

Armor of God

April/June 2001

The First Christians

Who Wrote The Law? • Here's Why the Critics Can't Ignore the Prophets
Understanding Baptism • Christianity-Lite

We often receive letters and e-mail asking very interesting questions about the Bible. Let me share with you one we received recently:

I'd like to ask you regarding the verse, Colossians 2:16, "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days..." which is often used as evidence that the Annual Holy Days and Sabbath, as well as keeping the ritual food laws, were abolished, and that Paul instructed Christians not to be bound by such customs. I have already gone through some of your literature on the Annual Holy Days (God's Seasonal Plan) as well as on keeping the Weekly 7th day Sabbath. You have amply provided all the supporting scriptures for your beliefs, but the verse above seems to be contradicting what the other verses are stating. Any light you could shed on this matter would be very much appreciated. Thank you. (HC, Philippines)

Most Christian groups interpret this verse to mean that the Holy Days of God, the Feasts and the Sabbath, including the Food Laws are all done away. From the standpoint of someone who "doesn't" keep the Holy Days and the laws, this verse seems to support that idea. But is this really what Paul meant? There are certain criteria that many have overlooked. Let's consider several factors. First, the Colossian Church is a Gentile Church. If Christian churches (20-30 years after the death of Jesus Christ) no longer keep the holy days, and the food laws, why would Paul even mention this in his letter? Why would the church even have a problem with it? Second, in Colossians 3:5, Paul urges the Colossian church to "mortify" themselves from "fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry..." Some people suggest that the "uncleanness" meant not "unclean foods" but "unclean thoughts." However, in verse 8, we find that Paul lists the so-called "unclean thoughts" besides uncleanness. These are anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication, etc. that also needs to be put off *in addition to* uncleanness.

What can we learn from all these? It is obvious Paul was not telling the Colossians that there is no need to keep the Sabbaths, the Holy Days or the Food Laws. Rather, he was instructing them not to be distracted by any man who judges them concerning these things. The Colossian Church was in fact "observing" them which is why they were criticized by non-Christians around them. Paul had to encourage them not to mind such criticism.

It doesn't make any sense for Paul to tell the Colossians "to stop" observing the Holy Days and "command" the Corinthian Church to keep the feasts. The Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread were observed by the Corinthian Church (I Corinthians 5:7-8, I Corinthians 11:23-26)!

Consider this: why would the Lord Jesus Christ PERSONALLY instruct Paul the correct observance of the New Testament Passover if it is no longer necessary to keep the feast? And why would Paul give instructions to the Corinthian Church on how to *properly* keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread TWENTY YEARS LATER? Obviously the churches of God are keeping the Holy Days. They have been keeping it for no less than TWENTY YEARS *after* Jesus went to heaven. But they have made some mistakes in its "proper" observance. Therefore Paul had to write them a letter how to do it correctly.

Does that seem like the feasts were "done away"? You be the judge.

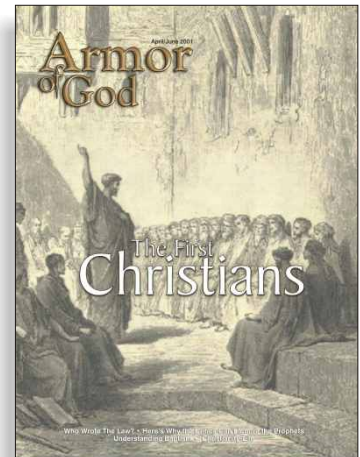


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The First Christians

What was the early apostolic church like? Were they a perfect church? Did they encounter any problem? Was that church a 'peaceful' church? What kind of members did the church have?

When Jesus said, "I will build my church..." (Matthew 16:18), He spoke probably in Aramaic or native Hebrew. The Greek word was "*ekklesia*," translated church in our modern translations. In the original Greek however, *ekklesia* is essentially two words: *ek* meaning 'out,' and *kaleo*, meaning 'to call.' This is why many preachers often refer to the church or *ekklesia* as a group of "called-out" ones. However, in Jesus time, *ekklesia* was not always defined as "church" but was more often defined as a group, team, congregation or assembly. Jesus' main objective for his "*ekklesia*" was more than just establish a church, but for them to serve as "witnesses of His death and resurrection" and to preach a future Kingdom which will rule the earth.

He started with twelve disciples, a few women and some friends. At the end of his ministry, there were about 120 followers who believed in Him. It may come as a surprise that he did not encourage his disciples to "stop" attending Sabbath services in the synagogues, and begin constructing their

own church building. He Himself was very much a part of those worship services in the synagogues during His ministry and was even invited to read and teach the Scriptures on many occasions.

Jesus continually preached, "Repent: for the Kingdom of God is at hand." (Matthew 4:17, Mark 1:15) If the law has been done away, or if Jesus intended to do away with it, why does He need to preach "repentance"? It is very clear in the 3½ years ministry of Jesus that repentance, turning away from one's sinful life, is necessary if one expects to be in the Kingdom of God (Luke 13:3-5). Jesus *knew* that His death DOES NOT mean the law is no longer to be kept, that's why He continually taught obedience to the commandments, not only in DEEDS but also in the MIND and in the HEART! Jesus knew that His death means sinners no longer need to pay the penalty of their sins but this DOES NOT give them license to continue breaking the law or disobey it. In the famous Sermon on the Mount chapters, Jesus clearly taught that the keeping of the Law begins in the heart, and sin, or the breaking of the Law also

begins in the heart (Matthew 5-7).

The Great Commission spells out very clearly the mission order of the church: Go ye therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and *teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you*. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. (Matthew 28:18-20). Jesus continually taught obedience to the Ten Commandments, and just before he went up to heaven, he "commanded" his disciples to *obey* everything he has taught them and to teach the same to everyone.

Today's preachers teach *contrary to the teachings of Jesus Christ*. They teach that the law has been "done away." Do they know better than Jesus Christ? Whom will you believe?

Jesus' core followers were fishermen, a tax collector, common folks, one or two Rabbis and those which the society of His day considered "sinners" above all. Contrary to what "church-goers" are today, Jesus' disciples were not ordinary "church-going" folks. They were "revolutionaries" aspiring for

complete freedom from the Roman government to establish their own! Their vision was to topple the Roman government and with Jesus as King, rule with Him over the tribes of Israel. They didn't exactly see themselves as pastors, preachers, or ministers the way churches are structured today. They preached of a coming literal Kingdom and at the same time preaching that only those who accept Jesus as Savior and have "repented, baptized and received the Holy Spirit" can become a part of that ruling Kingdom. In other words, Peter and the apostles weren't just our everyday "church-going folks," they envision themselves as rulers and kings of a coming kingdom which they hoped would be set up in their lifetime.

But God did not set up the Kingdom as they expected. He is not subject to the timetable of man. He holds it for the future and we can still become citizens of that Kingdom!

The Day of Pentecost

Peter, in his very first public sermon on the Day of Pentecost, shouted: "Repent, and be baptized, every one of you for the remission of sins..." Again, if the sacrifice and death of Jesus meant the law was either *nailed to the cross* or *done away*, why do men and women have to repent? Repent of what? What is the point of repenting from something that no longer exists or is in force? Jesus had ALREADY DIED and was offered as a sacrifice *before* Peter made the statement. So if the death of Jesus "nullified" the law, why would Peter make such a statement *afterwards*? Didn't Peter know that the "law has been done away" by the death of Jesus? Did not Paul say "where there is no law there is no transgression?" (Romans 4:15) If after the death of Jesus Christ, Peter and the other apostles continue to preach repentance from sins, what does that mean? The answer is quite obvious! The *LAW is still very much in effect and in force!*

Paul knew well enough to warn the churches of God in Galatia and Corinth, that those who live in disregard of the Law will neither inherit nor enter the Kingdom of God. (I Corinthians 6:9-11, Galatians 5:19-21) *Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. (NIV, I Corinthians 6:9-11)* For a more thorough and in-depth discussion on this subject, request for your free copy "**The Ten Commandments**" immediately.



The death of Stephen marked the beginning of Jesus' disciples' persecution and martyrdom (Acts 7:54-8:3).

Peter may not have realized how far the "future" was when he said, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children, and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call." (Acts 2:38-39) We do know, however, that 20 centuries has passed from the time he said it.

Pentecost is often referred to as the "birthday" of the Church of God, but we know that the apostles "received the Holy Spirit" well ahead of Pentecost (John 20:21-23). The resurrection of Jesus Christ marked the beginning of the new Church of God, He being the foundation and chief cornerstone, the firstfruits among many brethren. He "breathed" on

the disciples and gave them the holy spirit the very next time He manifested Himself to them after His resurrection.

The Early Persecution

After the ascension of Jesus, the disciples continued to attend the local synagogues and preached the resurrection of Jesus and performed miracles and healings (Acts 2:46, Acts 3:1, Acts 4:2, Acts 5:29-32).

This grabbed the attention of the rulers and elders of the Sanhedrin. They called Peter and John, threatened and ordered them to stop preaching the resurrection of Jesus. Peter and John were not intimidated, but instead made one of

the boldest statement of a disciple: "Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God. For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard." (Acts 4:20).

Peter, John and the disciples, unfazed by the threats, continued to preach the resurrection. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, "the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders among the people. And all the believers used to meet together in Solomon's

Colonnade. No one else dared join them, even though they were highly regarded by the people." (Acts 5:12-13). Nevertheless, more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number. This made the high priest and his associates, members of the Sanhedrin, more jealous of the apostles and ordered the arrest of Peter and John and had them imprisoned. But God sent an angel to release them from prison and the very next morning they were once again in the temple preaching.

The death of Stephen marked the beginning of Jesus' disciples' persecution and martyrdom (Acts 7:54-8:3). Except for the Apostles, the brethren were scattered in Judea and Samaria, and in other parts of Asia, preaching along the way as they go running for their lives.

Saul was going house to house forcibly taking the brethren and throwing them into prison.

The Conversion of Paul

On his way to a “Sanhedrin-backed” campaign against a perceived new Jewish sect, Saul was in for the shock of his life. On the road to Damascus, a blinding light struck him and he heard a voice: “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?”

“Who are you Lord?” Saul asked. “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,” he replied. “Now get up and go into the city and you will be told what you must do.” (Acts 9:1-6) God blinded Saul for three days, enough to make him think over and contemplate the things he’s been doing against Jesus’ disciples. For someone who suddenly loses his sight, who believes he has done nothing wrong, he was forced to really think deeply about what has just happened. Three days later, Jesus sent Ananias to restore Saul’s sight, baptize him and give him the Holy Spirit.

Ananias was reluctant and fearful upon hearing the instruction, but Jesus assured him that Saul is a “chosen instrument” to carry the name of Jesus to the Gentiles, to their kings and the people of Israel. And Saul too must suffer in Jesus’ name. He will now have a “dose of his own medicine” and even more.

Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus. He began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God. Saul baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Christ. After many days, the Jews conspired to kill him. (Acts 9:19-22).

Saul, renamed Paul, from persecutor of the Church of God, now became the persecuted. In every place where he preached the gospel he finds himself at odds with the rulers of the synagogues.

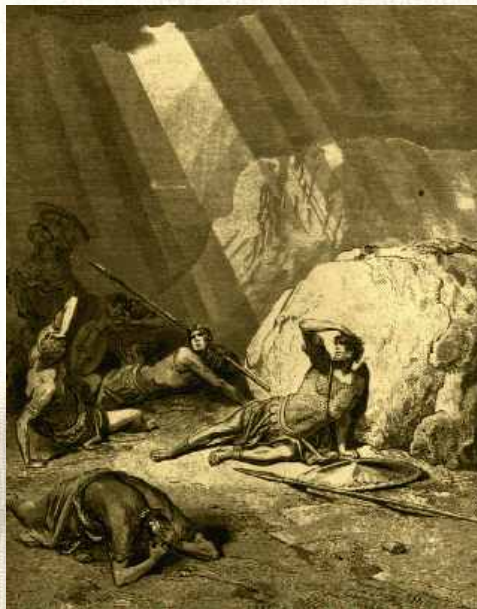
Paul’s 13 letters to various churches are now part of “Scriptures” although he himself never considered his letters (or epistles) as such. He dedicated his whole life to the preaching of the gospel, and was a very strong preacher (Acts 18:5). Paul was beheaded after the Roman court finds him guilty in a trial manipulated by the Emperor Nero (circa AD 67).

The First Jew-Gentile Controversy

A few years after the resurrection of

Jesus and His ascension to Heaven, His disciples faced their first controversy: Should Gentile converts undergo physical circumcision in order to be saved? (Acts 15). They once had a minor argument concerning the ministration to the widows a few years back but it was resolved by appointing 7 deacons to handle the matter.

Some Pharisee converts visiting Gentile churches, Antioch particularly, started to “preach” that unless a “disciple”



On his way to a “Sanhedrin-backed” campaign against a perceived new Jewish sect, Saul was in for the shock of his life. On the road to Damascus, a blinding light struck him and he heard a voice: “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?”

is physically circumcised, they cannot be saved.

The circumcision issue brought a “sharp dispute and debate, and much discussion” as we are told in Acts 15:2, 7. In the end, the Holy Spirit guided them into understanding that it was by “the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved...” not by circumcision of the flesh. (Acts 15:11)

After resolving that physical circumcision is not necessary for the Gentile churches, the Apostles, the Elders and the Jewish brethren wrote a letter. This very brief letter contains “requirements” for Gentile Christians as guided by the Holy Spirit:

The apostles and elders, your brothers,

To the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia:
Greetings.

²⁴We have heard that some went out from us without our authorization and disturbed you, troubling your minds by what they said. ²⁵So we all agreed to choose some men and send them to you with our dear friends Barnabas and Paul—²⁶men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁷Therefore we are sending Judas and Silas to confirm by word of mouth what we are writing. ²⁸It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements: ***You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality. You will do well to avoid these things.***
Farewell.

Regardless of what local pastors or preachers teach concerning the food laws and sexual morality, it is clear in this NEW TESTAMENT letter that Christians, especially Gentiles, MUST abstain from foods offered to idols, from blood or meat of strangled animals and to avoid sexual immorality. Most born-again “Christian” teachers avoid a lot of New Testament writings that seem to “reinforce” Old Testament laws. There is no escaping the fact that if there were no more laws to keep, then there should be no more “restrictions” on food or sexual behavior. The fact is Jesus had no intention of “doing away with the Law”! If there was, He would have told and taught that concept while He was with the disciples “after” His resurrection.

Heresies and False Doctrines in the First Century

The various letters of the Apostles reveal many interesting developments inside the first century churches. While many continue in their faith and strong belief in Jesus Christ’s promises, heresies and false doctrines began to be introduced. And accepted—ironically by *their very own teachers and brothers in the faith!*

The Apostle Paul tells the Galatian church that he wonders how soon they have turned “to a different gospel—which is really no gospel at all.” (Galatians 1:6-7) Paul warned Timothy concerning Hymenaeus and Philetus who were teaching “the resurrection has already taken place... and destroyed the faith of some...” (2 Timothy 2:17-18) Peter warns of “false prophets among the

people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them.” (2 Peter 2:1)

James, the Lord’s younger brother, cautioned: “Dear friends, remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ foretold. They said to you, ‘In the last times there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires.’ These are the men who divide you, who follow mere natural instincts and do not have the Spirit.” (Jude 17-19)

The Lord Jesus, several years after He went back to Heaven, warned through the Apostle John the seven churches in Asia minor for allowing heresies and false doctrines in their midst. To the Pergamum church, He said: “I have a few things against you: You have people there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin by eating food sacrificed to idols and by committing sexual immorality. Likewise you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.” (Revelation 2:14-16) Similar warnings were given to the 6 other churches such as Ephesus, Smyrna, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea.

These same heresies, in various subtle forms, are alive and well today, along with myriad of inaccurate and false interpretation of both the Old and New Testament scriptures. This misunderstanding give rise to hundreds of differing churches each one claiming to be holding “the truth.” And even inside these churches are members who hold their own private interpretation and version of “the truth.”

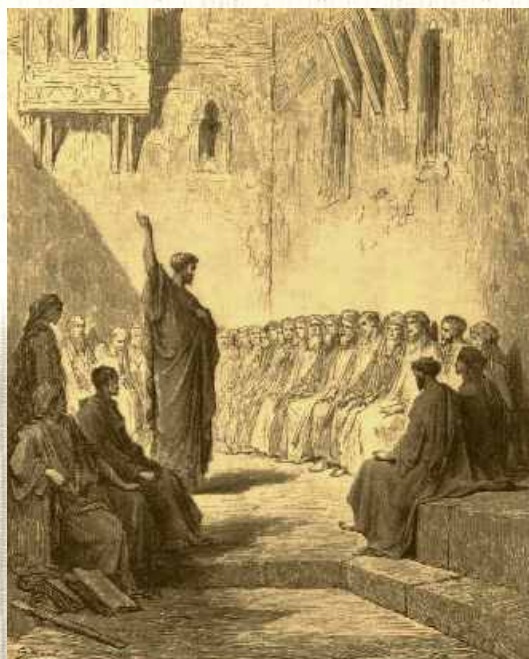
New Testament History Ends Abruptly

The Acts of the Apostles does not have an ending. Luke “closed” his historical record by telling us that “for two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. Boldly and without hindrance he preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ.” (Acts 28:30-31)

Traditional history tells us that Paul was found guilty on false charges in a trial

that was manipulated and orchestrated by the Emperor Nero (who blamed the burning of Rome to Christians) and was beheaded at around 67-68 AD.

The apostle John, on exile in the Isle of Patmos (c. AD 90-96), through a vision, wrote the warning of the Lord Jesus to the seven churches in Asia. Revelation 2 and 3 tells us that false doctrines and heresies have crept inside the churches and Jesus warned them that if they “do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.” (Revelation 2:5)



Boldly and without hindrance Paul preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ.

After John's death, the New Testament history was “sealed and closed” but only theoretically. The scattered churches, even under persecution, continued preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God with the resurrected Jesus as King of Kings. Fragments of historical records exist on the whereabouts of the many scattered churches that kept “the faith once and for all delivered to the saints” and where they have gone. At around 400 A.D., persecution broke out on the “little churches” that kept the seventh-day Sabbath. And anyone in the Roman Empire found keeping the Sabbath was not spared. The persecution continued for centuries.

The Church of God in the Twentieth Century

Mainstream Christianity in the 20th Century bears little resemblance to the “*ekklesia*” that Jesus originally established. Today's large churches do not preach Jesus coming as King of kings who will rule the earth with the saints for a thousand years. Instead, they teach that people will go to heaven if they were “good” and to hell if they were “bad.” What a complete contradiction!

Today's many different “little” churches who claim to be different from the large ones preach that the “law is done away...” A complete opposite from Jesus parting message to His disciples in Matthew 28:20: “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, ... *teaching* them to *obey everything* I have commanded.” Jesus nowhere preached disobedience to the laws but continually taught obedience (Matthew Chapters 5-7) not only in *deeds* but also in the *hearts and minds*.

While preachers, pastors and teachers keep trumpeting “the law is done away...” Jesus teaches: “If you want to enter into life, OBEY THE COMMANDMENTS. ‘Which ones?’ the man inquired. Jesus replied, “Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, honor your father and mother, and love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 19:17-19) Sometimes, one is left to wonder, do any of the preachers, pastors and teachers ever *listen* to Jesus or *read the New Testament particularly Matthew*?

Is there any church today that has any semblance to the church that Jesus founded? A church that keeps the commandments, preaches the good news about the soon-coming Kingdom of God, and keeps the faith once and for all delivered to the saints?

The answer is YES! And it's not very hard to find.

Recommended for further reading, write for your free copy of the booklet “The Church and the New World Order” and “Everything You've Always Wanted to Know about The Church of God International...” AG

Who Wrote The Law?

The Bible specifically states that Moses wrote “the law,” made a book of it, and put it into the side of the ark (Deut. 31:24-26).

The critics deny it.

What is unreasonable about Moses being the author of the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Bible)? We know that Moses could write and that there is no historical, archaeological, or literary reason for denying it.

Why should it be inconceivable that a literate man, as educated as Moses was, would write a chronicle of the Exodus and wilderness wanderings in which he was a chief participant? Why should it be inconceivable that his works would have been retained by Israel and held in high esteem? There is no more venerated figure in all Israel's history.

