree as "false".

At this point, I think it would behoove us to examine in some detail the "great and valuable promises" given and received by Peter and the other apostles. All these promises were given by Jesus and are encompassed in John 13-16. Lets walk briefly through these chapters and see if we can determine whether or not these promises had universal application to all Christians.

The setting for this context is given in Chapter 13:1-5. It was at the "last supper", the Passover supper where Jesus "desired with a great desire" to eat it with his disciples (Luke 22:15). It was a very personal confrontation with those he had "chosen". They were in a prepared room together. Jesus proceeds to wash their feet. Notice the specific applications and descriptions made to and about them:

- John 13:5 Jesus washed their feet;
13:8 He must wash their feet if they were to have a part with him;
13:10 They were all clean but Judas;
13:18 Jesus refers to them as personally chosen;
13:34 The disciples present would be identified by their mutual love;
14:2 Rooms were going to be prepared for them;
14:11 They were reminded of the works they had seen him do;
14:12 They would do greater works than he because he was going to the Father;
14:13 Anything they asked in his name would be granted;
14:16 They would receive the advisor "into the age";
14:17 The Spirit of Truth that dwelled with them would be "in them";
14:26 The Spirit would teach them everything and remind them of Jesus;
15:3 They were already cleansed through the message;
15:5 They were the branches of the vine (Jesus);
15:5 As branches, they would bear much fruit;
15:7 They could ask anything and it would be granted;
15:15 They were addressed as friends because they had received revelation;
15:16 They had been specifically chosen by Jesus;
15:16 They had been specifically chosen and appointed to bear fruit;
15:19 They would be hated by the world;
15:20 They were promised persecution;
15:26 The Holy Spirit would be sent to them to testify;
15:27 They would testify because they had been with him from the onset;
16:2 They would be expelled from the synagogues or gatherings;
16:6 They were sorrowful;
16:8 The Spirit would come to them. The Spirit's job description:
To convict the world of sin, righteousness, & judgment;
The Spirit would guide them into all the truth (verse 13);
The Spirit would glorify Jesus (verse 14);
He would take from Jesus and give it unto them (verse 14).

There could be added many other personal references to the "chosen" apostles but these should suffice. The problem in application occurs by Jesus' occasional use of the words "he" or "anyone" instead of "you". However, if you look closely at the context, you will see that the

"he", "anyone" and the "you" are used interchangeably and that Jesus is not making universal application.

For example, in John 14:11, Jesus challenges them to believe in him based upon the miracles "works" that they have seen him perform. He then uses the phrase "the one who believes" (NRSV) or "He that believeth" (KJV). Is he all at once making reference universally to all believers? Not if you stay in the context! He goes on to say that the "anyone who believes" will do even greater works than he.

If the "anyone who believes" could be universally applied then every believer would be able to perform all the signs done by the apostles! This has never occurred in either the "apostolic dispensation" under discussion or since and yet the promise is both specific and sure. Jesus didn't say, "he that believes enough." He didn't say, "if you have enough faith." It was unnecessary because they knew that he was referring to their faith based upon their witness of him, his teachings, and his miracles (verse 11).

He goes on to promise them anything that they desired when asked in his name (verse 13). If I was in a room with a few people that I addressed about a certain subject, promising them certain benefits as they acquiesced to my will, and then said, "now anyone who does what he is told will receive a reward", would they get the idea that the "anyone" included the entire world outside the context of the room? No they wouldn't!!

Reader, this is the reason that our Biblical applications are inconsistent. We seek to apply apostolic promises to ourselves and then question our faith when we don't receive the same results. The examples will be multiplied before we finish this study. These men were not supermen in any sense of the word. They were not capable of more faith than we. They were – like the majority of us – average, every day people that had been captivated by the precious and endearing person of Jesus.

We see another use of this same principle in John 15:5-7. In verse 5, Jesus says "I am the vine, **you** are the branches" (emphasis mine). In the following sentence he switches to the word "those" (NRSV) or "he" (KJV). "Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit..." In verse 6, Jesus uses the word "whoever" (NRSV) or "a man" (KJV) to continue the discourse. In verse 7, he returns to the word "you". It is easy to see that the "you" in verse 5 corresponds to the "those" of the same verse, the "whoever" of verse 6, and the "you" of verse 7.

However, in spite of this context, many claim that the Lord is all at once making universal application to all believers. This is clearly not the case! He is still talking to the same people. If the application of "you are the branches" can be applied universally, the promise of receiving "anything asked" can be applied universally. If the promise is "specific" to the apostles then all other attributes must be explicitly applied to them.

Reader, are you getting the point? The apostles were specifically chosen by Jesus. They were to be his "branches". They were directed to go and bear fruit. Jesus, in the person of the Holy Spirit, was going to make his dwelling with them. Other Christians – both first century and modern – are not "branches"! They were and are the "fruit" of those "branches" if you hold the view that

the "fruit" is new converts (for the "fruit" may simply be love for one another). Regardless of your view as to the "fruit", it was the "branches" that were to "bear" it. Jesus promised that these "branches" would bear "fruit" – much "fruit." We have neither been referred to as "branches", commanded to bear fruit, or promised that we will receive anything we pray for in Jesus' name. I challenge anyone to prove differently and stay in the context.

In actuality, the metaphor of the "vine and branches" explains perfectly the divine relationship between Jesus and his apostles and the coming revelation ("treasure") deposited in them – the "earthen vessels". The branches receive sustenance directly from the vine. Fruit, on the other hand, grows from the branches and receives what is required indirectly from the vine through the branches. The "treasure" or message of the Anointed flowing from the "vine" into the "branches" or his apostles resulted in the "fruit". This is what the Hebrew writer explained in the introductory verse to this chapter.

The gospel was first spoken by the Lord ("vine") and then delivered by those that heard him ("branches") to the Hebrew Christians and confirmed by the Holy Spirit. The Hebrews were the "fruit" of the message delivered by the eye witnesses of Jesus. If you universally hold this text to mean all believers, you invariably make "fruit bearing" a requisite for salvation.

This is just what many have done. They have kept many saints in a continual state of anxiety because of this teaching which is utterly foreign to the context. If there was nothing we could "do" to be saved, then what can we "do" to stay redeemed? The scripture says,

"Oh foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you... Are you so foolish? Having started with the Spirit, are you now ending with the flesh? (Galatians 3:1a, 3)."

We have pointed to the Judaizer Paul alludes to here with contempt but have laid upon the saints even greater burdens. The Judaizer wanted the Gentile Christians "to be circumcised and to obey the Law of Moses." Modern "clergymen" insist that faithfulness is defined as "bearing fruit" (which is defined as proselytizing others into their denomination as a rule) – completely disregarding the apostolic context. Both the Judaizer and the modern "clergymen" are gross "bewitchers". The "moderns" are just more comfortable with their form of legalism than they are with the Judaizer's.

Paul, addressing the Ephesian church, explains the transmission of revelation from God to Gentiles in these words:

"For this cause I, Paul, am the prisoner of the Anointed Jesus on account of you of the Gentiles; (since indeed, you heard of the administration of that favor of God having been given **me** for **you**; that by revelation he made known to **me** the secret – as I wrote briefly before, by reading which, you can perceive my intelligence in the secret of the Anointed One – which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed **to his holy apostles and prophets** by the Spirit (Ephesians 3:1-5, Wilson, emphasis mine)."

We see, then, from the context and metaphors of John 13-16, and the application of this apostolic grace in Paul's explanation above, the apostles were "specially" chosen and given particular and unique responsibilities. This was the "treasure in earthen vessels" referred to by Paul. These were the "great and precious promises" described by Peter. The Hebrew writer defines these promises as "so great a salvation" (Hebrews 2:3) and makes it plain that it included the receiving and dispensing of the Gospel while being attested to by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Another parallel on this same subject is given by Paul as he addresses the disunity exemplified by the Corinthian body. Since these Christians were claiming to follow their human "heroes" – "I am of Apollos, I am of Paul, I am of Cephas, I am of Christ" (1 Corinthians 1:12) – Paul explains the unique relationship between those who were given the responsibilities of preaching the gospel and those who received the divine message through their heralding. After admonishing them that this "hero worship" was unseemly and unspiritual, he explains their peculiar relationship thusly:

"For when someone says, 'Indeed, I am Paul's,' and another, 'I am Apollos',' aren't you human beings? What then is Apollos and what is Paul? Servants, through whom you believed; just as the Lord gave to each one. I planted, Apollos watered; but God made you grow. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but it is God who made you grow. Now the planter (Paul) and the waterer (Apollos) are one, but each will receive his own reward, according to his labor. For we are God's co-workers; you are God's farm; you are God's building. According to that favor of God that was given to me, I have laid a foundation like a wise architect, and another person is building upon... (1 Corinthians 3:4-10, emphasis mine)."

Can you see the similarities above to Jesus' promise to the apostles in the figure of the "vine and branches"? Whereas the "fruit" cannot allude to the "branches" neither can the "co-workers with God," refer to the "field". Paul makes a clear distinction between those who shared in the apostolic ministry and the requirements of those that received the message. In this case the "field" or the "building" was the Corinthian hearers and their obligation was to glorify the message not the messengers.

However, even as the "branches" have been universally applied to all believers by many, so has the above apostolic responsibility described as "co-workers with God" been generally applied to all Christians. Both have been used to bolster the claims of some program thrust upon the "laity" by the "clergy". Those that have not "performed" have been considered less faithful than those that have "gotten with the program".

Reader, nowhere in the Biblical text is the "non" apostle or "non" prophet spoken of as a "branch" or "co-worker with God". It is this constant misapplication of specific "gifts" that has multiplied frustration among many and buttressed the claims of those "kings" among us. On the one hand, church leaders have misused apostolic promises and obligations to motivate modern Christians to evangelistic efforts and other "worthwhile" programs. On the other hand, those claiming various, direct "Holy Spirit leadings" have misused and personally applied many phrases describing apostolic revelation, apostolic directives and apostolic power to themselves.

The letters of Paul to the Corinthian body are a favorite sources to those who would mistakenly apply apostolic dispensational phrases to themselves, thus becoming the ecclesiastical "kings". Let's examine a few more. In I Corinthians 2:12, Paul writes,

"Now **we** have received, not the spirit of the world, but that **spirit which is from God**, so that we may know the things graciously given **to us** by God (emphasis mine)."

I have not only heard this many times applied to Christians in general but I have used it that way myself. As a matter of fact, I have been personally guilty of most of the misapplications that have been aforementioned. What causes the problem for us?

There are two main reasons for our problems. First, we have a tendency to forget the principle of "apostolic dispensationalism" under discussion. Second, we all have problems remaining within the Biblical context. In verse 12, we run amok with Paul's use of the words "we" and "us". I'm a "we" and an "us", aren't you? No, not here. Let's walk through the text together.

In 1 Corinthians 2:1, Paul identifies himself as the "revealer" of the testimony they (the Corinthians) had received. In verse 4 - 5, the message had come with a "demonstration of the Spirit and power". In verses 6-11, the "we" under discussion had revealed the "hidden wisdom" that had been kept secret. This wisdom had been "what no eye had seen or ear heard". However, this "mystery" had been "revealed" to "us" (verse 10). Therefore, it was the "we" and the "us" that had received the "Spirit" that had revealed the "mystery" – confirming it with power. As before argued, if general application can be made to all Christians, then all believers would have the same powers of confirmation (verse 5-6) and revelation (verses 7-11). In that case, who needs the scriptures? Think about it!

You can readily see that the misapplication of verse 12, invariably leads to the misuse of verse 16. Paul ends his argument by stating that the "animal man does not receive the Spirit of God" and then adds, "For who knew God's mind? Who will school him? But we have the mind of Christ". How many times have you heard that verse applied universally? Did the apostle "all at once" change the "we" from the apostolic gift to the Corinthians?

Come on people. You know the answer. We of the twentieth century do NOT have the "mind of Christ" that Paul was claiming for himself. The closest we could possibly come to having the "mind of Christ" would be – through study – a perfect knowledge of the scriptures in its pure, unadulterated original revelation – in the original signatures – in the original language. After all this, we still couldn't claim the "mind of Christ" like Paul. Remember, Jesus had promised his envoys that the "Spirit of truth" that was dwelling "with them" would later be "in them" (John 14:17). Paul was saying that he had Jesus "in him" viz, "the mind of Christ."