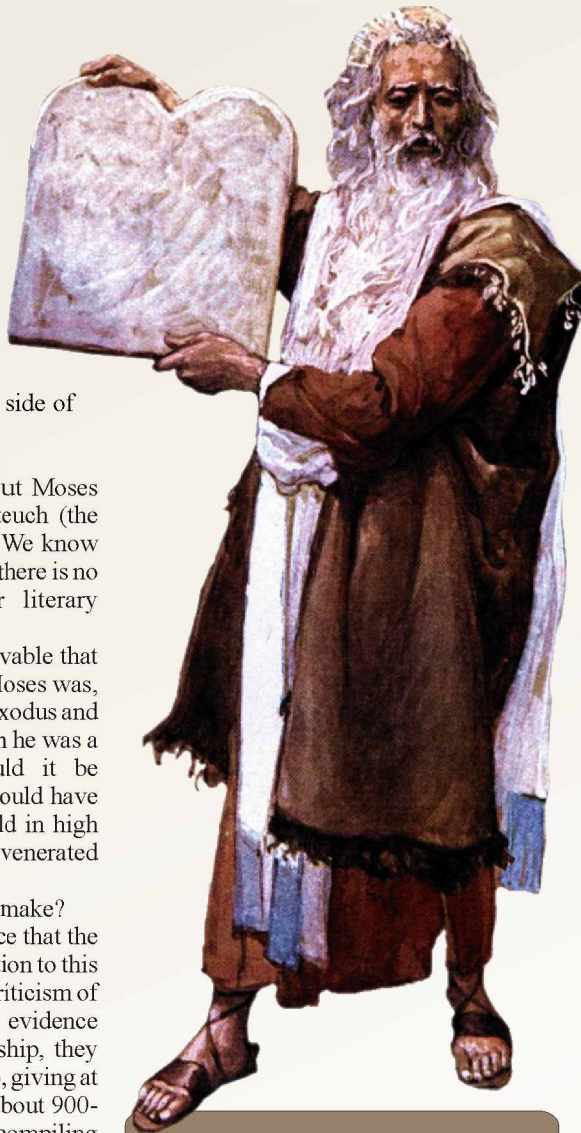
But what difference does it make?

It makes so much difference that the critics have devoted more attention to this subject than any other in their criticism of the Bible. In spite of all the evidence pointing to the Mosaic authorship, they have chopped the Pentateuch up, giving at least five authors dating from about 900-700 B.C., and delayed the final compiling of the books until after the Babylonian captivity!

Why? On the basis of what evidence?

Consider the Evidence

The critical theories generally deny that Moses wrote the Law. It is supposed to have been written in various periods of religious development over a span of centuries. Now since the Bible makes it



Did Moses write the first five books of the Bible? Hebrew tradition and Jesus say he did. But the Bible critics disagree. Why? What are their reasons? What proof do they offer? Can we know who wrote the Law? And does it really matter?

quite clear that Moses wrote the Law, we must surely expect the critics to have a very good reason for disputing this.

It's worth taking the time to examine these reasons—by going directly to the foundations upon which these theories are built.

The critics advance three main “clues” from which they derive their theories.

Clue Number One

Astruc's Clue (1753). Certain passages in Genesis call God JHWH (Jehovah) and in others He is referred to as Elohim. This is interpreted to mean a difference in authorship (A. Rendle Short, *Modern Discovery and the Bible*, p. 167).

Virtually all of the literary analysis of the Pentateuch has proceeded from this observation. How much, however, can really be learned from a purely literary analysis of a document?

The reader can easily judge this for himself by a simple examination of his own Authorized Version of the Bible [King James Version of 1611]. In it the word YHWH, or YAHWEH, (pronounce Jehovah by some) is usually rendered in capital letters, and occasionally by the word GOD, also in capital letters. The word Elohim in all of its forms is simply translated “God,” with no capitals. By going through and marking the words it becomes quite simple to get an overall view of the distribution of these titles or names of God.

The first thing Astruc noticed was the first chapter of Genesis used the term Elohim exclusively.

It must be remembered that Astruc was a Frenchman, and had for ten years resided in Paris, at a time when the niceties of style were as much studied as the punctilious of etiquette. We can hardly be surprised, then, that he should conclude that an author who used the name Elohim thirty-one times in a chapter containing only thirty-one verses, must have no other name for God. For how otherwise could he have inflicted or endured what to the sensitive Frenchman was so frightful a monotony? (John Urquhart, *The New Biblical Guide*, Vol. 1, p. 22)

In the second chapter of Genesis, however, Moses combines the two words into "Yahveh Elohim." For Astruc, this was inconceivable. It seemed impossible to impute to Moses "a fault which no other writer has ever committed." He asked:

Is it not, on the contrary, more natural to explain this variation by supposing, as we do, that the Book of Genesis is formed of two or three memoirs, joined and stitched together in fragments, the authors of which had each given to God always the same name, but each a different name—one that of Elohim, and the other that of Jehovah or Jehovah-Elohim? (Astruc, quoted by John Urquhart, *ibid.*, p. 43.)

But one simple fact was taken into consideration by the critics. YHVH and Elohim are not synonyms! They are two different names for God—and consequently have entirely different meanings. It is necessary for a writer to choose one of the other or both according to the emphasis which he wishes to place on the name.

What have we proved? That distribution of the divine names in Genesis may be interesting and there may even be some significance in the choice of words in that particular passage. But it certainly cannot be regarded as proof of multiple authors!

[Besides, Moses, as an author, is not bound by the literary style and writing of the 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th or the 20th Centuries, therefore his writing cannot be judged by our literary standards.]

No Evidence From Computers

Now what about the differences of style within the Pentateuch? Does this prove that multiple authors were involved? A recent computer test of the style of the Pentateuch indicated multiple authorship. But is this kind of evidence proof?

Recently two theologians "commissioned" a computer to make a purely literary analysis of the Epistles of Paul. The computer was programmed to

analyze key words in the author's vocabulary, their frequency of use, and the length of sentences. Their conclusion? "Only five out of thirteen letters tested were written by Paul."

The results of the computer research were considered as conclusive evidence that Paul did not write all the Epistles attributed to him. This conclusion was widely publicized.

Later, however, scientists used the same computer to make an analysis of contemporary authors—notably Ian Fleming, creator of James Bond. The computer's conclusions: Ian Fleming didn't write them all!

Of course, Fleming did actually write the books. They have grossed
t o o



much money for an unknown author to sit quietly on the sidelines while another author soaks up the money. But employing the standards by which the Epistles of Paul were judged, Ian Fleming didn't write all of his books!

The works of Graham Greene and G. K. Chesterton were also found to have "more than one author." But Dr. Robert Churchhouse, who conducted the experiment at the Atlas Computer Laboratory in Chilton, Berkshire, refuted his own results and felt this was "highly unlikely." In other words, the computer's literary analysis wasn't able to accurately

determine authorship.

Many of the greatest writers known to man are quite inconsistent in their style. Sir Walter Scott has been criticized frequently for his unevenness of style.

Let us grant that he could write abominably. But is there any great writer, especially any great novelist, who does not sometimes nod? Dickens has appalling lapses of style; so has Thackeray; so has George Meredith... (John Buchan, quoted by O.T. Allis, *The Five Books of Moses*, p. 70).

Another illustration can be found in the works of Thomas Hardy. Buchan calls the last two paragraphs of *The Woodlanders* "the most beautiful passages written in our day by any novelist." However, there was such a lapse in style that he is able to quote two thirds of a specific sentence and say, "Could anything be better?" Then, after quoting the rest of the very same sentence he says, "Could anything be worse?" (*Ibid.*) If the critics found this in the Bible, they would assume that a different man wrote the last half of the sentence!

We see then that [computer-generated] literary analysis, including Astruc's clue, is unable to determine the authorship of the Pentateuch. [It is noteworthy that if there is something the computer tests can accurately prove, it has accurately proven that authors or writers, whether Moses or those in our time, do not follow a strict literary rule or style of writing.] We are now ready to look at the second foundational "clue."

Clue Number Two

De Wette's Clue (1805). The Laws of Moses are ignored until the time of Josiah; then we begin to hear of the central sanctuary described in Deuteronomy 12. Moreover, the literary style and moral and religious tone of the books are centuries ahead of Moses' day (A. Rendle Short, *Modern Discovery and the Bible*, p. 167).

Now De Wette wasn't entirely wrong. The Laws of Moses were generally ignored until the time of Josiah. But here's where a rather simple-minded assumption leads the critics astray: It is an axiom of criticism that if a law is ignored, broken or generally unknown at any given point in an historical account, it may be concluded that the law was in reality introduced at a later date and the historical account is inaccurate. In other words, the Law of Moses is supposed to have come along

after Josiah began in his reign.

The Sanctuary

We are told by the critics that it is in Josiah's time that we begin to hear of the central sanctuary described in Deuteronomy 12—as opposed to a number of high places where offerings might be offered. The reader should examine Deuteronomy 12 for himself. It contains instructions, not merely for offerings and sacrifices, but for the observance of Holy Days. God specifically instructed them that were not to observe these Holy Days anywhere they pleased, but they were to go “unto the place which the Lord your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put his name there.”

The place is not specified. It is simply to be a place where God selects.

Now for the critics to proclaim that this idea of a central sanctuary was unknown until the time of Josiah, and that therefore Deuteronomy must have originated about that time, they must overlook entirely the historical record of First Samuel.

A man named Elkanah is described—the father of Samuel. We are told: “And this man went up out of his city yearly to worship...the Lord of Hosts in Shiloh” (I Sam. 1:3).

Notice that he left his own city and went to a sanctuary elsewhere. Reading on in the account, we find that there was a high priest at this central sanctuary, that it was a place to which people went to pray (I Sam. 1:9, 10), and that Elkanah offered his sacrifice and his vow there (I Sam. 1:21), as commanded in Deuteronomy 12:6-7.

In other words, to say that we only begin to hear of a central sanctuary in the time of Josiah simply overlooks the plain record of all the Biblical history leading up to that time.

Laws Disregarded

The key to clue number two, however, lies in the critic's idea that laws which Biblical record indicates were unpracticed were in fact not in existence.

But this argument fails to take into account the *fact* that these laws *again* fell into disuse and became generally unknown *after* Josiah's time in precisely the same way as before Josiah.

In addition, the reader should look into II Kings 22 for himself and judge whether the Law of Moses really was totally new to Josiah and the priests. The

book which Hilkiah found in the Temple was no ordinary book of laws. It is described as “the book of the law.”

The direct article is present in the Hebrew. Furthermore, the reaction of Josiah when he heard the words of this law makes no sense whatsoever if he had had no such knowledge of the existence of such a law before this time. Who would be foolish enough to swallow a totally new book concerning which there was no tradition and of which no one had heard—and suddenly decide that it was a book of great religious authority? Why would Josiah accept it? And how could he possibly impose it upon the people unless there was at least some knowledge of its authority?



It is clear that while the contents of the book came as a great shock to Josiah and the others, the existence of the book and its authority did not.

Centuries Ahead

De Wette goes on to point out that, “The literary style and moral and religious tone of the books are centuries ahead of Moses' day.”

True. The moral and religious tone of the books is indeed centuries ahead of Moses' day. In fact, the moral and religious tone of the Law of Moses is centuries ahead of our own day!

The Laws of Moses are centuries ahead of their time in every way—scientifically as well as morally. Where health is concerned for example, the Laws of Moses are an island of common sense in a sea of paganism.

The especial value of the Hebrew contribution to the development of scientific medicine was the complete repudiation of the dominance which magic was thought to exercise in the whole realm of pathology, and the substitution of a rational prophylactic approach (R. H. Harrison, Healing Herbs of the Bible, p. 14).

Now the evolutionary approach would have us to believe that the Hebrews grew out of paganism into this new phase—that it represents the natural progress of the human mind. But is this idea historically accurate? What in fact did the human mind do with these laws?

It is therefore unfortunate that the Jews of the apocryphal period abandoned their inheritance and began to adopt the ancient Babylonian practice of using spells, amulets and charms in the prevention and treatment of disease ... In later Judaism the physician became increasingly involved in magic and superstition (ibid., pp. 14, 15).

The Law of Moses—given by God—lifted the Hebrews out of the paganism and filth of Egyptian medicine, but the human mind couldn't hold on to it. Israel reverted to the pagan superstition over and over again. It was only occasionally, as in the case of Josiah, that revivals of faith in God and obedience to His law took place.

Now what is left of De Wette's clue? We find that his evidence for his hypothesis about the writing of the Biblical laws in the time of Josiah is based on a naive substitution of an evolutionary concept of the development of religion for what was in fact simply a degeneration in Israel's religion. We find that the central sanctuary was in use from the time of the Judges. And when we come to the point regarding the moral and religious tone of the books, we simply come back again to the question, “Are these laws of human or divine origin?”

It is true that no man living in Moses' time could have originated these laws. The critical argument is that they were written later. Yet, in fact, these laws would not have originated from the mind of any man at any time in the history of Israel—or in the history of the world! [The health laws of “clean and unclean meats” alone of Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14 are glaring evidences of

a "Mind" that is beyond Moses or any of Josiah's time. And it is only in the 20th Century, at the advent of the study of Genetics, can we prove that these health laws concerning animals are well founded.]

The history of Israel proves conclusively beyond any shadow of a doubt that both Judah and Israel were by

represent a stage in Israel's religious development, but a stage in their religious degeneration.

Notice also that Graf held that God could be worshiped anywhere at any shrine in the earliest stage. Yet we have already seen in I Samuel 1 that Elkanah had to leave his city and go to the central sanctuary.

No one could have palmed off a spurious law of Moses on these hard-headed, stubborn, rebellious people and made them believe it was divine

nature hostile to this law—before and after the time of Josiah! They were hostile to the law because it was the Law of God, and no one—I repeat no one—could have palmed off a spurious law of Moses on these hard-headed, stubborn, rebellious people and made them believe it was divine! Either there was some admittedly divine authority in this book or it could never have been accepted!

Clue Number Three

Graf's Clue (1866). There are three stages in the development of Israelitish religion. JE {The two "documents" containing YAHWEH and Elohim} corresponds to a stage, running up to the time of Josiah, when God might be worshiped anywhere at any shrine; any layman could offer his sacrifice, and images of Jehovah were tolerated. D corresponds to a stage when worship was centralized at Jerusalem, and priests and Levites only might minister at the altar. After the exile, a full and complicated ritual was laid down by P, and only priests could minister (A. Rendle Short, *Modern Discovery and the Bible*, p. 168).

All this, of course, is purely hypothetical. A key is found in the remark that "images of Jehovah were tolerated." Tolerated by whom?

Certainly not by God!

The "Graf Clue" is based on his own mistaken interpretation of the history of Israel. It is based squarely on the evolutionary concept of culture, which has since been discarded.

It is quite true that there were numerous altars in Israel which are spoken of in Judges, Samuel and Kings and there were images held by some people—including Michal, David's wife. All this proves nothing except the fact that the people were disobeying the law. It doesn't prove that the law was not in existence. Furthermore, it does not really

Graf-Wellhausen Theory

Actually, this "clue" is not a clue at all, but is pure theory. It was taken in hand by a literary critic named Wellhausen and developed into what is now known as the Graf-Wellhausen Theory. Strangely, this theory was not based upon literary analysis or archaeological discovery. It was founded entirely on the German philosopher Hegel's evolutionary philosophy.

There is no proof of these three stages of Israel's religious "development" at all. The Bible doesn't back it up in any way. Nor does archaeology. However, at the turn of the century the Graf-Wellhausen Theory was held in the highest esteem. Dr. C. F. Burney wrote of this theory:

This latter hypothesis [i.e., the Graf-Wellhausen Theory] with the reconstruction which it involves of our view of the development of Israel's religion after B.C. 750, may now be regarded as proved up to the hilt for any thinking and unprejudiced man who is capable of estimating the character and value of the evidence (H. M. Wiener, *Essays in Pentateuchal Criticism*, p. 176).

Here we encounter intellectual blackmail. If one disagrees that this hypothesis is "proved up to the hilt," then he is regarded as either unthinking, prejudiced, or incapable of estimating the value of evidence. Many a scholar has been intimidated by this approach. The Graf-Wellhausen Theory was almost universally accepted among higher critics of the day.

But has the theory stood the test of time and evidence? No, it hasn't.

The Theory Falls

Since 1908, a tremendous amount of new material has become available which

has forced a complete reappraisal. One of the top contemporary Bible scholars, writing in 1960, tells us that:

The generally accepted account of Israel's history and religion produced by Wellhausen and popularized in the late 19th and early 20th centuries survives, to be sure, today. It is especially among non-specialists that it is accepted as indubitably valid, and particularly among those who would claim the label "Liberal," religious as well as secular (G. E. Mendenhall, "Biblical History and Transition," *The Bible and The Ancient Near East*, p. 36, emphasis mine).

The specialist in the field have had to realize that Wellhausen's theory was really not based upon evidence as well as on philosophy. However, there are always those who don't get the word. Mendenhall goes on to point out:

Yet, Wellhausen's theory of the history of Israelite religion was very largely based on a Hegelian {evolutionary} philosophy of history, not upon his literary analysis. It was an a priori evolutionary scheme which guided him in the utilization of his sources. Such evolutionary schemes have been rejected nearly everywhere else ... Hypotheses are basic to research, to be sure, but they should arise on the basis of some sort of evidence, not simply be transferred from a philosophic system.

Now this was not published by some obscure religious quack, but in a collection of articles by the most noted Biblical scholars and archaeologists in the world. It reflects the scholarship and research of recent years. Yet many theologians are still blissfully unaware of it!

While many people assume that critics have successfully repudiated the Bible, the facts are stacking higher and higher all the time repudiating the critics. Wellhausen, as others have done, started with an assumption which prejudiced the rest of his work and guaranteed a false conclusion.

The Three "Clues"

Now, what is left of the three foundational "clues" upon which the critical theory was built? Astruc's "clue" was found to be inconclusive. De Wette's "clue" was spawned in ignorance of essential evidence. And Graf's "clue" was not a clue at all but an expression of an evolutionary theory or religion which has since been rejected by scholars.

There is, therefore, no foundation for the critical theories which deny the

continued on page 18

Bible prophecy is an emotionally loaded subject. In it, a great supernatural Being claims to know EXACTLY what will happen to man in the next few years. Some marvel—most ridicule. Some believe—most criticize. Criticize? That's the "sport of scholars." In this article, we examine "modern theology's critical analysis" of Ezekiel, Daniel and Isaiah—and discover why the critics cannot ignore the prophets!

Here's Why the Critics Can't Ignore the Prophets

Why is that man cannot dismiss the Bible with a wave of the hand as he might other writings of the ancient world? The Bible—more than all the other books put together—has drawn unparalleled attention from critics. Nothing in the history of literature can begin to compare with it. It has been examined, dissected, reviled, pulled apart, and even put back together again and defended.

For some reason, man could not simply say, "I don't believe it" and then carry on as always. There are many reasons why. But standing head and shoulders above all the rest is prophecy!

Prophecy Troubles Critics

The human mind, even gifted with the greatest insight and sagacity, can go only so far in predicting future events. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and the twelve minor prophets have all gone far beyond the tightly limited boundaries of mortal man. So the critics have a choice: Either they must admit that a power and intelligence greater than their own human mind had inspired those prophecies, or they must find some other way to explain them.

Guess which alternative the critics have chosen!

They have chosen to look for a human explanation. Their usual solution

is ridiculously simple—they "re-date" the prophecies! They shove the date of composition forward a few centuries—so that the prophecies appear to have been written after all of the prophesied events had already occurred!

It is significant that no critic has ever attempted to deny the divine origin of these prophecies while leaving them in their own time setting.

Actually, this effort of the critics unequivocally proves the phenomenal accuracy of the prophets. Why else would a materialistic "scholar" feel it necessary to fabricate a new day? If the prophecies were not accurate—if even only one were wrong—critics would love to expose this obvious incompetence and glaring error by retaining the true dates. But they can not do so. They full well realize that Bible prophecy—if they don't tamper with the dates—is unerringly, precisely accurate in even its most intricate details.

So the critics have only one choice—they must alter the date of the prophetic statement and turn it into contemporary history. [They have to or they are faced with the inevitable—a Being that is capable of making the foretold events come to pass as He pleases...]

But can we know the dates with any certainty?



We certainly can!

In this article, we will demonstrate the absolute prophetic authenticity of three of the most important prophets—Ezekiel, Daniel, and Isaiah.

Date of Ezekiel

Ezekiel is one of the easiest of the prophets to date. No one was any more thorough—he gives us no less than twelve specific dates in his book.

Ezekiel dates his prophecies from the year of “Jehoiachin’s captivity” by Nebuchadnezzar’s reign which occurred at the time of the spring equinox in 596 B.C. (II Chron. 36:10). Since all historians agree upon the dates of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign, we can compose the following dates for the book of Ezekiel:

Chapter 1:1-2	5 th day of the 4 th month in the 5 th year (592 B.C.)
Chapter 8:1	5 th day of the 6 th month in the 6 th year (591 B.C.)
Chapter 20:1	10 th day of the 5 th month in the 7 th year (590 B.C.)
Chapter 24:1	10 th day of the 10 th month in the 9 th year (beginning of 587 B.C.)
Chapter 26:1	1 st day of a month in the 11 th year (586 B.C.)
Chapter 29:1	12 th day of the 10 th month in the 10 th year (end of 587 B.C.)
Chapter 30:20	7 th day of the 1 st month in the 11 th year (586 B.C.)
Chapter 32:1	1 st day of the 12 th month in the 12 th year (beginning of 584 B.C.)
Chapter 32:17	15 th day of the month in the 12 th year (584 B.C.)
Chapter 33:21	5 th day of the 10 th month in the 12 th year (end of 585 B.C.)
Chapter 40:1	10 th day of the beginning month of the civil year Tishri, the seventh month in the 25 th year (572 B.C.)

Now that’s evidence! Yet, some critics just toss aside such careful, meticulous dating!

Where Critics Go Wrong

Why, then, do the same critics attempt to place the authorship of the book

of Ezekiel between 400 and 230 B.C.?

The answer is twofold. First, they must assume—without proof—that Ezekiel’s prophecies are not of divine origin. Then, proceeding from this assumption, they reasoned that Ezekiel had to have had certain historical information available before he could have written these remarkable “histories”. His in-depth script for the fall of Tyre, for example, was still being acted out in fantastic detail until about 320 B.C. Consequently, the critics reason, Ezekiel couldn’t have written it before that time!

undetected until the present day!