Reader, the "proof of the pudding is in the eating". If we can claim the "mind of Christ" then why the divisions and differences of opinion over the Biblical text, and where is the confirming power? If I have the "mind of Christ" then you have no right to disagree with even one conclusion drawn by this thesis. In addition, if I claim to have the same "mind" as Paul, then you could demand the same "demonstration of power". You get the point.

This is the danger of misapplication and continually leads to boasts of Holy Spirit leading, guiding, and scripture illumination, as well as Romanism and the proliferation of modern day "prophets". This is the underlying reason for the multiplication of bogus miracles, healings, and signs that have been "part and parcel" of these pretenses in every generation. Ultimately, this theology gives impetus to those that "would be kings" among us.

The apostle Paul refers to the attributes of his "ministry" in both letters to the Corinthian brethren. He stresses his "calling" from the beginning of 2 Corinthians! Paul makes a clear distinction between his apostleship and the Corinthian brethren. He defends his message against the claims of "false apostles" alluded to in 2 Cor. 11:13. In doing so, he continually draws attention to the "ministry of righteousness" (2 Cor. 3:9) that had been deposited in him. Reader, take time to go through this letter and underscore these apostolic references that Paul makes concerning himself and those that shared in his apostolic ministry.

In 2 Cor. 1:1, Paul calls himself an apostle by the "will of God". Notice also the immediate distinctions made between himself and the Corinthians. God comforts him so that he can comfort them (verses 3-7). In verses 8-12, Paul refers to great persecutions borne by him and even refers to the fact that the Corinthians had prayed for him. In verses 18-22, Paul refers to the message preached by he and his companions, even alluding to the divine "anointing" of the Holy spirit as a witness (verses 20-22). Discern the clear distinctions made between he and the Corinthians.

"For whatever be the Promises of God, they are in him yes, and in him Amen, to the Glory of God through us. Now the one who is establishing us with you in Christ, and who anointed us, is that God, who also has sealed us, and has given the pledge of the Spirit in our hearts (emphasis mine)."

Here you have a clear reference, not only to the divine revelation through the apostles, but an allusion to the confirming power of the Holy Spirit. The descriptive phrases are "anointing" and "sealed". These are both very clearly pointing to apostolic claims. Continuing in chapter 2:1-11, Paul speaks of their obedience to his directive in his first letter. In verses 12-13, he writes of his personal fear in not finding Titus but then continues by describing the fact that God always leads him triumphantly.

"But thanks be to God, who in the Anointed One always leads **us** in triumphal procession, and through **us** spreads in every place the fragrance that comes from knowing him. For **we** are the aroma of the Anointed One to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; to the one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things? For **we** are not peddlers of God's message like so many; but in Christ **we** speak as persons of sincerity, as persons **sent from God** and standing in his presence (2 Cor. 2:14-17, emphasis mine)."

These verses are quoted because of their often misuse. How many times have you referred to Christians today as being led in "triumphal procession"? How many times have you heard them referred to as the "aroma" of life or death. Reader, consider this. As modern Christians "participating in the divine nature" we may be led from time to time in circumstances that could

approach a "triumphal procession." We might even be able to obscurely refer to ourselves in some situation as the "aroma" of Christ. However, these verses don't teach it! They are not references to the Corinthian addressees. The apostle is making specific claims about himself and his ministry. He even begins chapter 3, by asking the question, "Are we beginning to commend ourselves again?"

In verse 5, Paul claims that his competence comes from God. I wish I could say that about my competence – how about you? In verse 6, he describes the apostolic call as "God... who made us competent to be servants of a new covenant". In verses 12 - 18, speaking of the excelling glory of the Spirit of God through the New Covenant, Paul alludes to the continuing revelation given the apostles in these words.

"And all of **us**, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit (emphasis mine)."

As you well know, practically all of us have applied the above verses to ourselves, explaining it thusly. "As we study and conform to the teachings about Jesus we become more and more like him." This may be true but is it what Paul is saying here?

If we continue in the context it is easy to see that Paul is claiming revelation through God's power. The "all of us" of chapter 3:18 is the "we" of chapter 4:1-2. Believers may participate to some extent in this transformation but the apostles and prophets were those looking at the Lord's reflection not the Corinthians. He is comparing the New Covenant to the Old Covenant. He is claiming his revelation is the unveiling of what the Old Testament was pointing to – the reflection of the Anointed therein. He and the apostles could see this Messianic reflection but it was hidden from the unbelieving Jew. Chapter 4, proves this as Paul continues:

"Therefore, since it is by God's mercy that we are engaged in this service, we do not lose heart. We have renounced the shameful things that one hides; we refuse to practice cunning or to deceitfully present God's message."

You can readily see that Paul has not left the discussion about his ministry. He finishes this verse by saying that as a New Testament minister he does not falsify God's word. They were true witnesses, unlike the "false apostles" of 11:13.

We certainly cannot claim that today about our "preaching" or any other's. Have you ever taught something that you later have found to be wrong? Have you been a witness to a particular teaching that you knew was wrong? These mistakes of interpretation and misunderstandings would not be possible if we could "see" as Paul the "reflection of Christ". We, like Peter, find some of the things Paul writes "hard to understand" (2 Peter 3:16). Unlike those Paul describes who willingly "deceitfully present the message", we get it "goofed" regularly even though unintentionally. You might see by now that the apostles and prophets had a distinct advantage over those of us trying to understand their revelation.

Continuing in chapter 4, Paul talks about his "our" gospel (verse 3). In verse 6, he claims that God had "shone" in their (apostles) hearts. Verse 7, refers to the apostles as "earthen vessels" (KJV) or "clay jars" (NRSV) – the receptacles of the gospel "treasure" and that this extraordinary power came from God and not themselves. Verse 12, again acknowledges the distinction between apostles and Corinthians, "So death is at work in us, but life in you." Verse 12, shows clearly the apostolic responsibility to speak that which they had received.

"But just as we have the same Spirit of faith that is in accordance with the scripture – 'I believe, and so I spoke' – we also believe, and so we speak."

Do you remember that being used as an "evangelistic" motivator? Reader, we do NOT have the "Spirit of faith" Paul was claiming for himself. Verse 15, again proves that it is to be apostolically applied by switching to the "you". "Yes, everything is for your (Corinthian's) sake..." Verses 16-18, switches back to Paul.

"We do not lose heart... For this slight momentary affliction... because we look at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal."

It is only reasonable to ask, what is it that cannot be seen? Well from the context it would be the physical evidence of Jesus. The reflection of Christ (chapter 3:18) that the apostles "see" with "unveiled faces" (chapter 3:18). The knowledge of God that "shone" (chapter 4:6) in their hearts. The "treasure" in clay jars (chapter 4:7). They could see with physical eyes the manifestations of Judaism, i.e., the Jewish temple. They could see with fleshly eyes the Levitical priests and the sacrificial animals. But those things were temporary whereas the revelation of the Anointed Jesus through the Holy Spirit was "spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 2:14-16), "veiled" to the unbeliever (2 Corinthians 4:3ff), and "eternal".

Chapter 5, continues with Paul's apostolic allusions. He speaks of the "building from God" that would replace his earthly dwelling if destroyed (verses 1-4). He desires this new body so that "mortality can be swallowed up by life" (verse 4). These verses have been a special favorite of mine and I have always used them "generally". However, they are clearly speaking of Paul and the apostles. I believe that they are also descriptive of all believers as we share in the "divine nature" but the context demands that we see the apostolic connection.

In verse 5, Paul is again emphasizing the apostolic authority of revelation:

"The one who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee."

What did the Holy Spirit guarantee? Paul is clearly not alluding to their common salvation here. Revelation is in view. The "ministration of righteousness" that had been "unveiled" to the apostles and prophets. This is another reference to the "great and precious promises" given to the apostles by Jesus.

Remember again, they were promised that the Holy Spirit would be "in them" (John 14:17), that it would "guide them into all truth" (John 16:13), and that it would "bear witness" to their message (John 15:26).

In the above verse, Paul is saying that he knows that the truth was unveiled to him because of the confirming power of the Holy Spirit. They had been prepared "earthen vessels" or "clay jars". They had been filled with the gospel "treasure" and the Holy Spirit's testimony guaranteed it. If we try to make universal application to this verse, we again enter the murky waters of mysticism and subjective experience trying to explain this "Holy Spirit Guarantee" – AND LEAVE THE CONTEXT COMPLETELY!

In verses 6-10, Paul continues reference to himself explaining that living in the flesh leaves them "away" from Christ, causing their walk to be "by faith and not by sight" (verse 7). Remember, he just said that the things seen are temporary and the unseen things eternal. He is referring to the same here. Then Paul acknowledges his confidence in the eternal things (verse 8-9). What was this confidence based? The confirming power of the Spirit of God. The guarantee of verse 5!

Verse 10, bears special attention because it brings in the accounting of their stewardship.

"For all of us must appear before the judgment seat of the Anointed One, so that each may receive repayment for what has been done in the body, whether good or bad."

When remaining in the context this verse must be applied by Paul to the "servants of reconciliation." He has not changed his reference to the Corinthians so if they can be included at the "judgment seat" (literally tribunal) we must go elsewhere. I believe Paul makes reference here to the principle "of the one to whom much has been given, much will be required" (Luke 12:48). He reminded the Corinthians in his first letter to regard the apostles as stewards.

"Think of **us** in this way, as servants of Christ and stewards of God's mysteries. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy (I Corinthians 4:1-2, emphasis mine)."

This makes sense if you regard other verses speaking to apostolic responsibility. Jesus made it plain that "branches" that did not remain in the vine would be cut off and burned (John 15:1ff). Paul speaks of his obligation to "proclaim the gospel" as a responsibility he dares not shirk.

"If **I** proclaim the good message, this gives me no ground for boasting, for an obligation is laid on **me**, and woe to **me** if **I** do not proclaim the good message. For if **I** do this of **my** own will, **I** have a reward; but reluctantly, **I** have been entrusted with a commission. (1 Cor 9:16-7, emphasis mine)."

James warns against assuming a "teaching" role. "My brothers, not many of you should become teachers, since you know that we will receive a heavier judgment" (James 3:1). In Romans 14:10, the phrase "judgment seat" is used there to include all believers but the context is different. The Roman verse is teaching that the Lord is the Judge of his slaves. Therefore, since we are all slaves of Jesus and not each other, we have no right to judge each other.

As if to underscore the apostolic application of 2 Cor. 5:10, Paul again includes "others" in verse 11. "Therefore knowing the fear of the Lord, we try to persuade others". He includes the Corinthians by naming their ("your") consciences. In verses 12 - 15, the "we" of the apostles and the "you" of the Corinthians are used fairly interchangeably. In verse 16, Paul switches back to the apostolic testimony. "From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view, even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view." The "we" in this verse has to be apostolically applied because the Corinthians never knew Jesus in the flesh.

In verse 17, the word "anyone" is inserted, tending to muddy the water but can also be seen to be specifically applied by the next verse which says,

"All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through the Anointed One, and he has given **us** the service of reconciliation."

This is clearly referring to apostolic revelation as before. It is easily identified in that context as Paul continues:

"So **we** are ambassadors for the Anointed One. So, as if God were making his appeal through us; **we** beg **you** on behalf of the Anointed One: be reconciled to God."

Even though it is pleasant and "ego-boosting" to consider ourselves "ambassadors for Christ", this is simply false. If the Corinthians were not "ambassadors," and they were not, then neither are we. Paul clearly makes distinction between "we" and "you". The "we" were the ambassadors and the "you" were the Corinthian believers that were being entreated by those same "ambassadors".

The *American Heritage Dictionary* defines ambassador thus:

Am-bas-sa-dor (ăm-băs'-ə-dər) (-dôr') n. 1. A diplomatic official of the highest rank appointed and accredited as representative in residence by one government to another... 4. Any authorized messenger or representative.