A “Pseudo Ezekiel”?

Now let’s consider the problems that this imaginary, “pseudo-Ezekiel” would have had to face in getting his spurious book accepted as the work of an original Ezekiel and then have it accepted as Scripture.

During the time of the Babylonian captivity, there was a recognized religious authority among the Jews. Ezekiel refers to them as the “elders of Judah” (Ezek. 8:1).



But Ezekiel’s prophecies about Tyre’s destruction were indeed written in 596 B.C.—as is clearly proclaimed. How then could the critics explain it’s incredible accuracy for the next 250 years without acknowledging their Creator God in heaven?

(In reality, the prophecy concerning Tyre is still being fulfilled today—so using the critics’ own reasoning, we would have to conclude that the Book of Ezekiel has not been written yet!

Let’s put it bluntly: We are asked to believe that Ezekiel’s dates are an out-and-out fraud. Furthermore, we are asked to believe that this fraud in dating went

Later, when Cyrus decided to give permission for the Temple to be rebuilt, “Then rose up the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites ... to go up to build the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem” (Ezra 1:5). The leaders of this expedition were Zerubbabel the governor and Joshua the high priest.

A little later, about 457 B.C., Ezra comes to Palestine. Ezra is called a “ready scribe in the law of Moses, which the Lord God of Israel had given” (Ezra 7:6). “Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach Israel statutes and judgments” (verse 10).

Notice that Ezra was not a lawgiver, but a scribe—a copier—of an already existing code of law.

Throughout Ezra and Nehemiah, it is quite obvious that there is a ruling body of Jews concerned with ecclesiastical affairs and that there is a “holy scripture” an authoritative body of religious writings (see Neh. 8:1).

There can be no question that the “law of Moses” was the Torah—the first five books of your Old Testament. Remember this was before 400 B.C.

Now back to the mischievous plot of “pseudo-Ezekiel.” He would have had the rather formidable task of palming off on a group of Jewish priests, Levites, and governors, a totally new book which none of them had ever heard before—and convince them that it was written during the Babylonian captivity. Quite an assignment!

The Jews have always been an intelligent, practical people with a great deal of common sense. Would they have accepted a book purporting to have foretold, in advance, the history of the last few years, yet which did not appear until after the event?

Would you have accepted such a book?

Suppose some individual would try to convince you that he has written a book listing in detail all the major events of 1990-1995 and that the book was published in 1960, but he gave you a copy of the book in the year 2000, would you immediately accept this would be prophet?

Wouldn't it seem a little bit contrived?

When one comprehends the exalted position of the Torah among Jews past and present, the obstacles that a “pseudo-Ezekiel” would face becomes insurmountable.

Why was Ezekiel Accepted?

Why then were Ezra and the men of the Great Synagogue (the assemblage of priests and Levites constituting the religious authority) willing to accept the

real Ezekiel at all? The answer becomes obvious when we understand that the Canon of the Old Testament—that is, the books making up the Old Testament—was complete by the end of the 5th Century B.C. Ezra and the Jews with him in Babylon were aware of the prophetic work of Ezekiel when they returned.

Ezekiel had been part of the succession of prophets: He had held an office which was honored and respected. His prophecies had already begun to come to pass. And as they continued to be fulfilled before the Jews' very eyes—while the book was their very possession. Nobody could question the

is the fact that NO MAN could have made the prophecies that Ezekiel made. This, however, is not evidence for a later date, rather, it is PROOF OF A DIVINE ORIGIN!

Date of Daniel

Daniel was a contemporary of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. He was carried into captivity by Nebuchadnezzar about 604 B.C. and continued to live and write for more than the next 70 years.

Certain critics, however, date Daniel between 165 and 175 B.C.! That shouldn't come as a great surprise. But, just for curiosity, let's examine whatever reasons they have fabricated. Again, topping the



authenticity of the book.

Interestingly enough, even the critics have not been willing to call Ezekiel an out-and-out fraud. Their reason is obvious: Frauds have ulterior motives. And any ulterior motive would have been transparent throughout. But no such motive can be found in Ezekiel. And no fraud writes like Ezekiel writes.

Ezekiel rings true. Literature with such a powerful moral force simply does not arise from a hypocritical mind.

Finally, since both Jewish tradition and the Jewish historian Josephus state that the Old Testament was completed about the end of the 5th Century B.C., there can be no question of a later date for Ezekiel.

Absolutely, the only claim that can be advanced to question Ezekiel's own date

list, is the assumption that the Book of Daniel is of purely human origin.

The fundamental axiom of criticism is the dictum that a prophet always spoke out of a definite historical situation to the present needs of the people among whom he lived and that a definite HISTORICAL situation shall be pointed out for each prophecy (George L. Robinson, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*).

Consider what this means. It is a “fundamental axiom” that every prophet always spoke of and about the present needs of the people among whom he lived. In other words, Daniel is not seen by the critics as a prophet contemporary with Nebuchadnezzar, but rather as a “pious fraud” writing about 175 B.C. This “pseudo-Daniel,” it is reasoned, was

directing his “prophecies” to the current needs of the people in the second century B.C., since some of his “prophecies” cover that period.

Daniel Is Challenged

When one understands that what was going on about 175 B.C. the critics' motives become embarrassingly obvious.

This was the time of the Maccabean revolt against Antiochus Epiphanes. The book of Daniel covers historical details of the breakup of Alexander the Great's empire into four divisions and the subsequent war between the king of the south, climaxing in Antiochus Epiphanes' invasion of Jerusalem. Daniel's spectacu-

When he asked for further understanding, he was told: “Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the *time of the end*” (Daniel 12:9).

2. Daniel's words were *not* directed to the people of his own time nor even primarily to those in the second century B.C., but to those living at the *time of the end*.

Of course, some will argue that this was an attempt to make the people of his time believe that the end was near. Fair enough, but why then did they accept the book into the Canon when the end didn't

Daniel—decided to attempt to foist off a series of spurious prophecies on his gullible contemporaries (perhaps motivated by a dare from his friends). He then proceeded to embellish his phony predictions with a detailed description of life in Nebuchadnezzar's court, including punishment given for certain crimes, details of the religious leaders, customs of the time, etc.

The critics have generally felt that many of these details were fanciful tales, since a Jew living so much later [some 400 years difference] would have had no direct knowledge of these ancient times. He would have had to have been something of a novelist.

The third chapter of Daniel is thought by critics to bear this out.

The “story” of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego has been labeled “preposterous.” The very idea of throwing men into a furnace seems absurd. It simply doesn't fit the normal pattern of executions.

A letter (dated even before the time of Nebuchadnezzar), however, has been found (and is in the Nies Babylonian collection at the Yale University) which contains a royal decree ordering the death of a slave by burning in a furnace! (John B. Alexander, “New Light on the Fiery Furnace,” *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 69, 1950, pp. 375-6.)

Daniel's details of Nebuchadnezzar's court have been proven to be remarkably accurate. Sir Henry Rawlinson found that the magicians in Babylon at that time correspond exactly to the three classes of Chaldean doctors which Daniel enumerates.

Fairy tales don't come true.

Daniel's Prophecies for Today!

Daniel's prophecies didn't finish in 175 B.C.! And that's crucial—for this article, and for your life.

Having had Daniel's prophecies in hand since the sixth century B.C., it must have been quite an experience for the Jews of the time to see these things being



lar in-advance description of the minute details of all of this (in Daniel 11 the longest “detailed” prophecy in the Bible) are too absolutely accurate to have been written hundreds of years before they took place, say the critics.

Too accurate to have been conceived by man, that is, [who have lived 400+ years before the event actually occurred!]

Therefore, the “fundamental axiom of criticism” is applied—and Daniel is quickly put into a “time machine” and “re-materialized” some four hundred years later—as an attempt is made to set his prophecies into the “proper” historical situation of the Maccabean revolt.

There are two things wrong with this hypothesis:

1. Daniel himself did not understand all that he wrote.

come? [Besides, as pointed out earlier, the Old Testament Canon had already been compiled and completed several hundred years earlier.]

A Critical “Fairy Tale”

Once upon a time (about 175 B.C.) a pious man (really a religious nut or a clever fraud) resolved to avail himself of the traditions surrounding the name of Daniel. He then set about to write the circumstances of his own time. And so, in the name of “Daniel the prophet,” this fast-talking “pseudo-Daniel” proclaimed words of admonition and prophecy to the “faithful” (deceived idiots) around him in the second century B.C.

Now ponder what this imaginary situation would have to have been. This wily fellow—living long after the time of

Line Upon Line

"For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept: line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little..." *Isaiah 28:10*



Understanding Baptism

Doctrinal Statement:

The ceremony of water baptism is performed by immersion for the forgiveness of sins upon true repentance and acceptance of Christ's sacrifice. After this ceremony, the laying on of hands follows and one receives the gift of the Holy Spirit. Baptism symbolizes the renunciation of the past sinful way of life, the burial of the "old man" in a watery grave, and the emergence of a new Spirit-led man living with Christ's mind and following in His footsteps.

The New Testament places great emphasis upon the ceremony and symbolism of water baptism. It is a deeply meaningful initiatory rite referred to in Hebrew 6:1 as one of the foundational doctrines of Christian belief. John the Baptist is the one who introduced water baptism as a ceremony through which one outwardly demonstrates his inward attitude of repentance and his desire to submit to God.

Christ placed His stamp of approval upon John's baptism and set the example for us by undergoing the ritual Himself (Matthew 3:13-17). The Father likewise expressed His favor with Jesus' baptism by saying through an angel immediately afterward that Jesus was His beloved Son in whom He was "well pleased" (verse 17).

Jesus' disciples continued to baptize in a manner similar to John until the death and resurrection of their Master, when the

practice took a new and deeper significance.

(John's baptism did not make available the Holy Spirit. Later we have an example which shows the necessity of re-baptism in the name of Jesus for some who had undergone only the baptism of John—Acts 19:1-6).

In Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus commanded that the apostles go into all nations preaching the gospel and baptizing the disciples. They followed Christ's command and they themselves both stressed the importance of baptism and explained its meaning in their preaching and teaching.

The Command

Jesus Christ is our example to follow in all things. Not only is He our Savior, but He is our Lord, Master, soon-coming King, and the Captain of our Salvation. Therefore, we need to think in terms of following in His footsteps, walking as He walked. "For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps" (1 Peter 2:21).

Why did Jesus go to John and ask to be baptized? It was not for repentance of sin, because He never sinned. The statement "to fulfill all righteousness" means to accomplish what God gave Him to do. Jesus saw His baptism as furthering God's work (Matthew 3:13-15).

Jesus was baptized because He was

personally confessing the sin of the nation, as Nehemiah, Ezra, Moses, and Daniel had done. He was showing support for what John was doing, and He was inaugurating His own public ministry. Jesus, the perfect man, didn't need baptism for sin, but He accepted it in obedient service to the Father, and God showed His approval (Matthew 3:16-17).

After Jesus was resurrected, He gave instructions to His twelve apostles (Mark 16:15, 16). Notice the fate of those who do not believe and are not baptized. Therefore, it was Jesus Christ Himself that commands baptism. Please read Matthew's version of this command given by Jesus (Matthew 28:19, 20).

On the Day of Pentecost, when the New Testament church began, the apostle Peter gave an inspired sermon that pricked the hearts of the people (Acts 2:14-40). The people were so upset, they asked, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Peter then said unto them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

If we are to be saved from the death penalty of sin, we must repent and be baptized for the remission of those sins. Baptism symbolizes our belief in God and faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. Also it is symbolic of putting to death the old sinning self by burying it under water.

It is easy to say that we repent and believe in Jesus Christ, but will we be obedient and willing to be immersed in water through baptism? Not only is baptism an act of our willingness to change our life, but it is also a test of our obedience. Water baptism, then, is a requisite towards the way of salvation.

Final Instructions

God has not gone far off somewhere. It should become clear to you as you study His Word, the Bible, that He is very near to you, and is very interested in your welfare and progress. The reason many prayers are not answered is that those who pray do not really understand or know the true God. They think of God as some far-off, vague, ethereal, undefinable Something. They do not think of God as a real personality who is actively sustaining the whole universe, which He created and maintained.

God is the active, law-giving Ruler of the universe. He reveals Himself in His Word, the Bible, and clearly shows us what kind of God He is. He tells us how we should worship Him. He informs us how we should obey Him. And He fulfills all His promises.

It is of paramount importance that we take His Word literally. It should be meaningful to each one of us in a personal way. God means what He says.

Jesus certainly understood this, He said, "Your word is truth" (John 17:17). All of the apostles lived their lives and constantly taught and acted as if God's Word was literally their guide.

We constantly have choices to make. Will we choose to obey Jesus and live by every word of God (Matthew 4:4), or will we listen to the cacophony of different ideas of men?

If we expect to get results in our prayers, we must believe the God of the Bible. We must believe that it is truth, and be willing to allow the truth to guide our lives.

We must seek the true God by praying, studying His Word to learn His commandments, and acting on the revealed Word by putting it to use in our lives. In other words, we must believe the Bible. This is one of the keys to effective prayers.

Before beginning this lesson, have you prayed for God's guidance, asking Him to open your heart and mind to understand the message He has for you? Are you willing to accept correction through this lesson? Are you grateful to

God for His loving compassion for you? Have you found a quiet place for your Bible study? Do you have your Bible at hand and paper for your own personal notes? If so, you are ready!

Understanding Baptism

The biblical passage concerning water baptism and its importance is found in Acts 2:36-41. The apostle Peter gave an inspired sermon on the Day of Pentecost in which he convicted the hearts of his listeners for having put the Messiah, Jesus Christ, to death. Thousands heard that message and became filled with guilt and shame for their part in this act of treachery. Their spontaneous cry was, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (verse 37). A very honest question.

When people come to recognize, as this first-century group did, that they have been living contrary to the commandments of the Lord their God who created them, what should they do as individuals, and as a nation?

Peter's answer to them was, "Repent, and let everyone of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (verse 38).

Previous lessons have made clear that repentance and faith are necessary to attain salvation. The next step, as we are shown by Peter, is baptism.

Even though the Scriptures are quite clear about the method of baptism, there is much confusion in the world as to how baptism should be done. Some religious groups sprinkle, pour, immerse—but what does the Bible tell us about this commanded rite?

The word sprinkle occurs a number of times in the New Testament, but always in connection with the blood of Christ, and never to baptism. The word pouring also appears several times, but not in relation to baptism.

The word baptize is not an English word per se. When translating the New Testament from Greek to English the translators left this word untranslated. The Greek word is baptizo. The definition of the word baptize is "immerse". It means, "plunge into" or "put into". It does not mean, "sprinkle" or "pour". The Greek word for "sprinkle" is rantizo, and "pour" is cheo. Therefore, sprinkling and pouring are not forms of baptism. Immersion, being placed fully under water, is. Water baptism has great symbolic meaning, as this lesson will make clear.

Review

1. *The strongest statement for water baptism is found in Acts 2:38.*
2. *Many people ask what they should do to be saved.*
3. *Peter told several thousand people to "repent and be baptized."*
4. *There is confusion or outright disobedience in the manner in which baptism is done.*
5. *While the words sprinkle and pour are used in the New Testament they are never used in regard to baptism. Only the concept of immersion is.*

Scriptures to Read, Remember, and Recite.

1 Peter 2:21; Mark 16:16, 16; Matthew 28: 19, 20; Acts 2:36-41; John 17:17; Matthew 4:4

Baptism by Immersion

The reason John the Baptist was baptizing in the Aenon River was the fact that baptizing requires "much water" (John 3:23). If John were only sprinkling or pouring, a river of water would not be necessary.

Jesus of course had no sins to repent of, but He allowed John to baptize Him, setting an example for us to follow (Matthew 3:13; 1 Peter 2:21).

The baptism of Jesus proves that He was fully immersed, for He "went up straightway out of the water". If sprinkling or pouring were used, He would not have come "up...out" of it (Matthew 3:16)!

In the book of Acts, when Philip baptized the eunuch, they both went into the water. If sprinkling or pouring were being used, Philip could have stood on the bank and leaned over to get the necessary water to sprinkle or pour.

These two examples show that the early New Testament church Jesus established practiced total immersion when baptizing (Acts 8:38; Matthew 28:19, 20).

Review

1. *Baptism requires much water.*
2. *Jesus was immersed, and came up out of the water.*
3. *Jesus also set an example for us to follow.*
4. *Philip had no need to go down into the water with the eunuch if mere sprinkling or pouring water were the custom.*

5. *The New Testament church practiced total immersion.*

Scriptures to Read, Remember, and Recite.

John 3:23; Matthew 3:13-15; Acts 8:38; Matthew 28:19, 20

Meaning of Baptism

The act of baptism is symbolic, and we need to understand what it symbolizes. Water baptism has no magical power; however, God requires this simple physical act of obedience if we are to become His sons and daughters and receive His Holy Spirit.

Baptism is an outward ceremony or sign of an inward repentance. It shows forth one's willingness and desire to put away his or her old life and begin living a new life of obedience to God on a permanent basis.

The apostle Paul tells us that after Jesus was crucified for our sins, His dead body was buried, and then He rose again the third day (1 Corinthians 15:3, 4; Romans 8:11). Jesus was in the heart of the earth, "the grave," for three days and three nights, but then was made alive and given immortal life by God's Spirit (Matthew 12:38-40). His resurrection shows He triumphed over sin and death.

Baptism is symbolic of one's death, burial, and resurrection from the grave (Colossians 2:12, 13; Romans 6:3-13). Just as Jesus died for our sins and was buried, in like fashion, symbolically, our immersion in a watery grave pictures the death and burial of our old sinful life. So also as Jesus was resurrected in newness of life, our coming up out of the waters of baptism is symbolic of our rising out of the grave to live a new life of obedience to God. We are now free from the guilt of past sins and the death penalty those sins demanded.

At baptism we begin living as follower of Christ, surrendered to God. We walk in "newness of life." After baptism we consider ourselves as dead, so far as sin is concerned, but alive to God through His Son Jesus Christ (Romans 6:11).

Once we are baptized and receive the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ begins to live within us through His Spirit (Romans 8:9, 10; Colossians 1:27-29).

We now have the spiritual strength we need to yield ourselves to God and resist the influence of the world, the flesh, and the devil. Also God's Spirit furnishes us the faith and love of God to obey His

spiritual law (Romans 5:5; 13:10).

The apostle Paul gave us this beautiful statement: "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I am live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20). Baptism requires a total surrender, which takes place after a heartfelt repentance and the recognition that we are worthy of death because of our sins. Our willingness to humble ourselves and do what Jesus did in the ordinance of baptism is essential. "*He that is baptized shall be saved*" (Mark 16:16).

Review

1. *Baptism is an outward sign of an inward repentance.*
2. *It demonstrates a desire to give up our old life and begin living a new life of obedience to God.*
3. *After three days and three nights in the grave, Jesus was made alive.*
4. *He triumphed over sin and death.*
5. *Being brought up out of the waters of baptism is symbolic of being brought out of the grave to live a new life of obedience.*
6. *We are free from the guilt of past sins and from the death penalty those sins have incurred.*
7. *God's Spirit provides the strength to resist sinful influences.*
8. *Baptism is an expression of our repentance from sin and our desire to bury our old sinful life.*
9. *Baptism is an ordinance by which we express our faith in Jesus Christ as our personal Savior.*

Scriptures to Read, Remember, and Recite.

1 Corinthians 15:3,4; Romans 8:11; Matthew 12:38-40; Colossians 2:12, 13; Romans 6:3-13; Acts 2:38; Romans 8:9, 10; Colossians 1:27-29; Romans 5:5; 13:10; Galatians 2:20

In the Name of Jesus Christ

There is no salvation through any other person or savior than Jesus Christ. The Bible says, "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

The scriptures tell us that Jesus baptized more disciples than John (John

3:22; 4:1). But the actual work of baptizing these people was done through the disciples who did it for Him (John 4:2).

When the repentant believers were baptized, they were baptized "in the name of Jesus" in other words, by His authority. When you do anything in another's name you do it by his express permission. The disciples of Jesus did the baptizing for Him, by His authority and in His name, and that was the same as if Jesus had actually done it Himself. Ministers of Jesus Christ do all things in His name (Acts 10:48).

Review

1. There is no other name under heaven by which we must be saved.
2. *Jesus' disciples did the baptizing for Him.*
3. *They baptized repentant believers by the authority of Jesus Christ.*

Scriptures to Read, Remember, and Recite.

Acts 4:12; John 3:22; John 4:1, 2; Acts 10:48; Colossians 3:17

Into the Name!

In Matthew 28:19, we find repentant believers are to be baptized "in" the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Observation: The inspired Greek word translated "in" is *eis*. This word actually means "into". The one who is baptized becomes the possession of, and comes under the protection of, the one whose name he bears. Therefore, Matthew 28:19 should be translated: "...baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit". It is done in the name, by the authority of Jesus Christ.

When God's ministers baptize in the name of Jesus Christ, they are not baptizing the baptismal candidate into any humanly devised organization or denomination, but into the very God Family, into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Review

1. We have learned that we are baptized into the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.
2. *God's ministers do this in the name and by the authority of Jesus Christ.*
3. *In so doing the baptismal candidate becomes the*

possession of and under the protection of the One whose name he bears.