The apostles meet the above definition for all the reasons already noted. They had received "the mind of Christ". The Holy Spirit resided "in them". They had received "the very great and precious promises". They were as those "Standing in His presence" (2 Corinthians 2:17, emphasis mine). As with carnal ambassadors, they were Jesus' representatives and when they spoke – Jesus spoke. In like manner, all the power of the Anointed was available to them. Modern believers don't qualify any more than the Corinthian body. Are you getting the point?

In chapter 6, Paul again uses the idea of "co-worker" to refer to his ministry. "As we work together with him, we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain." He again makes the distinction by use of the "we" and the "you". In verses 3 - 10, Paul continues to defend his apostleship. In verses 14 - 18, Paul encourages the Corinthian body not to be mismatched with unbelievers.

This brief look at the first six chapters of 2 Corinthians should suffice for the purposes of our discussion. This principle of Bible interpretation can be used in every context. The reader should keep in mind that there definitely was an "apostolic dispensation" when Jesus' "ambassadors" lived and taught. It was these ambassadors that were to receive and record God's will for future generations. Paul explains it this way:

"Now to the One who is able to establish you according to my good message and **heralding** of Anointed Jesus, according to the revelation of the secret, which was kept concealed from times eternal, but which now has been disclosed; and through the prophetic writings, **according to the arrangement of the eternal God**, has been made known to all the nations for the listening of faith (Romans 16:25-26, emphasis mine)."

The historical framework is easily limited by the normal length of life as well as by the text. Those claiming revelation today receive no authority from the scriptures. It is only by making universal application to apostolic promises and responsibilities that they are sustained.

The Apostolic Dispensation and Miracles

"These signs will follow those who trust: they will cast out spirit beings; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes in their hands; and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover...' And they went out and proclaimed the good message everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by the signs that accompanied them (Addition to Mark, vv. 16:17-18, 20)."

The misunderstanding of New Testament miracles and their purpose is also a foundational element in the making of "kings" today and deserves special attention. Jesus promised to reveal "all truth" through his Spirit. The apostles claimed they received this promise. Paul said,

"You are aware that I kept back nothing that was profitable – without fail declaring and instructing you publicly and in the homes (Acts 20:20)."

He also said, "for **I** did not refrain from declaring God's entire plan to **you**" (Acts 20:27, emphasis mine). He continued along this fashion in Ephesians 3:3-5,

"How that by revelation he made the secret known to me... in other ages was not made known but has now been revealed **to his holy envoys and prophets** by the Spirit." (emphasis mine)

Peter also alluded to this kept promise:

"According to his divine power, he has given **us** all things that pertain to life and godliness through the knowledge of the one who called **us**." (2 Peter 1:3, emphasis mine)

Jude echoes the apostles' claim by writing,

"...that **you** earnestly contend for the faith that was once and for all (time) delivered to the saints (Jude 3, emphasis mine)."

The Hebrew writer claimed the message was confirmed "by them that heard Him" (Hebrews 2:3). You can't have it both ways! If "all truth" was promised by Jesus and received in the first century by the apostles and prophets, there is no such thing as modern day prophecy! Moreover, if the purpose of the signs and miracles were to confirm this sacred testimony – then the miracles and signs would also cease with the completed and confirmed revelation.

Miracles and signs have always gone hand in hand with revelation, demonstrative of God's presence in both the Old and New Testaments. It should surprise no one that the "last days" brought to pass through the Son be attested to with miracles. Speaking of the miracles performed by Jesus, John writes,

"Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of **his students**, which are not written in this book. But these are written that **you might believe** that Jesus is the Anointed One, the son of God, and that through trusting **you** may have life in his name (John 20:30-31, emphasis mine)."

These verses give a very concise reason for the recording of the miracles – that "you might believe". If modern day miracles are still occurring, then we would not NEED to read of the miracles in the New Testament to believe. On the other hand, if we can draw faith unto salvation from the original recorded testimony, then signs are unnecessary for us today. Or are we "Doubting Thomases"?

In addition to the specific nature of apostolic promises, Mark makes reference in the introductory verses to the confirming use of miracles. The problem arises in our tendencies to universally apply the pronoun "them". Those who claim twentieth century miracles and power, do so based upon the general application of "them that believe". Their argument is that we moderns are also believers therefore we are a part of the "them that believe". As you can see, this same tendency toward generalization has been demonstrated throughout this thesis.

If we back up to Mark 16:14, we find that the "them" that Jesus is addressing are the apostles. He upbraided "them" for their unbelief because they had not believed others who had seen him after he resurrected. It was "them" he commissioned and promised the confirming signs.

In Matthew's account, specific references were not mentioned: just a general statement by Jesus, "All authority is given unto me in heaven and on earth... make disciples... and remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:18-20). The promise to be "with them" is certainly reminiscent of all the promises of holy Spirit revelation and power that have been previously mentioned. Also, Matthew stresses the historical framework by adding "to the end of the age", which has before been adequately proved to be the period just before and concluding with the destruction of Jerusalem.

Luke narrows the scope of this apostolic commission and points to the coming promise the apostles were to receive, alluding forthrightly to their receiving the Holy Spirit as promised by

Jesus. Luke lays the foundation for his continuing historical account later recorded in Acts in Luke 24:44-49.

"These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you – that everything written about me in the Torah of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms must be fulfilled... Thus it is written, that the Anointed is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And see, I am sending **upon you** what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until **you have been clothed with power** from on high (emphasis mine)."

This promise is reiterated in Acts chapter 1. After the disciples had chosen another apostle explained by Peter as one to be "numbered among us and was allotted his share in this service" (Acts 1:17), they waited for the promise which is recorded in Acts 2. Though the promise of the "pouring out of the Spirit" was to "all flesh" (Acts 2:17), certain miracles were limited in application to the apostles and prophets.

It is evident if you examine Acts 2 that only the apostles were doing "signs". The "tongues of fire" rested on "them" in verse 3. These "them" spoke in languages never studied. The actual countries are listed in verses 9-11. The "them" were all Galileans (verse 7). These "them" included Peter and the eleven (verse 14). The "them" were all witnesses of Jesus' resurrection (verse 32). The "them" that were asked by the Jews, "What should we do?" were all "apostles" (verse 37). Even after 3,000 were baptized and "added to their number" (verse 41), only the apostles were identified as performing miracles (verse 43). After the group continued to multiply, signs were specifically mentioned in reference to the apostles only (Acts 4:33; 5:12).

In chapter 6, miracles are still found ONLY with those whom God had personally called. Here, Stephen was also included as doing "wonders" but only after an apostolic "hand-laying ritual," (see verses 6-8) which invoked God's blessing as it had when Matthias was chosen to succeed Judas in chapter one. In chapter 8, Philip also was included with the miracle workers. He was one of those seven men mentioned with Stephen in Acts 6, and that had been brought to the apostles and received the "laying on of hands." He could not pass this ability to perform signs to those he converted and baptized, however; he was a prophet but not an apostle.

In order to propagate the miraculous gifts among Philip's converts, Peter and John had to come and lay on hands (Acts 8:11-13, 14-18). Simon, the converted sorcerer noted, "that through the laying on of apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given" (Acts 8:18). This was a clear statement by Luke to denote the progression of "spiritual gifts" that would be followed in the apostolic dispensation.

It can be seen as an obviously apparent reference to miracles done through the power of the Spirit and demonstrates with lucidity that living apostles were required to pass this "gift" on. The writer of Acts is giving us a visible insight into this subject as he takes us through the succession of miracles designed to confirm the gospel message. As long as new revelation was forthcoming and this "treasure" was still in "earthen vessels", confirmation was required. Otherwise, the

hearers would not know whether this new revelation was approved. Once the revelation was received by the apostles and prophets, delivered to the saints, and confirmed by the Holy Spirit, signs and miracles were no longer needed.

Paul alludes to these miraculous gifts and to the method of their imparting more than once. In Romans 1:11, he tells the Roman Christians, "For I am longing to see you so that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift to strengthen you.." Paul exhorts the young disciple Timothy to

"... kindle the gift of God that is within you **through the laying on of my hands**, for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather of power... (2 Timothy 1:6-7, emphasis mine)."

Paul reminded the Corinthian believers that they fell behind no others in the "gift" department

"I give thanks to my God... for in every way you have been enriched by him, in speech and knowledge of every kind – just as the testimony of the Anointed One has been strengthened among you – so that you are not lacking in **any spiritual gift**... (1 Corinthians 1:4-7, emphasis mine)."

Though he doesn't specifically mention the "laying on of hands" he reminds them emphatically that he was their apostle referring to the gifts that he received as apostolic signs. He stresses,

"The **signs of a true envoy** were performed among you with utmost patience, signs and wonders and mighty works. How have you been worse off than the other assemblies...?" (2 Corinthians 12:12-13, emphasis mine)

Notice the phrase – "signs of a true envoy." This cannot be overemphasized when dealing with the apostolic dispensation and the context of miraculous signs. As before mentioned, the "ambassador" carries with him the entire power and authority of the government he represents. Therefore, the apostolic responsibilities as those chosen depositaries of the gospel "treasure", demanded the confirming evidence of that designated as the "signs of a true apostle" – "signs", "wonders", and "mighty works" – to distinguish them from those "false apostles" that appear in every age and that are specifically referred to by Paul in 2 Corinthians 11:13.

Let me reiterate. It cannot be stressed too much that miracles and "gifts of the Holy Spirit", are consistently linked with the prophetic ministry in the New Testament. As before stated, signs were to confirm the word (John 20:30-31, Mark 16:20; Hebrews 2:3). Once the message about Jesus was revealed and attested to, the need for "gifts" ceased. After the ekklesia was established and confirmed, the need for gifts disappeared.

In 1 Corinthians, Paul deliberately de-emphasizes the gifts and emphasizes the Giver. God's attributes, not his gifts to people, were what people ought to be pursuing. This is the "more excellent way" of chapter 12: trust, hope, and love.

Speaking of Love, the greatest of what would remain (1 Corinthians 13:13), Paul says forthrightly,

"Love never fails, but as for **prophecies**, they will pass away; as for **tongues**, they will cease; as for **knowledge**, it will pass away. For we know partially; we prophesy partially; but when the complete thing comes, the partial will pass away (1 Corinthians 13:8-10, emphasis mine)."

Paul is referencing the end of these "gifts" because the Corinthian church was carried away with them. They were overly proud of some "gifts" and jealous of others. Evidently, those that could speak with "tongues" thought this "gift" was the greatest (See chapter 12 and 14). Regardless, Paul found it fitting to explain the connection between revelation and "spiritual gifts". He names only three "gifts" that would cease but they were representative of all the others. The key to understanding the above passage is found in the phrase "we know in part and we prophesy in part".

Partial revelation had been attained but was still ongoing. They were still receiving prophetic knowledge. However, when the "complete" (NRSV) or "perfect" (KJV) had come, the "part" was to vanish. Two distinct things are in view here. One was to be perfected and the other was to vanish. First, let's see if we can determine the "part" to vanish. Paul has already specifically cited that "knowledge" (a "gift" mentioned in chapter 12:8), "prophecy", and "tongues" would cease.

"We know PARTIALLY." Revelation was incomplete. More was forthcoming, therefore the statement, "we prophesy PARTIALLY." However, when the "complete thing" comes, Paul explains, the "partial" will be done away. We know by what he has already said that "prophecy" was "PARTIAL" and was going to cease. When would it cease? When the "complete thing" came! My opinion is that the complete thing can only refer to the "prophesy in part" when completely revealed. When the part that was already known is coupled with the part that would come – the "prophecy part" – then you have the "perfect" or the "complete." Paul had already said that "tongues", "knowledge", and "prophecy" would end! When? When the "perfect" came.

If the "complete thing" is indeed the complete will of God in scripture, then we know that the "gifts of the Spirit" ended with this age of revelation. As we have seen in the previous chapter, the apostles claimed that they had received the "all truth" promised by Jesus. The Hebrew writer and Jude echoed the truth of their claims, Jude stating positively that it was delivered "once and for all" to the saints (Jude 3)!

Some would try to make the "that which is perfect" Jesus and his final return. This will simply not "wash". The "complete" is neuter Greek. When referring to persons, the word would have been masculine. The use of the neuter gender for "complete" indicates that it is a thing and not a person that is "complete." Also, the context is speaking plainly to the partial "knowledge" and the partial "prophecy." One of these must be related to the "complete thing" – either "knowledge" or "prophecy." Repeating Romans 16:25-26, in which Paul discusses the use of prophetic writings in spiritual teaching, we buttress this view.

"Now to God who is able to strengthen you according to my good message and heralding of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret from the ages but is now disclosed, and through the **prophetic writings** is

made known to all the Gentiles, according to the arrangement of the eternal God, to bring about listening of faith (NRSV – Emphasis Mine)."

These two verses are central to our discussion and are extraordinary in their range and scope. They unveil that it was God's arrangement that the gospel would be spread to the Gentiles through "prophetic writings". It was God's purpose to have the message of Anointed Jesus in print. It makes perfect sense, doesn't it? Otherwise, His desire for mankind's salvation would need continual confirmation and miraculous attestation. This "gospel" has the same power to bring about the "listening of faith" today as it ever did. The gospel is, has always been, and will always be "living and active" (Hebrews 4:12). If it has the power to save and to bring about the required "new birth", then what is yet lacking?

Those who would claim that the Bible is a dead letter do not do so on scriptural authority but from a motivation that springs entirely from within themselves. These would have preferential treatment in some way – they "would be kings". They are seeking personal consideration as above the "run of the mill". Thus the assertions of Holy Spirit "leading", scripture illumination, tongues, miracles, prophetic utterances and modern day revelation – spring not from Biblical truths but from the recesses of the human heart. It is this heart which God says is "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked" (Jeremiah 17:9). These "spiritual gurus" and "God called" prima donnas have led the unsuspecting, ignorant and lazy minded innocents into spiritual stagnation, false pride and sometimes even physical catastrophes.

I have personally asked Mormon missionaries what the Book of Mormon and "Latter Day Sainthood" could possibly offer that Biblical promises do not. How can you improve on "eternal life"? How can "modern revelation" exceed the promise of receiving a new immortal body? What greater portend does it hold than the promise to "see him as he is"? They could answer NOTHING that was substantial!

How does the "speaking in tongues" (actually ecstatic utterances) improve the quality of salvation except by making the "tongue speaker" feel more special than the ungifted? What can any modern prophecy offer that the Biblical promises do not? What does the mysterious, unexplainable, direct leading of the Holy Spirit actually accomplish for the Saint that isn't already performed by the Spirit's revelation in the sacred text except for the "warm fuzzy" subjective feelings that some find necessary as proof of God's presence?

I could go on and on but it isn't necessary. These manifestations all draw attention away from Biblical record and toward the "gifted" individual. Name one exception!

I would like to add one observation in this chapter concerning the "miracles" of the twentieth century. They are vastly different from those recorded in the New Testament which were both public and numerous. Unlike the "miracles" of today, they were witnessed by both friends and enemies of the perpetrators thereof. They did not take place – as those of modern claimants – somewhere else. That the supernatural took place couldn't be denied, even by the opposition (Acts 4:16).

Unlike the so-called miracles of today, "signs" required NO faith from the recipient. After all, how much faith does a dead man have? By the way, why can't these modern charlatans raise the dead? Why don't they visit the hospitals and heal those therein? Why do their "miracles" require a church building sanctuary? Why don't they do what Jesus, the apostles and other New Testament gifted men did, go into the highways and byways? Why can't the "tongue speakers" today speak in different human languages as those so gifted in the New Testament? Why only the "tongues of angels"?

The answers forthcoming from these "spiritual" pretenders and misinformed teachers when challenged is that they indeed have witnessed all these things – or at least heard of them all taking place somewhere. They've heard men speak in human languages that they've never studied. They've known of the dead being raised. My challenge has been and still is this. Bring forth the man that can actually speak in languages that he has never studied and I will be converted. I will provide the poison for the person who can drink it and survive. I will deliver the dead body for anyone claiming the power of the apostolic dispensation. Oh! No! they say. That would be putting God to the test! How convenient!

Paul told the Corinthians that when he came he would test the "power" of those making authoritative claims.

"But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will, and will know, not the word of them which are puffed up, but their **power**. For the Kingdom of God is not in word only but in **power** (1 Corinthians 4:-20, emphasis mine)."

These were the same individuals who Paul refers in his second letter as "false apostles". As before stated, Paul had already mentioned that he possessed the "signs of a true apostle". These pretenders and usurpers also made claims to various rights among the Corinthian body. Paul was determined to expose them publicly by putting their "power" to the test.

False exercise of the gifts was apparently common enough in Thessalonica that the citizens were ignoring both true and false gifts. Paul urges them not to disregard such things, but urges them to "Examine all things. Hold fast to the good; abstain from every form of evil." (5:21-2)

I make another challenge for those who simply claim to be "led by the Holy Spirit" in a way that is not Biblically defined. Tell me one thing that the Holy Spirit does for you that the Bible does not do for every Christian? Just one thing that could distinguish your claims from a Mormon, Holiness, or "charismatic". I'm still waiting for the answer. The late Biblical scholar and debater Foy E. Wallace, Jr. said it so well that it bears repeating here.

"It has always been my experience that no one claiming the personal, literal, indwelling or illumination of the Holy Spirit, can express a truth, true thought or sentiment, on the subject of spiritual influence not already revealed in the written Word of God."

These "miraculous" claims and "guidances" cannot be proven by contextual Biblical means or demonstrated in any practical way whatsoever! Since they are subjectively arrived at and maintained they are also foundational errors that aid and abet those who "would be kings".

THE "GREAT COMMISSION"

"Therefore, go and make students of all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the son, and of the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all the things, whatever precepts I gave you. And look, I am with you all the days, even to the end of the age (Matthew 28:18-20)."

The subject of the "Great Commission" is particularly pertinent to this discussion because it is the favorite of those that "would be kings" among us: teaching that it is the responsibility of every Christian to preach the gospel to the whole world. It has been central to the raising of millions of dollars and for the recruiting of thousands of "missionaries". This "plea for the lost" has been primary in the mass accumulation of wealth experienced by many tele-evangelists. This "commission" has been the mainstay of the clergy system and support that was spawned soon after the death of the apostles and proliferated today. It has been a root source of guilt motivation carried on from thousands of pulpits. By many, sharing directly in this "commission" has become a prerequisite for continued salvation. It is – opines the modern evangelistic "preacher" – the reason God keeps us alive after we're baptized instead of immediately translating us to heaven. For those churches "zoned in to the heart of God", it is the backbone of all service to God. But is this "commission" applicable today?

Every Gospel contains Jesus' "great commission" in one form or the other. John's is found in chapters 13-16, which we have examined in some detail. Herein, the metaphor of the "vine and branches" is used. Mark's record is found in Mark 16:15ff, and has also been discussed in some length and where the terms "all the world" and "every creature" are substituted for the "all nations" of Matthew. Luke's is found in chapter 24:44ff, and has also been quoted. You will have noted that Mark's, Luke's, and John's "commissions" have all been very specifically applied to the apostolic ministry and dispensation by the added context of miracles. Is Matthew's to be considered differently?

One very important thing about the gospel's recorded "commission" can be noted here. The apostles that received it, thought it was limited to the Jews! Yes they did! Some scholars who have discerned this fact have attempted to explain it by claiming apostolic ignorance "at the time"! My question would be this. Was it ignorance on the apostle's part or is it our understanding that has been shaded by the prejudices of our own theology? After all, what would happen to "preaching" if this "commission" could be understood to have been first century applied and fulfilled? Great Scott, what a dastardly thought!! Universal acceptance of this view, coupled with the logical conclusions associated with it, would ring the "death knell" of Romanism, Protestantism, and denominationalism of all kinds. It would send the thousands of clergymen scurrying into the market place to find a real job. Scary thought, isn't it?

Those who adamantly insist that the "great commission" is continually applicable in every generation use an argument that is similar to this. "The apostles were told to go everywhere

(Mark's "all the world"), preach to everybody (Matthew's "all nations") and Mark's ("every creature"), baptize disciples, and teach these disciples to do "all things" that the apostles were told to do, which was preach, make disciples, and baptize."

Does this sound familiar? These refuse to interpret the "all nations" in this text as the Jews only. They don't see a connection to Jesus' statement in Matthew 24:14, where Jesus says that his gospel would have to be preached to "all nations" before the "end would come". They see no parallel with the phrase "end will come" and "even to the end of the age." No siree, the "all nations" means every living breathing human being in every place on earth because Mark says "every creature". Therefore, the "even to the end of the age" means the final coming of Jesus.

One thing is for sure, if the "all nations" of Matthew 24:14, included every human being, in every place on earth, then every human being in every place on earth heard the "gospel message"! Oh yes they did! That's what Paul claimed – twice! Read it for yourself.

"... provided that you continue securely established and steadfast in the faith,; without shifting from the hope promised by the good message that you heard, which **has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven...** (Colossians 1:23, emphasis mine)."

"Now I ask you, didn't they **all** hear? Indeed, Their musical sound reverberated into all the land and their declaration into the **farthest points of the habitation** (Romans 10:18, emphasis mine)."

On the other hand, if the "all nations" was limited to a certain population, then only that certain limited population heard the gospel. Either way, the so-called "great commission was fulfilled.

Reader, I'm not trying to be difficult. I'm just trying to get us to interpret Bible things the way they were meant. It certainly would not be far-fetched to believe that Jesus' "all nations" of Matthew 24:14, was the "all nations to whom he was referring in Matthew 28:18, and the corresponding "all the world" or "every creature" in the verbiage of Mark. If it was, then the "commission" was fulfilled in the first century (see again, Romans 10:1-18; Colossians 1:23). Subsequently, if the "commission" was fulfilled, it cannot be applicable and specifically applied to us any more than the other "apostolic applied" verses we have examined. In fact, just as Mark concluded his Gospel stating that those sent did go "everywhere" (Mark 16:20), Paul said that the gospel was preached to "every creature under heaven" (Colossians 1:23).

As before mentioned, the apostles NEVER considered this commission to include the Gentiles. They were participating in Jesus' ministry which was to the "lost". Nowhere is the Biblical use of the word "lost" referring to those outside of Judaism. In Luke 19:10, Jesus said,

"... the Son of Man comes to seek and save what was lost." The "lost" he was referring in this context were those wayward Jews like Zacchaeus. Jesus had said of Zacchaeus in the proceeding verse,

"This day is salvation comes to this house, since he is also a son of Abraham."

These were the same "lost" he refers to in Matthew 10:5-6. Sending the apostles forth, Jesus limits their latitude by saying,

"Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter into any city of the Samaritans; But go rather to the **lost sheep of the house of Israel**" (emphasis mine)."

Additionally, Jesus talked of the limitation on his own ministry. Addressing the Canaanite woman Jesus said,

"I was **only** sent to the lost sheep of the tribe of **Israel** (Matthew 15:24, emphasis mine)."

Reader, it preaches well to encourage contemporary Christians to reach out to the "lost" as Jesus did. I have been guilty myself of the same application. But Jesus was not referring to "sinners from among the Gentiles" (Galatians 2:15) but the "lost" of Israel. I am not saying that Jesus had no regard for the Gentiles. Of course he did! But reader, he was not referring to them in the above passages.

The use of the term "lost" is just another example of the Gospel writers' dispensational application. If Jesus didn't apply the text universally, where is our authority to do so? That's a fair question, isn't it? If acknowledging this principle forces us to re-examine our theology then let's simply do it without fear of the ramifications!

Truth seekers in every generation have been required to take a stand against orthodoxy! Jesus challenged everything deemed sacred to the Jewish leaders. Those that chose Jesus were cast out of their fellowship. Many teachers are fond of reminding people to be like the noble Bereans (Acts 17:13). Maybe it time we modern students partook of some of their nobility.

As previously mentioned, those appointed to carry on the "commission" of Jesus didn't recognize the Gentiles as the "lost" either. As we peruse the historical account of the ekklesia's progress and growth, one will notice that the apostles and their Jewish converts had not preached the gospel to even one Gentile before Acts 10. According to Biblical scholars, this was at least ten years after Pentecost (Acts 2:1) and maybe as long as twenty years.