Scriptures to Read, Remember, and Recite.

Matthew 28:19

Being Put in the Church

Believe it or not, after baptism and the laying on of hands to receive the Holy Spirit, we become members of the divine Family of God.

Few professing Christians understand that one must first be begotten, then born, into the Family of God. As a matter of fact we are now God's children though only begotten, still subject to the possibility of a spiritual miscarriage. "Beloved, now we are children of God...we know that when He is reveals, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2).

It is interesting to compare spiritual birth with physical birth. The physical birth begins with a begetting. Then there is a development period of some nine months, and then the birth. The spiritual birth is similar. First a spiritual begetting, then nurtured by God's Spirit, a period of spiritual growth and development in the "womb" of the church, and finally the

appearance of immortal, glorified, spirit-composed sons and daughters of God at Christ's Second Coming (1 Corinthians 15:49-52; 2 Corinthians 6:18).

Jesus promised His disciples the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5). On the Day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit came and sat upon 120 disciples, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4). Also there were an additional 3000 souls who were baptized (Acts 2:41).

God's true church is called body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12, 27; Colossians 1:8). We cannot join this true church of God; we must be put into it by God (1 Corinthians 12:13).

The apostle Paul pointed out that we must have the Spirit of Christ dwelling in us, or we do not belong to Him (Romans 8:9). We only become Christ's when the Holy Spirit comes into us!

All the members are held together by the same common bond, and that bond is God's Holy Spirit.

So it is possible for someone to associate with the members of the body of Christ and still not be a part of the body. Only God knows who has truly repented. Only God knows who He has given His Spirit to.

It is the receiving of the *Holy Spirit of God that immerses us, puts us into, the*

church of God.

Review

1. *After baptism and the laying on of hands to receive the Holy Spirit, we become members of God's divine family.*
2. *When Jesus Christ appears, we shall be like Him.*
3. *We shall be God's sons and daughters a part of the God family.*
4. *One hundred and twenty disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost.*
5. *Three thousand souls were baptized also on the Day of Pentecost.*
6. *God's true church is called the body of Christ.*
7. *Only God can put us into His church.*
8. *It is receiving of the Holy Spirit that puts us into the church of God.*

Scriptures to Read, Remember, and Recite.

1 John 3:2; 1 Corinthians 15:49-52; 2 Corinthians 6:18; Acts 1:5; 2:1-4, 41; 1 Corinthians 12:12, 27; Colossians 1:18; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Romans 8:9. **AG**

Who Wrote the Law?

continued from page 10

Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. But there is a very good foundation to support the truth that Moses was the human author of the Pentateuch.

The Test of Language

If the Pentateuch was written long after the time of Moses and only was finally finished after the Babylonian captivity—as the critics would have us to believe—there should be certain clearly defined linguistic evidence available. Late Babylonian and Persian influence should be present, and there should be no special Egyptian influence. Furthermore, the history and archaeology should be "full of mistakes and anachronisms" (A. Rendle Short, *Modern Discovery and the Bible*, p. 161).

These tests certainly apply equally to other books of the Bible, which were in fact written at a later date.

Such books of the Bible as Ezekiel, Daniel and partly also of Ezra and Nehemiah,

which were admittedly composed during and immediately after the exile, reveal in language and style such an unmistakable Babylonian influence that these newly entered foreign elements leap to the eye (A. S. Yahuda, *The Language of the Pentateuch in Its Relation to Egyptian*, p. xxix).

The Pentateuch, however, presents a totally different picture. The influence of the Babylonian language in the Pentateuch is so minute as to be negligible and what is there is extremely archaic, dating back to the time of Abraham. This, of course, is exactly what we would expect.

It is when we look for the Egyptian influence, however, that we begin to get the full picture. Yahuda finds even the early chapters of Genesis "full of Egyptian influence." For example, the word *tebah* is used for Noah's ark, and is an Egyptian word. It occurs twenty-six times in Genesis, twice in Exodus (dealing with the little ark that the baby Moses was hidden in) and nowhere else in

the Old Testament.

Pilster lists some of the more notable Egyptian words found in the Pentateuch. Read his conclusion:

These words alone (there appear to be others in the Pentateuch) show, firstly, a strong Egyptian influence upon the writer, which is adequately and best explained by his having been, although a Hebrew, instructed in Egyptian schools; in other words, they point to Moses; and secondly as they are words of everyday life—including a liquid and dry measure, and linen and woolen textiles—indicate strong and persistent Egyptian influence upon the common life of the Hebrews which admits of no explanation satisfactory as that of the sojourning of the Israelites in Egypt for a considerable period (W. T. Pilster, *The Pentateuch, A Historical Record*, pp. 506, 507).

This powerful Egyptian influence in the Pentateuch, which shows itself most distinctly in the Exodus, is unmistakable evidence of the Mosaic authorship of the

Pentateuch. Kyle says:

These words are of such unusual meaning and of such temporary use in Egypt, belong so peculiarly to the place and the times and are used with such absolute accuracy throughout the Pentateuch, that it is incredible that scribes of a late period in Israel's history could have attained to such a linguistic nicety. The passages in which these words occur must have come from the Mosaic age, the only age when some of them were employed in Egypt (M. G. Kyle, *The Deciding Voice of the Monuments in Biblical Criticism*, pp. 249, 250).

Finally, if, as the critical theory would have us to believe, the Pentateuch was of late origin and based on early myths and legends, we would expect the history and archaeology to be full of mistakes and anachronisms. This however, is not the case.

Then when the archaeological data of the Mosaic age are laid all along the course of the Pentateuchal narrative, it is found to be so uniformly harmonious with that narrative, with the customs, the institutions, the topography, the itineraries, and the history, as far as these are known, all the way from the shadows of Hebrew slavery in Egypt to ... the turning back from Kadesh-Barnea, as to make one marvel that different authors in different centuries should have been so uniformly successful in the representations of historical fiction (*ibid.*, p. 251).

And so in conclusion, everything in the Pentateuch is as it should be for Moses to be the author.

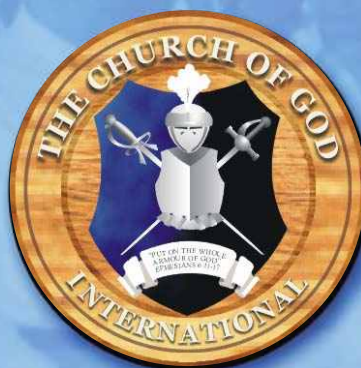
What Difference Does It Make?

Let's return to the original question. What difference does it make whether Moses wrote the Pentateuch? Why have the critics devoted so much time trying to prove that the Pentateuch was composed of documents written from about 750 B.C. onwards?

The answer is simple. Once we admit the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, it becomes impossible to deny the divine origin of the Law. The evolutionary concept of the development of Israel's religion requires a passage of time in which a law could evolve. The Law, they reason, therefore had to be the result of trial and error of a form of "natural selection."

No single living man in *any* given age of history could *possibly* have written such a Law. In this the critics are correct. *God*, not Moses, is the Author of the Law!

[The Good News of Tomorrow's World, February 1971] AG



The Church of God Meeting Schedule

The Church of God, International welcomes everyone who wishes to attend its weekly meetings. We encourage you to bring along your family and friends. Admittance is absolutely FREE. You can also avail of our literature which are FREE for the asking.

Our weekly meeting schedule are as follows:

1st Saturday of the month
2:00 to 4:00 pm
Lubang Function Room
Edsa Plaza Hotel

2nd to 4th Saturday of the month
10:00 am to 12:00 nn
6th Floor, Peaksun Building
1505 Princeton St., cor. Shaw Blvd.
Mandaluyong City, Metro Manila



These are days of the light, fast, easy things: days of hanging back, of non-involvement, of non-commitment, of (dare we say it?) getting lukewarm. Today we see quick marriages, easy divorces, and ready abortions. We even have “lite” snacks, Bud Lite...and, unfortunately, “Christianity-Lite” and “Church-Lite”!

We are to be lights in the world (Matthew 5:14), but we are not to make “light” of our Christianity. When we take our calling lightly, we are practicing, in effect, “Christianity-Lite”!

Recently my father died, and, as he lay dying, I was surrounded for three weeks by people I had not seen for years: relatives, old friends, church members, former members, and various ministers. For whatever reason, it seemed that I suddenly became fair game and a “lightning rod” for redress, correction, and evaluation. It became readily apparent that virtually all these well-meaning people had different sets of beliefs, although most professed to be “Christians.”

unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? How much more things that pertain to this life?” God’s Word tells us right from wrong and it is incumbent upon His saints to obey Him.

The practice of justifying one’s actions with a “Don’t judge me!” attitude is what is referred to as “Christianity-Lite” profession without commitment, belief without foundation, faith without works (James 2:20).

Following are a few of the many statements I heard at this time of duress. How would you answer them?

“There is no love in the Ten Commandments. I’ll argue that with anybody. The Old Testament is replaced by the New Covenant. The law was nailed to the cross” (this by a minister).

“I do not believe all the Bible is inspired. I never proved it. I felt as though I were brainwashed” (this by an ex-member).

“Buddhism has led me to Christ. Everyone knows Christ traveled through the

'Christianity-Lite'

“This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away” (2 Timothy 3:1).

I soon discovered that it is “OK” to profess Christianity...as long as you do not try to live it. If you live it, you are accused of “judging” the ones who do not. “We all worship God in our own way,” it is excused, “so we must not judge one another.” “Judge not, that ye be not judged” (Matthew 7:1) is quoted as a watershed for doing one’s own thing with a clear conscience. Although it is true that we are not to condemn as to anyone’s ultimate fate or their worthiness before God, we are, however, to discern, evaluate, and make determinations. First Corinthians 6:2,3 asks, “Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? And if the world shall be judged by you, are ye

East and appropriated the tenets of Buddha as His own” (proclaimed by a relative).

“The reason they kept the Sabbath, Holy Days, and dietary laws is that they were Jewish. We are not Jewish!” (this by a gainsayer).

“He is in heaven now smiling down at us. We need to live for him now” (from a stranger).

“Christmas is OK. God understands. Why, we’re not worshiping pagan gods. There is only one God; we all worship the same God no matter what you call Him” (spoken by a former member of God’s church).

And finally, “The Feast of Tabernacles re-established? Oh, God, I hope not!” (by a former member).

These statements are reproduced to arouse your awareness of a few of the attitudes that are extant. How would you have responded? Could you have answered these statements, and if not, why not?

Brethren, spiritually we are nearly alone out there! God's church is turning "gray." And unless we are able to pass the baton to a new, enthusiastic generation of Christians, we may be just one generation away from apostasy and darkness. When a man—a false prophet—appears and stands in the Holy Place, proclaiming that he is God and encourages men to take his mark, his name, or the number of his name, millions will follow (Revelation 13:16-18)! How can you know you will not be deceived?