If the apostles understood Jesus to mean Gentiles when he spoke concerning the "lost", i.e. "every creature" of "all nations" in "all the world" they had been particularly obtuse and disobedient. Some people believe this about the apostles. They hold that the Twelve did not understand the "commission" in Matthew 28 or were just being stubborn about including Gentiles.

The facts are different, however. Acts 10, records the new revelation received by Peter, to call nothing "unclean" that God had "cleansed." Then Peter, taking SIX Jewish witnesses along with him (he obviously knew his people), went and preached to the gentile Cornelius. But further proof that the "great commission" was limited is found in chapter 11! After Peter was "called on the carpet" for his impropriety in entering into the house of the "uncircumcised" and dining with them (verse 3), Peter made his apology recorded in Acts 11:1-17.

This would have been a perfect opportunity for Peter to remind them of Jesus' "great commission" of the gospels, especially Matthew 28:18-20 and Mark 16:15ff. If the universal application is correct, we could have expected him to say, "Brethren, you know that Jesus – after he had resurrected – told us apostles to go into "all the world" and to "all nations" and preach to "every creature". Until a few days ago, I thought he was referring to the Jews only. Now I understand it! He meant Jews and Gentiles!"

But he didn't tell them that, did he? Instead, he drew their attention to the NEW REVELATION that he had received in Acts 10, coupling his personal revelation with that of the Holy Spirit's witness of this momentous event (Acts 11:4-18). And this is not all, either!

The conference that convened in Jerusalem (Acts 15) to discuss the Judaizers' attempt to coerce the Gentiles into circumcision and obedience to Moses' Law, provides fresh evidence that the Gospel's "great commission" was limited to the "apostolic dispensation". This time Peter again draws their attention to the NEW REVELATION he had received in Acts 10. He said,

"My brothers, you know that earlier, God made a choice among you, that **I** should be the one through whom the Gentiles would hear the message of the good news and believe. And God, knowing their hearts, testified to them by giving **them** the Holy Spirit, just as he did to **us**... (Acts 15:7-8, emphasis mine)."

These verses are particularly significant because they again show that God included the Gentiles in His salvation plan historically in Acts 10. This is clearly evident as Peter identifies the time as "...earlier, God made A choice among us..." Of course, as in the former example, no mention of the "great commission" is referenced here or included. In fact, no one EVER refers to Matthew 28 as including gentiles although the Cornelius event is referred to several times as the time when Gentiles were first invited into the new covenant.

James adds his weight to this argument in verses 13 and 14, of the same chapter:

"My brothers, listen to me. **Simeon** has related how God **first** looked upon the Gentiles, to take from among them a people for his name (emphasis mine)."

His speech not only excludes any reference to the four gospel's "great commission", he emphasizes the events of Acts 10, by calling it a "first." The Greek word here is *πρωτον* (*πρωτον*), which means "first in time or place, or first of all".

Let me reiterate: no one is saying that God did not have it in mind until Acts 10, to include the Gentiles. I am saying, however, that it was not revealed to the apostles until then – the apostles making it plain that Gentile salvation was NOT referred to in any gospel "great commission". All modern preaching about the "great commission" falls into the same category of misapplied uses of apostolic responsibilities as in those scriptures previously examined.

Aren't the saints required to share their faith, you might ask? In spite of all the pulpit "preaching" encouraging the saints to be evangelistic, the letters of the apostles and prophets to the first century ekklesia are void of such goading.

What is the scripture most quoted to prove this? Besides the "great commission" verses, the "clergy" has recently turned to the NIV to find a scripture that would teach such a doctrine succinctly. It is found in Philemon 6. It says,

"I pray that you would be active in sharing your faith so that you might know all the good things we have in Christ Jesus (emphasis mine)."

The KJV reads, "That the communication of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus."

Wilson, attempting to be as literal as possible, renders it,

"That the fellowship of thy faith may become efficient, by knowledge of every good thing in us, in regard to Christ."

And the NASV depicts it thus:

"And I pray that the fellowship of your faith may become effective through the knowledge of every good thing which is in you for Christ's sake."

Though the translators disagree over the exact rendering of the Greek, a close examination of the context will show you what it *doesn't* mean. It says nothing about evangelizing the unbeliever. No it doesn't! Look for yourself.

Notice that Paul is both commending Philemon personally for the love and faith he has already demonstrated "to the saints" and to Paul himself. Paul is setting the tone of the letter in which he will press greatly upon Philemon to continue in this "sharing" or "fellowship" vein, by accepting his runaway slave Onesimus back home as a brother in Anointed Jesus.

The "fellowship" or "sharing" of faith in this verse is being applied "to the saints". Unbelievers are not referenced at all. Read it again and notice all the references to Philemon's service to the brethren. Paul is clearly not telling Philemon that he needs to be evangelistic so he may understand the goodness of Jesus.

Furthermore, the word translated "fellowship", "sharing", or "communication" is the Greek word **κοινωνία** which denotes commonalty among those referred to. In this case the "saints" of God. He couldn't be speaking of non-Christians because there is no "koinonia" between the believer and unbeliever. This is Paul's point exactly in 2 Corinthians 6:14-17:

"What fellowship does right have with wrong? And what partnership (**κοινωνία**) does light have with darkness? And what concord has Christ with Belial? Or what part does the one who believes have with an unbeliever?"

When promoting an evangelistic program, the NIV preaches well but even then, only out of context! This is just another example of the application of scriptures according to our paradigm, theology and agendas.

As previously asserted by the author, the New Testament epistles are devoid of commands, admonishments, and allusions to "make disciples." Besides a few references to the faith of some churches, you have nothing that could even hint of the kind of pressure parallel to the teaching of twentieth century "evangelists". These self promoting, program boosting "pulpit ministers" lay heavy burdens upon the saints with their constant misapplication of apostolic responsibilities. Even those whose motives are pure are clearly wrong.

So what are Christians obligated to do? So help me, I can't find that they are obligated to "do" anything. They are to "be" men and women of faith – standing with Jesus against the "wiles of the accuser". How can you improve on the concept of true and undefiled religion spoken of by James?

"Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this – to visit (literally, to oversee) widows and orphans in their affliction and to keep oneself unspotted from the world (James 1:27)."

As you can see, emphasis is on Christian character, service and love for one another – this being defined as "pure and undefiled religion." Can you fathom the result of moving the nation's believers out of the church buildings every Sunday and into the neighborhoods eager to serve the needy? Just think of it! Instead of turning off the skeptics because of their misconceptions of the real Jesus, they would be overwhelmed.

Aren't we obligated to share our faith? That depends. Peter, like Paul, speaks of the believer's position and influence among unbelieving Jews. He thus instructs them,

"But⁴ you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may shew forth the excellencies of the one who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." (1 Peter 2:9, emphasis mine)

Taken by itself, this verse would seem to indicate that the "shew forth" denotes the responsibility of the believers so depicted to "preach the gospel". However, the context is pointing to their manner of life, not the content of their speech. A true parallel could be the admonition in Matthew 5:16:

"In this way, let your light shine in the presence of people, so that they would see your good deeds and glorify that Father of yours in the heavens."

Jesus had already told those that would be his students that they were the "light of the world" and that it would undo the purpose of light to be hidden or placed in a position that blocked the light. Many have tried to say that we are light only when we are doing good works. Jesus, however, says that we are light whether we are concealed or on a lampstand. Obviously, a concealed light does the world no good. This is the allusion here in Peter.

⁴ in contrast to the Jews

In 1 Peter 2:1, they are told to put away the corrupt (literally, that which decays) lifestyle. In verses 2 - 3, the apostle instructs them to grow as they partake of the "pure spiritual milk of the message." Verses 4-11, introduces Jesus as the "living" and "rejected" stone of the Jewish unbelievers but the precious stone of these (Jewish) converts. These Christians are stones of the "spiritual house" destined to offer "spiritual sacrifices".

These Christians are a direct contrast to those who have taken offense at Jesus. Because of their faith in Jesus, they have obtained mercy and are now considered the people of God (verse 11). Verses 12, through the end of the letter, describes in detail the method of "shewing forth the excellencies of Him..." In addition to defining the right relationships with one another, the governing authorities, and their own families, Peter reminds them of their obligation to speak of Jesus to others in 1 Peter 3:15.

"On the contrary, make the Anointed Lord holy in your hearts. Always **be prepared to give a defense** to those who inquire concerning the hope that is in you (emphasis mine)."

Of course, this scripture had a first century setting and application. These Christians were being persecuted for their faith by the Jews. Therefore, they were to be able and willing to defend their hope in the Anointed Jesus. Jude encouraged like behavior, referring his message to the same general audience. He wrote, "...that you earnestly contend for the faith..." (Jude 3). To whom were they to "make defense"? To those that "asked" them about this "new" religion of theirs. You find no encouragement to knock on doors, invite them to "church", enter their synagogues, and challenge their every thought and practice. Their "manner of life" was to be so exemplary that the unbelieving Jew – with whom they were at odds – would be constantly curious about their willingness to suffer on Jesus' behalf.

I get just as exasperated as the next person at the "shallowness" of many Christians and for their inability to make defense of Christianity to twentieth century agnostics, atheists, and cynics. The main reason for this failure, however, has been the enthronement of the professional class of "preachers", "evangelists", "pastors", and "teachers". These have replaced the priesthood of all believers in making defense. In either their theology or in their practice, the "laity" have transferred their responsibilities to the "experts" – those that "would be kings". As a consequence, the "laity" have become spiritually supine and unable or unwilling to think for themselves. This has caused millions to follow "every wind of doctrine" without thought or challenge, assuming that the wizards of their fellowship know what they are talking about.

Jesus created his "peculiar people" to accept only one "teacher" and that was himself (Matthew 23:8). In the apostolic dispensation it was demanded that the "called out" body of believers heed the men that stood in Jesus' presence, dispensing the gospel "treasure". Today, we're left with the "word in the book" and every Christian is to be the "captain of his own soul". The revealed record (scriptures) is given to every priest for his personal examination and edification – as he personally understands and perceives it.

"PREACHING" AND THE APOSTOLIC DISPENSATION

"For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and human beings, the human being Anointed Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, the testimony borne at the proper time. And for this I was placed as a herald and an envoy (I am telling the truth, I am not lying) as a teacher of Gentiles in trust and truth (1 Timothy 2:5-7)."

There is probably no fraternity of men and women today that is more maligned than "preachers". Conversely, this same fraternity enjoys the esteem and respect of millions. In the fellowship of which I have personal experience, the "preaching of the gospel" is held up to be the noblest of callings. You often hear "preachers" say, "This brother was once a complete reprobate and now he is a 'gospel preacher'"! The implication of this statement is obvious to those who have heard it. The brother in question had moved from one extreme to the other. He had gone from depravity to the highest pinnacle of spirituality. From reprobate to "preacher" – that's a mighty gulf. Many Christians use the terms "my preacher" said, or "my pastor" believes, as a way of authoritatively ending many Biblical discussions.

It is not my purpose to make light of the transformation of the reprobate or this respect given the professional clergyman but to place these attitudes under scrutiny as a proper subject of this thesis. In other words, "preachers" are looked upon by their admirers as worthy of emulation. To many, these have become their "mediators" – if not in theory in practice. They are regarded as "gifted" by some or just more knowledgeable by others. In either case they carry more authority as they speak. These are listened to by the hour – week after week, Bible class after Bible class, sermon after sermon. They are the central attraction of every pulpit. They are the keynoters of every seminar and retreat which, after all, are promoted and conducted by themselves.

They enjoy a special fraternity with one another as those who have special and grave responsibilities and who are privy to information unsuitable for laity ears. They agonize over the best way to lead and move those that fall under their charge. Their position within the fellowship is one of envy for those whose ambitions are directed towards this calling. The "full time ministry" or "being on staff" is considered and promoted by them to be the highest calling of God.

In many denominations and Romanism, these individuals have been specially ordained by a mystical, ritualistic process. Some have been anointed by the Holy Spirit with a special grace. Some claim the "gift of prophesy" and other notable abilities that separate them from the laity over which they "pastor". Those who reject this supernatural calling, still talk of being ordained by God, even though this "God ordaining" is harder to explain. Don't you agree, that individuals who are drawn to such an environment are candidates for intense scrutiny?

Generally speaking, most modern Bible students agree that the apostolic "office" was fulfilled by those specifically chosen by Jesus in the first century. However, as we will be able to see shortly, the word translated "preacher", "preach", "preached", "preaching", "proclaim", and "publish" also refers only to "gifted" men when referring to the "gospel message" of Jesus Christ. The

word for herald, preacher, is **κηρυξ** in the Greek and is only used three times in the entire New Testament. It is defined by Vine as,

"KERUX, a herald, is used (a) of the preacher of the Gospel, 1 Tim. 2:7; 2 Tim. 1:11; (b) of Noah, as a preacher of righteousness, 2 Pet. 2:5."

Though Vine fails to mention it, two of the three occurrences are used by Paul to refer to himself and his apostolic duty. The scripture introduced in the introduction to this chapter says, "I was placed as a herald (**κηρυξ**) and an envoy." The other is found in 2 Timothy 1:11, and is phrased almost identically. "For which I was appointed a herald (**κηρυξ**) and an envoy (*apostolos*) and a teacher."

The third usage of the noun KERUX is found in 2 Peter 2:5, and it refers to Noah, "...a herald (**κηρυξ**) of righteousness". As you can see, these three occurrences clearly refer to the "prophetic gift".

In the introductory text and in 2 Timothy 1:11, Paul combines "herald" and "apostle", and then adds "teacher" to the list. In 1 Timothy 2:6, in addition to his appointment, Paul speaks of both the "testimony to be borne" and its "proper time." This places "preaching", i.e. heralding, directly within the bounds of the "apostolic dispensation" and Holy Spirit witness.

The word **κηρυξ** (herald or "preacher"), refers to one who proclaims the message of the king. He is the king's direct representative. In the New Testament setting and as our previous study has shown, this term specifically applies to those who have "the mind of Christ". Those who had received the "very great and valuable promises." Those who saw with "unveiled" eyes the "reflection of Christ". Those who were "ambassadors" for Christ. Those who referred to themselves as "earthen vessels", "prepared" as depositories of the gospel "treasure". Those who were God's "co-workers" and "stewards of the mystery of Christ". Those who were "standing in his presence". Those who had been given the "service of reconciliation". Now we can add – those who were "preachers", heralds of KING JESUS. Shall I continue?

Just from the three examples above, a careful student can see that to refer to oneself as a "preacher" within the confines of the New Testament definition, is to play "fast and loose" with the text. Although unintentional, it places the claimant in the company of those that boast of inspiration and apostolic gifts! Those who claim to have been ordained by God must explain this "ordaining". The word usually translated "ordain" simply means to be appointed or placed. Vine says,

"1. TITHEMI (τιθημι), to put: see Appoint, No. 3. 2. KATHISTEMI (καθιστημι), from kata, down, or over against, and histemi, to cause to stand, to set, is translated to ordain in the A.V. of Tit. 1:5; Heb. 5:1; 8:3. See Appoint, No. 2."

Paul claims to have been "ordained" (KJV), or "appointed" (NASV) an "apostle" and "preacher". He refers many times to this ordaining. You can read of it in chapters 9 and 16 of Acts and many

other places within the New Testament. He always claimed his ordaining was supernatural! He also had the "signs of a true apostle" to back up these declarations.

Today, however, many claim ordaining by God but have nothing Biblical or practical to bolster their claims. They can offer no other proof than some mysterious calling found within themselves to explain it. Others, as we have mentioned, understand the connection between ordination and the supernatural, declaring these powers for themselves and their ministry. It is another reminder of our tendency to overlook Biblical definitions, redefine the terms according to our theology and practice, and continue to use scriptures apart from their intended meaning. Reader, if there are no "apostles" living today, then there are no "preachers" either. Both of these terms refer to prophetically gifted men who received their ordination directly from Jesus. In the same way the term "reverend" applies only to God, the term "preacher" only refers to gifted individuals among the apostolic dispensation. We have just as much authority to use "reverend" as an adjective as "preacher". I realize this is a direct thrust at the heart of our theology but it is Biblical just the same. If you're still interested, continue this study with me.

The verb form of the word κηρυξ is κηρυσσω (kerusso), and is used 61 times in the KJV New Testament. Another form is κηρυγμα (kerugma) and is used 6 times and is translated "preaching" all 6 times. Listed below are all 67 verses with the English word so you can check my work:

- Matthew 3:1 Preaching – Refers to John the Baptist;
4:17 Preach – Refers to Jesus;
4:23 Preaching – Refers to Jesus;
9:35 Preaching – Refers to Jesus;
10:7 Preach – Refers to the apostles;
10:27 Preach – Refers to the apostles;
11:1 Preach – Refers to Jesus;
12:41 Preaching – Refers to Jonah;
24:14 Preached – Gospel to "all nations";
26:13 Preached – Gospel wherever;
Mark 1:4 Preach – Refers to John the Baptist;
1:7 Preached – Refers to John the Baptist;
1:14 Preaching – Refers to Jesus;
1:38 Preach – Refers to Jesus;
1:39 Preached – Refers to Jesus;
1:45 Published – The leper telling of his healing;
3:14 Preach – Refers to the apostles;
5:20 Publish – The demoniac about being healed;
6:12 Preach – Refers to the apostles;
7:36 Publish – The healed deaf mute;
13:10 Published – Refers to the apostles;
14:9 Preached – The Gospel wherever;
16:15 Preach – Refers to apostles;
16:20 Preached – Refers to the apostles;
Luke 3:3 Preaching – Refers to John the Baptist;
4:18 Preach – Refers to Jesus;
4:19 Preach – Refers to Jesus;
4:44 Preached – Refers to Jesus;
8:1 Preaching – Refers to Jesus;
8:39 Published – The healed demoniac;

9:2 Preach – Refers to the apostles;
 11:32 Preaching – Refers to Jonah;
 12:3 Proclaimed – Refers to the apostles;
 24:47 Preached – Refers to the gospel to all nations;
 Acts 8:5 Preached – Philip in Samaria;
 9:20 Preached – Refers to Paul;
 10:37 Preached – Refers to John the Baptist;
 10:42 Preach – Refers to Peter;
 15:21 Preach – Those who preach Moses;
 19:13 Preacheth – Refers to Paul;
 20:25 Preaching – Refers to Paul;
 28:31 Preaching – Refers to Paul;
 Romans 2:21 Preachest – Those who preach the Law;
 10:8 Preach – Refers to apostolic gospel;
 10:14 Preacher – Can't hear without one;
 10:15 Preacher – They have beautiful feet – are sent;
 16:25 Preaching – Refers to the Gospel by prophets;
 1 Cor. 1:21 Preaching – Refers to apostolic message;
 1:23 Preach – Refers to Paul and gospel messengers;
 9:27 Preach – Refers to Paul;
 15:11 Preach – Refers to Paul and gospel messengers;
 15:12 Preached – Refers to Paul and gospel messengers;
 2 Cor. 1:19 Preached – Refers to Paul and gospel messengers;
 4:5 Preach – Refers to Paul and gospel messengers;
 11:4 Preacheth – "False apostles" another Jesus;
 11:4 Preached – Refers to Paul's true gospel;
 Gal. 2:2 Preach – Refers to Paul;
 5:11 Preach – Refers to Paul;
 Phil. 1:15 Preach – Those who preach out of envy;
 Col. 1:23 Preached – Refers to Paul and gospel messengers;
 1 Thes. 2:9 Preached – Refers to Paul and gospel messengers;
 1 Tim. 3:16 Preached – Christ among the nations;
 2 Tim. 4:2 Preach – Timothy told to;
 4:17 Preaching – Refers to Paul;
 Titus 1:3 Preaching – Refers to Paul;
 1 Pet. 3:19 Preached – Refers to Jesus;
 Rev. 5:2 Proclaimed – A strong angel.

As you can see from the above list, every reference to the "gospel of Christ" being "preached" – is being accomplished by gifted people. John the Baptist is referred to by the Scriptures as a "prophet." Of course, Jesus needs no explanation. Paul was an "apostle." The other personal references are to Philip, who was said to have been gifted (Acts 8) and Timothy who was told to "stir up the gift" that he had received from Paul.

The only questionable verse would be Philippians 1:15. In this one, Paul says that some, "preach Christ out of envy". I believe he is referring here also to gifted men with impure motives. These were described as "preaching Christ", so their message was not being questioned. Paul did not call them "false apostles" as he referred to those that were preaching "another" Jesus in 2 Corinthians 11:4. There is no good reason to believe that the rule is being violated here.

The other usage refers to things other than the "gospel". You have the leper "publishing" his healing by Jesus. You have the demoniac also "publishing" his healing to the community after being sent to do so. These were eyewitnesses of and participants in the things that they were

proclaiming or heralding. You have the "preaching of Jonah". Some usage of the word simply applies to the gospel message itself and therefore, by implication, to the apostolic responsibility.

Twice, the word is applied to the Torah of Moses. These verses are rendered, "Those that herald Moses" (Acts 15:21) and "those who proclaim that you shall not steal" (Romans 2:2). Even in these, God's authority is directly implied. Jesus told his disciples, that the scribes and the Pharisees "sit in Moses' Seat" (Matthew 23:2-3). These teachers carried the weight and authority of God according to Jesus. A HERALD is a direct representative of the one he heralds. We do not have "preachers" within the framework of this Biblical use and definition today.

The other word translated into all forms of "preacher" is the Greek Word EUAGGELISTES (ευαγγελιστης). This is where we derive the words evangelize, evangelist, and Gospel. It is defined by Vine as,

"Lit., a messenger of good (eu, well, angelos, a messenger), denotes a preacher of the Gospel... Cp. euangelizo, to proclaim glad tidings, and euangelion, good news, gospel."

This word is translated into various forms of "preach" a total of 46 times in the KJV New Testament. As remarkable as it may seem to those of us accustomed to twentieth century "evangelists", this word also refers to gifted men EVERY TIME. Look it up for yourself and see. The word is translated "preach" in Luke 4:43; Acts 5:42; 14:15; 16:10; Romans 1:15; 10:15; 15:20; I Corinthians 1:17; 9:16 (twice); 9:18; 2 Corinthians 10:16; Galatians 1:8; 1:9; 1:16; Ephesians 3:8; and Revelation 14:6. The only reference to a non gifted man is Revelation 14:6. It speaks of an angel.

The same is translated "preached" in Matthew 11:5; Luke 3:18; 7:22; 16:16; 20:1; Acts 8:25; 8:35; 8:40; 14:7; 14:21; 1 Corinthians 15:1; 15:2; 2 Corinthians 11:7; Galatians 1:8; 1:11; 4:13; Ephesians 2:17; Hebrews 4:2; 4:6; and 1 Peter 1:12; 1:25; 4:6. All these references refer to the prophetic Gospel revelation.

This word is used once as "preacheth" in Galatians 1:23, referring to the apostle Paul and the "Gospel" he had received directly from Jesus.

It is translated "preaching" in Luke 9:6; Acts 8:4; 8:12; 10:36; 11:20; and 15:25. Only in Acts 8:4 and Acts 11:20, are those "preaching" not specifically referred to as gifted. The emphasis here is on specifically referred because a strong case can be made that all those "preaching" were exercising their prophetic gifts and the message was confirmed by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Both the above references apply to the same Christians. They are introduced in Acts 8:4, as "...they that were scattered abroad". Luke notes that these "went everywhere preaching the word". One of those "preaching" was Philip (verse 5) and we know that he was gifted. These same persons are alluded to again in Acts 11:20. The text says,

"Now those who were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen traveled... speaking the message to none but the Jews only. And some of

them... coming to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists, announcing the good message of the Lord Jesus (emphasis mine)."

The following text implies that these "preachers" also had the prophetic gifts and that their message – like Philip's – was attested to by God. The text continues,

"And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned to the Lord (Acts 11:21, emphasis mine)."

What does it mean "the hand of the Lord was with them"? From what we have read of Philip's "preaching" in Samaria (Acts 8), miracles and wonders are undoubtedly meant. You never find the Gospel message in the New Testament going anywhere without confirming signs. Remember, this was a brand NEW REVELATION. This message was calling the Jews to accept this Jesus as the prophesied Messiah. There had been many pretenders in the past. What was to distinguish the claims of Jesus from all those false Messiahs that had proceeded him? You've guessed it! "The hand of the Lord" working with the "preachers". Describing signs in connection with Philip in Samaria, Luke writes,

"And the people with one accord listened to those things which Philip spoke, hearing and seeing the **miracles** that he did (Acts 8:6, emphasis mine)."

If the Gospel required the miraculous witness of God in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria, why not in Antioch? Those who try to draw a parallel in the twentieth century from Acts 8:4, avoid apostolic dispensationalism completely and compare apples to oranges. To think that those "preaching" in Acts 8:4 and 11:20 did not have confirming power available to them is certainly inconsistent if not obtuse.

The noun **εὐαγγελιστής** is found but three times. In Acts 21:8, Philip is called an "evangelist". Paul refers to gifted men in Ephesians 4:11, one being our word "evangelist". He also instructs the sometimes timid Timothy to fulfill his ministry and do the "work of an evangelist" (2 Timothy 4:5). I don't think any student would disagree that all three of these usages of "evangelist" referred to the gifted.

Another word in the group, EUAGGELION, is translated 76 times "gospel", which means literally "good message" or "good tidings".

From a superficial study, the author also believes that the word translated "teacher" in the New Testament (DIDASKALOS), also always refers to the prophetic gift. We know that Paul refers to himself as "teacher" in the same breath as "apostle" and "preacher". I would refer the interested reader to a study done by Frank Daniels entitled [The Role of Woman in the Church](#) for further study of this term and related issues.

It is one thing to claim that "the apostles left bishops as their successors, 'handing over their own teaching role' to them", but it is another quandary altogether to deny continuing revelation in the twentieth century while using terminology that only applied to those gifted men referenced in the scriptures. There are no "preachers" today. There are no "evangelists" today. These men had "the

mind of Christ" and their message was attested to by God. They are specifically referred to by Paul in the past tense and as gifted men in Ephesians 4:7-8,11-14.

"But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of the Anointed One's gift. Therefore it says, 'When he ascended on high, he led captive a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men'... And He gave some as envoys, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as shepherds and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of the Anointed One; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming (emphasis mine)."

Paul not only refers to "apostles" and "prophets" as gifted individuals but also "evangelists", "shepherds" (pastors) and "teachers".

How have many interpreted these verses? We have said that the "apostles" and "prophets" were indeed gifted and we now have them "in the book". The others really don't refer to miraculous gifts. Anyone, with certain exceptions, can be an evangelist or teacher. If they prepare themselves and are faithful. They can serve as a shepherd ("pastor") if they're old enough, married, and have believing children. These, in like manner, must properly prepare themselves. Reader, is this what this text says?

In the above text, all were miraculously gifted. These "gifts" had been given and were all prophetic in nature and dealt with dispensing the Gospel of Christ. Paul says that he was "prepared" by God, not that he prepared himself. "Gifts" from God are free and require nothing that would approach the seminary (or School of Preaching) idea of the twentieth century. They are all supernaturally bestowed. They cannot be described as talents. They required no Bible study, formal or otherwise! No mystical or secret ritual was needed to impart them to initiates. No brother or sister needed to inform them that gifts were present!

Let me reiterate, all the aforementioned gifted people carried prophetic ability. How can we tell? Because they were all involved in preparing God's people for "service." This "service" included "unity of the faith" and the mature knowledge of Christ. These special individuals were given to the ekklesia so that they didn't have to worry about being bamboozled by tricksters and treated as infants in the bullying hands of deceitful schemers. Remember, they did not have at their personal disposal the New Testament scriptures.

One of the "spiritual gifts" specifically listed by Paul was the "discerning of spirits" (1 Corinthians 12:10). This gift was central for making distinctions between revelations, given the propensity of "false prophets" during this epoch. This certainly fits the Ephesian text which speaks about being "tossed to and fro with every wind of teaching" by deceitful men and their constant schemes. This unity was possible since every single one of these people spoke and taught the same message through their gifts! Otherwise unity would have been impossible.

These discerning gifts were referred to many times in the New Testament. Paul also wrote to the Thessalonians,

"Do not quench **the breath**: do not disregard **prophecy**s. Examine all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil (1 Thessalonians 5:19-22, emphasis mine)."

John called those to whom he wrote to rely on the gift abiding within them.

"These things have I written unto you concerning those who are seducing you. But the **anointing that you have received of him** remains in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you... (1 John 2:26-27a, emphasis mine)."

These Christians had the power of God available to them in a way that is nonexistent today. They could "prove" the things that were good. They had been "anointed" and this "anointing" freed them from the reliance upon human teaching! As John says, this "anointing teaches you all things, and is truth, and is no lie..." (1 John 2:27b). These had God's message "remaining in them" attested by power. These were the gifted individuals referred to by Paul above. By exercising this power – this "anointing" – they could not be seduced. Unity of the message was assured.

Reader, why are their divisions today? Because people are no longer gifted and they are interpreting Scripture in multiple ways. I'm not saying that they are not doing their dead level best. What I am saying is that they are not qualified to equate themselves with those in the apostolic dispensation. Many who teach vastly different doctrines are claiming the "anointing". Some say they are apostolic successors. Others, just know that their interpretation is right and those who disagree are "false prophets" – out of fellowship with God.

However, the unity referred to in the New Testament springs from the one message, the "one Spirit" found in gifted humans. Today, we have translations – which cannot be expected to escape translator bias. These versions are then explained to us by ungifted men. It is obvious that the playing field is no longer level. Unity was possible then because God revealed only one Gospel message through gifted individuals, confirming this message with signs and wonders so that the populous could know the truth. These gifted people are referred to as "apostles", "prophets", "preachers", "evangelists", "pastors", and "teachers". These are the "earthen vessels" – the depositories of the Gospel "treasure".

In other words, there were no New Testament "apostles" without miraculous abilities. There were no "prophets" without signs. There were no "preachers" without wonders. There were no "evangelists" without the witnessing power of the Holy Spirit. There were no "pastors" without the "anointing", etceteras. This is the reason that people have claimed the Holy Spirit leading and power today. As they say, without the testimony, the word is just a dead letter. In actuality, it's not the Bible that's the dead letter but those interpreting it. The interpreters are the ones that are "dead" and "ungifted".

The Mormons say we can have unity today only if we have the same first century structure. Thus their claim for apostles, prophets, etcetera. The Catholic Church, as before quoted, claims apostolic succession and special grace for its teachers. Since both Mormons and Catholics claim to possess this special grace, at least they are consistent when they apply the terms "preacher", "teachers", "pastors" and "evangelists". Those who dispute Mormon and Catholic prophetic abilities are themselves guilty of not "calling Bible things by Bible names" and are in their own ignorance perverting the Biblical meaning. These just claim to be right. They have no need for the supernatural!

This is the main reason that there is always something mysterious about the modern "preacher's" calling. In my own case, my calling consisted of hundreds of hours of Bible study coupled with the idea that I had something worthwhile to share with others not so well informed. Combined with these, an invitation to "preach" was extended and excepted by me. Thus my calling.

When I was asked by interested people about "how", "whom", and "where" I was "ordained", I answered smugly, "I was ordained by God!" You see, I didn't accept all that skullduggery about seminaries or direct operations of the Holy Spirit choosing me by "outward show". I even sarcastically referred to seminaries as "cemeteries". Now I realize that my ordination was just as subjective, mysterious, and unprovable as those Seminarians and holiness "preachers" I had ridiculed. There is absolutely no scriptural authority for either.

In truth, modern denominations have fallen in love with what they perceive was the primary function of the New Testament herald – "pulpit preaching". This preoccupation with the pulpit was occasioned by Luther, not by anyone in the first century. This enamoring with the stage setting of public "preaching" and glorying in the accolades of their admirers, does not bode well for restoration theology. The fact is, "preachers" like the system. It has always been the highest test of devotion to choose what one believes is right even if it means pecuniary loss. What's even worse, the laity like it too and therefore cannot be expected to rebel in mass even if they accepted the conclusions of this thesis.

Reader, if every conclusion drawn from this study is true, we have lost nothing essential. We still have Jesus, the Anointed One, and all the promises of salvation. How can anyone improve on that? We are left with a renewed emphasis on our own responsibilities and stature as priests, standing without the need of any intermediates before our precious savior. We have gained freedom from the slavery that comes through the imposed will of men – men who have without true authority assumed positions that were not theirs to take. These are a few things that are left. I'm sure, with more time to contemplate, countless other benefits will come to mind.

THE NEED FOR RESTORATION TO PRIESTHOOD

"Thus says the Lord: Stand in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where the good way is, and walk in it: then you will find rest for your souls (Jeremiah 6:16)."

Above, we have the ageless call for restoration. A call to the good way. An admonition to ask for the old paths. It takes no Bible scholar to understand that the old paths in which a person can find

the good way and "soul rest" is God's way. It is time for all those who are interested in the principles of restoration to ask what has been the fruit of our apostasy? Has our paradigm accomplished the desires of Jesus? Is Churchianity today displaying Jesus in a positive light? Or are we like the Pharisees which Jesus described?

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of Gehenna as yourselves (Matthew 23:15)."

Some would argue that denominationalism is not all bad – that there are many good things accomplished by the present system of things. Even though some good is accomplished by the present system, the fact remains that all Christians are called to do things God's way for the GREATER good. Hach drives this principle home in his opinion on the subject. He writes:

"The fact that organized religion may benefit society in certain ways does not justify its existence.

"The fact that church members are not consciously rejecting true spiritual worship does not justify them. The fact that there are exceptions to the rule, i.e., Christians who practice true spiritual worship despite the religious organization in which they are involved, does not solve the problem."

The modern world derives its religious paradigm by what is practiced in Christendom. They see, through their experiences, a clear cut clergy-laity system in place everywhere. They see and hear the call for contributions going out from the clergy on radio and television. When they enter our assemblies this paradigm is reinforced by having the collection plate passed under their noses. The corporation is afraid to put a contribution box in the foyer lest the laity forget their obligation to support the business.

It matters little how much the "preacher" pontificates about all Christians being priests. They see clear cut sacerdotalism in practice. Though many "ministers" don't wear their collars on backwards, their title and position takes the place of the collar while they engage in a continual stream of exposition to the laity. It is insignificant to sermonize denouncing the laity concept. Visitors see hundreds of laity sitting meekly in the pews enduring another sanctuary experience.

We have always been tempted to believe that altering the worship agenda, the "preacher", the song leader or just adding more or less tempo and rhythm is the answer. It is not. The system is rotten. The wineskins are amiss. The wineskins of denominationalism will not accommodate the wine of New Testament Christianity. Our traditional corporation, with its board of directors and professional "ministers" will continue to waste the Lord's resources – both men and material. It will continue to nullify true conversions to the Priesthood of God. It will continue to turn those interested in clergy-type activities into "sons of Gehenna" – great defenders of the existent corporation from which they draw their sustenance. Hach again draws attention to the tendency of modern believers to accept a system that they are comfortable with whether or not it can be defended Biblically.

"The Church is a haven, it is safety, an institutional boundary for many Christians. The Church protects them from freedom. Churches tend to provide moral, social, and personal boundaries – all of which are limitations on freedom. Jesus came to eliminate these sorts of boundaries... Paul reminds people of godly things. He doesn't give commandments. 'This is how freedom is exercised in a responsible way,' says Paul."

The answer is simple but difficult. It has always been so. Take discipleship seriously. It is time to cast off the shackles of ecclesiastical Christianity with all its trappings. It is time to embrace our individual responsibilities – shunning the tendency to set up kings. It is necessary for those who know the truth to take a stand for pure, simple, committed, New Testament Christianity. It is profitable to be aware that Jesus didn't call the prominent citizens of the day to his vanguard of disciples. He called ordinary people. People with ordinary lifestyles.

The people were ordinary but not the call of Jesus. When Jesus calls us he is not wanting the occasional use of our talents. He is not calling us to weekend duty. He demands our life and intellect. He expected people to turn their backs on all rivals, pick up their cross and die upon it if necessary.

"If anyone comes to me, and does not hate his father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple (Luke 14:26-27)."

The corporate system has been challenged for years but is still solidly entrenched. It still stands because people, both "clergy" and "laity" endure it that way. In this contemporary paradigm, those attracted to be laity see by our practice that Jesus expects very little from them and is satisfied with even less. This, in turn, makes it hard for them to take the call to Priesthood seriously. In answering his own question of how ordinary people answer an extraordinary call, Tom Sine writes these words:

"We begin by sitting at his feet and learning from Him. We begin by recognizing that God is and that God reaches out in love through Jesus Christ to bring us back to our Creator... We must, in repentance, turn away from all that was destroying us, our lives, and relationships, and through the One who died in our stead find new beginnings and forgiveness of our sins." (*Taking Discipleship Seriously: A Radical Biblical Approach*, 1985, p.23)

When the early reformers in Kentucky decided that restoration must be pursued, they established the Springfield Presbytery as a platform for reformation and unity. They had struggled long and hard against the orthodoxy of their day and began to emerge from the darkness of their individual denominations. Great strides were being made towards the liberty that comes through freedom in Jesus. They made no claims that they had in any way arrived. The shackles that had bound their minds and thinking were being slowly removed. Many sacred cows were being slaughtered daily. Hundreds of years of traditions were being questioned with the lamp of scriptural truth. They had found among many citizens and offspring of these holy paradigms a hunger and thirst for simple Christian truth.

However, they realized that they may have traded in one ecclesiastical order for another less threatening. Being true to the principles of restoration, they determined that the Springfield Presbytery must die. The author wishes to share the obituary written to this end. It's entitled, "The Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery".

"The Presbytery of Springfield, sitting at Cane Ridge, in the county of Bourbon, being through a gracious Providence, in more than ordinary bodily health, growing in strength and size daily; and in perfect soundness and composure of mind; and knowing that it is appointed for all delegated bodies once to die; and considering that the life of every such body is very uncertain, do make and ordain this our last Will and Testament, in manner and form following, viz.:

Imprimis. We will, that this body die, be dissolved, and sink into union with the Body of Christ at large; for there is but one Body, and one Spirit, even as we are called in one hope of our calling.

Item. We will, that our name of distinction, with its Reverend title, be forgotten, that there be but one Lord over God's heritage, and his name One.

Item. We will, that our power of making laws for the government of the church, and executing them by delegated authority, forever cease; that the people may have free course to the Bible, and adopt the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.

Item. We will, that candidates for the Gospel ministry henceforth study the Holy Scriptures with fervent prayer, and obtain license from God to preach the simple Gospel, with the holy Ghost sent down from heaven, without any mixture of philosophy, vain deceit, traditions of men, or the rudiments of the world. And let none henceforth take this honor to himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.

Item. We will, that the church of Christ resume her native right of internal government – try her candidates for the ministry, as to their soundness in the faith, acquaintance with experimental religion, gravity and aptness to teach; and admit no other proof of their authority but Christ speaking in them. We will, that the church of Christ look to the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers into his harvest; and that she resume her primitive right of trying those who say they are apostles and are not.

Item. We will, that the people henceforth take the Bible as the only sure guide to heaven; and as many as are offended with other books which stand in competition with it, may cast them into the fire if they choose; for it is better to enter into life having one book, than having many be cast into hell.

Item. We will, that preachers and people, cultivate a spirit of mutual forbearance; pray more and dispute less; and while they behold the signs of the times, look up, and confidently expect that redemption draweth nigh.

Item. We will, that our weak brethren, who may have been wishing to make the Presbytery of Springfield their king, and wot not (know not) what is now become of it, betake themselves to the Rock of ages, and follow Jesus for the future.

Item. We will, that the Synod of Kentucky examine every member, who may be suspected of having departed from the Confession of Faith, and suspend every such suspected heretic immediately, in order that the oppressed may go free, and taste the sweets of Gospel liberty.

Item. We will, that Ja _____, the author of two letters lately published in Lexington, be encouraged in his zeal to destroy partyism. We will, moreover, that our past conduct be examined into by all who may have correct information; but let foreigners beware of speaking evil of things which they know not.

Item. Finally, we will, that all our sister bodies read their Bibles carefully, that they may see their fate there determined, and prepare for death before it is too late.

Springfield presbytery L.S.
June 28th, 1804

Robert Marshall
John Dunlavy
Richard McNemar – Witnesses
B.W. Stone
John Thompson
David Purviance"

Don't you love the spirit of that obituary? May God give us like-minded men who are serious about the ekklesia of Christ.

When asked the first step the author would take toward restoration, I could do no better than the above reformers. The first order of business is to dissolve corporate bodies that compete against the ekklesia of Jesus. In medical terms, the tumor must be radically removed before the body can be healed. In the meantime, individually and immediately, each and every priest should no longer support with their loyalty or finances the corporate structure. The restriction of cash flow will perhaps force the professionals and the Board of Directors to reevaluate the realities of their paradigm. That being accomplished, we might be able to see much clearer how to proceed. If the individual priest is unable to influence others of the "rightness" of this view, then he is responsible to God for his own stand.

CONCLUSION

"And now I commit you to God and to the message of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who have been made holy (Acts 20:32)."

In leaving a study such as this, I can think of no other verse in the Bible that is more comforting. The chains of human traditions will always bind the minds of those unwilling to examine the truth. As many times stated, the truth has nothing to fear by probing, discussion, and debate. Only orthodoxy is threatened by such exercise. The promise still stands that knowing the truth will set us free.

Even from a human standpoint, we should understand that there is something gravely wrong with a system that engenders the countless schisms we see in "Christianity" today. In his debate with the agnostic Owen in 1829, Alexander Campbell commented on this ageless problem. Campbell referred to the problem as stemming from a combination of "kingcraft" and "priestcraft". His statement is worthy of mentioning here.

"Skepticism and infidelity are certainly on the increase in this and other countries. Not, indeed, because of the mildness of our laws, but because of the lives of our professors (Christians), and a very general inattention to the evidences of our religion. The sectarian spirit, the rage of rivalry in the various denominations, together with many absurd tenets and opinions propagated, afford more relevant

reasons for the prevalence of skepticism than most of our professors are able to offer for their faith.

"Kingcraft and priestcraft, always German cousins at least, **have so disfigured, or as they suppose, ornamented Christianity**, so completely disguised it, that many having no taste nor inclination for examining the inspired books, have hastily and peremptorily decided that all religion is the offspring of fraud or fiction. The ignorance of the multitude, and the knavery of the few, are the most puissant auxiliaries of those daring and rash spirits who undertake to make it appear that the religious institutions of this country are founded on kingcraft or priestcraft.... We are assured that the progress of skepticism is neither owing to the weakness nor the paucity of the evidences of Christianity; but to **a profession of it unauthorized by, and incompatible with, the Christian Scriptures** (*Evidences of Christianity: a Debate*, 1829, emphasis mine)."

However, many are blinded by the "temptress of accommodation" – that is, to find a more effective method or a better program that will be the answer to this dilemma within the confines of orthodoxy. This is clearly a "cloud without water", promising renewal only to disappoint. Jesus said, "No one puts new wine in old wineskins." Attempting to prepare "old wineskins" for "new wine" is like trying to clog the hole in a dike with your finger. This tack is only the path of least resistance and will not repair the dam or keep it from breaking.

It is pleasant for the author to consider that – as far as God and Anointed Jesus are concerned – all Christians are absolutely equal. In this "message in the book dispensation," we are all ungifted alike. Since we have no "preachers", "evangelists", "teachers" and "pastors" to explain God's will to us, we must stand on our own. Thus freed from the shackles of orthodoxy, we can together pioneer new frontiers of Biblical knowledge. Through study, discussion, debate and mutual challenge, we can thrive. Loosed from the prisons of our own making, we can hold forth the Biblical scriptures for all to examine without the necessity of peering through the stained glass of Romanism and denominational Christianity. Certainly, Jesus has lost none of his appeal. He maintains his luster.

Many will consider the author's views naive and unrealistic – maybe even simplistic. This criticism of restoration principles is nothing new. The efforts of men like Campbell, Stone, and others were often ridiculed by churchmen and unbelievers alike. Commenting on the restoration efforts of Alexander Campbell, the religious skeptic and historian Fawn S. Brodie had this to say.

"Campbell, at the other extreme, tried to reconstruct the primitive Christian church, with all its **naïve** realism, oversimplified ethics, and **antiquated theology**, (emphasis mine)."

Unbelievers and moderns have always seen the teachings of Jesus as simplistic, antiquated and naive – teachings that needed to be altered by modern situations and humanistic values. Thus we can all see the result. "Christianity" stands in disarray and ill repute by multitudes. Many believe that the only thing religions are interested in is their money. No wonder. They are not far off the mark!

Reader, we can personally remove only one set of chains – our own. On the other hand, if we for any reason remain supportive of a system of "preachers" and "evangelists" after knowing the truth, we are guiltier than those whom assume positions they have no right to arrogate. Instead of complying with those teaching misapplied doctrines we need to "gird up the loins of our mind" and be strong! Whether male or female, we need to "play the man".

It is obvious that Jesus isn't portrayed in a favorable light by the "old wineskins" evident in our anti Biblical religions. Can't we all – unrestricted by those who would "preach", "evangelize", and "pastor" us – turn exclusively to

"... the message of his grace, which is able to build us up and to give us the inheritance among all those who are sanctified"?

Appendix

"ACTIVITIES" ATTRIBUTED TO THE HOLY SPIRIT THAT THE BIBLE ATTRIBUTES TO THE WORD OF GOD

1. Spiritual Begetting is through the Word of God (James 1:18; 1 Cor. 4:15).
2. Spiritual birth comes by the Word (1 Peter 1:23).
3. Quickening of bringing to life (Eph. 2:1,5; Tit. 2:11-12; Ps. 119:50,93).
4. Word provides spiritual cleansing (John 15:2; Eph. 5:26).
5. Soul purification (1 Peter 1:22; 1 John 3:3).
6. Salvation of the soul (James 1:21-22; 1 Cor. 15:1-2).
7. Justification by faith (Rom. 2:13; 3:27 1 Cor. 6:11).
8. Fills us with knowledge (Col. 1:9,13).
9. Wisdom and "filling" (Col. 3:16; Eph. 5:18-19).
10. Guides and directs (Ps. 73:24; 119:105; Luke 1:77-79).
11. Witness within the heart (1 John 5:6,10,13).
12. Enables growth (1 Peter 2:1,23).
13. Provides effective working (1 Thes. 2:13).
14. Produces fruit (Col. 1:5-6, 9-10).
15. The "rule" by which we walk (2 John 4; 3 John 4; Phil. 3:16).
16. The source of strength (Acts 20:32,34; Tit. 2:11-12; Heb. 10:29).
17. Comforts (1 Thes. 4:18).
18. The spirit of grace (Acts 20:24).
19. Love of God is shed by (2 Cor. 4:4-6; Rom. 5:5).
20. Dwells in the believer (John 6:35).
21. Engenders spirituality (John 6:63).
22. Enlightens the heart (Ps. 119:130).
23. Gives understanding (Job 32:8; Ps. 119:104).

24. Sanctifies (John 17:17).
25. Resisting the word is resisting the Spirit (Acts 7:51).
26. Disbelief is grieving the Spirit (Ps. 95:7-10; Heb. 3:7-12).
27. Disobeying the word is "quenching the Spirit" (Jer. 23:28).
28. Raises the dead (John 5:28-29; 1 Thess. 4:16).
29. Judges (John 12:47-48).
30. Makes us blessed (Ps. 119:6).
31. Keeps us from shame (Ps. 119:6).
32. Keeps from sin (Ps. 119:11).
33. Revives us (Ps. 119:25).
34. Keeps us from lying ways (Ps. 119:29).
35. Enlarges the heart (Ps. 119:32).
36. Enables us to give answer to the reproacher (Ps. 119:42).
37. Makes us wiser than our enemies (Ps. 119:98).
38. Gives us greater understanding than our teachers (Ps. 119:99).
39. Gives greater understanding than the ancients (Ps. 119:100).
40. Gives hope (Ps. 119:114).
41. Illuminates and gives insight (Ps. 119:130).
42. Gives peace (Ps. 119:165).
43. Brings delight (Ps. 119:174).

Reader, your comments and criticisms are welcomed. I can be reached at:

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