Second Thessalonians 2:2-4 warns us "That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God" (cf. Revelation 17:16-18).

Christian, are you scripturally prepared to respond to questions like these, to answer those who may sincerely ask you? And to stop the mouths of skeptics and gainsayers at a moment's notice (Titus 1:9)? If not, why not?

First Peter 3:15 encourages us to "Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear."

We do not need Christianity-Lite or Church-Lite today! More than ever, we need "Christianity-Heavy," "Christianity-Substantial," with heartfelt church commitment. We must constantly stretch toward spiritual maturity—not maintain spiritual infancy (2 Peter 3:18).

While more and more in these last days are becoming mere Bible professors, God's people are to be Bible believers—and doers of the Word. Christ said, "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46). Again, He said, "Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Mark 7:7). It is not up to mankind to define sin. God's Word tells us what sin is—"the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4)—it is up to us whether we will obey or disobey.

Could you prove to a trinitarian from the Bible that God is not a trinity? (*Write for the free booklet, Who, What, Is God?*)

Can you explain from the Scriptures that we do not go to heaven when we die, and show the true state of the dead? (*See the article, Immortality-God's Gift to the Saints.*)

Can you show that we are not "born again" now? (*Write for the free booklet, Born From Above-or Born Again?*)

Are you able to go through your Bible from beginning to end and show that God's people are to keep God's Sabbath and Holy Days? (*Write for Sunday, Saturday—What Difference Does It Make?*)

If not, why not?

Can you explain these things, and others, from your own Bible, or do you feel you may be stepping onto a spiritual land mine? Beware! Until you know a thing well enough that you can teach it to

polite about it. A simple "Get thee hence!" will do (Matthew 4:10). Far too many Christian soldiers have fallen because they did not heed this plain and simple admonition!

Christ said, in Luke 18:8, "Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?" Think. Why would He have asked that if there were not some possibility of its coming to pass?

Let us return to the basics. Get back into the Word of God; back into our church literature that expounds it; back into true Christian fellowship. We need to put on the whole armor of God (Ephesians 6:11) and fight the good fight. We need to know and know that we know! (*Be sure to write for our free booklet, How to Study Your Bible, to get started or to renew your commitment.*)

We need "Christianity-Substantial" in these last days—weighty, unwavering, and intense. We need committed Bible reading, Bible study, prayer, and

Are you scripturally prepared to respond to questions like these, to answer those who may sincerely ask you? And to stop the mouths of skeptics and gainsayers at a moment's notice?

others, you do not know it well enough yourself (Hebrews 5:12)! We desperately need to get back to the basics (Jude 3)!

Too often we become so "familiar" with the basics that we become "bored" with them and our ears itch for some new thing (2 Timothy 4:3). Too many have thought that they knew the basics well enough to "dabble" in strange doctrines with immunity and found out the hard way that they did not know them nearly as well as they thought they did. (In this vein, study Matthew 24:4,24; Acts 20:30; 2 Corinthians 11:13-15; Ephesians 4:14; 1 Timothy 4:1; and Hebrews 13:9). We need to prove—and reprove—what we think we know (1 Thessalonians 5:21)!

The doctrine of a progressive revelation after the apostles is not found in the New Testament. We are to defend the faith once delivered with all the strength we can muster, both by true doctrine and good example of life. Second John 10 warns us, "If there come any unto you" whether it be a friend, gainsayer, minister, or "an angel from heaven" (Galatians 1:8) "and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house" into your mind "neither bid him God speed." In other words, you do not even need to be politically correct or

meditation—not Laodicean "Christianity-Lite" (Revelation 3:16)! Matthew 6:33 exhorts us, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." There is nothing more awesome or important than your own salvation. We are encouraged in Philippians 2:12 to "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8). When—not if—satanic attack comes in any of its many disguised forms, will you be found wearing the whole armor of God? Or will you become another spiritual casualty?

"Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not" (Luke 12:40). When the King of Glory comes again, will you be practicing "Christianity-Lite," or will you be ready?

All Scripture quotations were taken from the King James Version. This article is adapted from a sermonette delivered by the writer at this year's Feast of Tabernacles in Land Between the Lakes, Kentucky. AG

Here's Why the Critics Can't Ignore the Prophets

continued from page 14

fulfilled before their eyes. The prophecies of chapters 2, 7 and 8 were proving to be absolutely accurate. The Babylonian Empire was succeeded by the Medo-Persian Empire, which was in turn conquered by Alexander.

When Alexander came to Jerusalem, we are told:

He went up to the temple, where He sacrificed to God under the direction of the high priest, and showed due honor to the priests and to the high priest himself. And, when the book of Daniel was shown to him, in which he had declared that one of the Greeks would destroy the empire of the Persians, he believed himself to be the one indicated (Josephus, *Antiquities*, XI, viii, 5).

With Alexander's rise to power at such a young age and his unbelievable march across the civilized world, it must have seemed impossible to those who were holding the book of Daniel that his kingdom could be broken at its peak of strength as Daniel had prophesied (chapter 8:8). Yet it happened! Not only was his empire broken, but it was later—as Daniel had said—divided into four primary divisions.

Daniel's Prophecy for Rome

A person living at the time of the degeneration of these four kingdoms and the rise of Rome in the west could—if we allow our imaginations to be stretched—have forecasted what was about to take place. This, of course, is what the critics believe a pseudo-Daniel did about 175 B.C. A man could—at that point in time—have possibly predicted that Rome would become the fourth great world empire. What a man could not have predicted at that time, was that Rome would be the last!

But Daniel did.

And he did not stop there. He went on to describe the nature of the Roman Empire: what it would be like, how it would develop, predicting that the Roman Empire would endure incredibly—being “resurrected” many times rather than being replaced, as the pattern of world history up to that point had been!

And finally, as incredible as it may sound, what it would do before the returning, conquering Creator God would destroy it!

The story is worth reading.

It would have been logical in 175 B.C. to look at the lesson of history and thereby assume that Rome was going to be just like all the rest—another fighting, conquering, pillaging, destroying world empire. Daniel, however, emphasizes that this fourth kingdom would be different from all the kingdoms before it (Dan. 7:7, 19, 23).

The unique strength of Rome, its terrifying nature, its twofold division, and its later history are all foretold by Daniel with stunning accuracy. So are the successive revivals—and a final union of ten European kings prophesied to destroy the English-speaking peoples in this generation.

How could a “pious fraud” have foretold the future beyond the latest dates given by the critics?

Or beyond today's date? Daniel's prophecy is alive in today's headlines—and tomorrow's! Using the critics historical approach to Daniel for a moment, we would have to again humorously conclude that his book is not yet written!

One Isaiah, Two Isaiah, Three Isaiah, Four ...

Isaiah is dated by Isaiah himself between 760 and 695 B.C. Notwithstanding, and as we might expect, critics have attempted to alter these dates by as much as 300 years. One even went so far as to place Isaiah in the first century B.C.—but was rather embarrassed when archaeologists discovered a complete scroll of Isaiah, copied and preserved, dated in the second century! 25 B.C.

When we examine the reasons for the difficulties that critics have with Isaiah, we find the same answer that we found for Ezekiel and Daniel—Isaiah is just a little too accurate for their materialistic tastes.

But with Isaiah, the problem could not be solved by merely pushing the date forward. The critics had to dissect the book—and have it attributed to the fraudulent writings of between two and five authors!

Jewish tradition informs us that King Manasseh of Judah had Isaiah sawn in two—the New Testament book of Hebrews alludes to this (Hebrews 11:37). But today's “higher critics” have butchered him into five pieces!

Why were two to five fictitious authors needed by the critics? To understand, we must return to the

“fundamental axiom of criticism.”

Having decided that a prophet cannot foretell the future, it is essential for the critics that the “pseudo-author” be writing for his own generation. When we have begun with this assumption, it is only natural to look to history for a historical context into which each prophet can be fit. What is strange about Isaiah, however, is that *there is no historical situation into which Isaiah AS A WHOLE can be squeezed!*

So there's only one “solution.” Isaiah must be “sawn asunder [a second time...]”

Critics With Saw in Hand ...

According to some, “the conversion of the heathen” lay quite beyond the horizon of any eighth century prophet; consequently, Isaiah 2:2-4 and all similar passages which foretell the conversion of those outside the chosen people are to be relegated to an age subsequent to Isaiah (George L. Robinson, “Isaiah,” *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, p. 1505).

Other ideas which are supposed to be “beyond the horizon” of Isaiah are those of “universal peace,” “universal judgment,” “the Apocalyptic character of chapters 24-27,” “the return from captivity,” and even the poetic character of some passages. All this, according to critics, means that Isaiah couldn't have written the entire book.

The question we have faced in Ezekiel, Daniel and now in Isaiah is whether their prophecies were dreamed up by “religious geniuses,” or whether they were inspired by God. The only evidence advanced by the critics to prove a later date for these prophets is the prejudicial “evidence” actually circular reasoning—that no man could have written the prophecies when these men said they did.

That isn't proof!

That's begging the question! We all agree that that concept of the “conversion of the heathen” might have lain completely “beyond the horizons of any eighth-century prophet.” But it doesn't lie beyond the horizons of God, nor does it lie beyond the ability of God to convey His concept to a prophet who otherwise could never have understood it! (See II Peter 1:21 and I Cor. 2:9-10.)

Now, what shred of evidence have the critics mustered up to indicate that Isaiah may have been written by more than one prophet?

All their hopes are placed in the one basket of literary criticism. A “first Isaiah” is supposedly distinguished from a “second Isaiah” (and a “second” from a “third”) solely on the basis of change in writing style.

But the real crux of the matter is not writing style. Nothing definite can be determined by counting particles, articles, conjunctions, or any other “characteristic traits” of a man’s writing. The fact of the matter is that an accomplished author’s writing style should and will change through the years—so any evidence based upon writing style is tenuous at best. (Modern computer-based literary analysis has claimed that Paul wrote [only] five of his 14 epistles, that Ian Fleming didn’t write James Bond, and that the works of Graham Greene and G. K. Chesterton had “more than one author.”)

Obviously, literary analysis of writing style completely fails to take into account the possibility of a purposeful change in form of the literature in question—i.e., a switch from a prose to poetry, or a switch from one form of poetry to another (in which the writer uses or omits words for the sake of euphony, rhythm, etc.).

The critics must face their own motivations.

The real criteria for breaking Isaiah down into sections are the prophecies themselves. No man could have written them as “prophecies.” And any man who wrote them as “histories” would have had to be present in several eras of Israel’s history.

Which might be possible for a tree—but not for a man.

Ageless Test of Prophecy

Another reason for the critics’ confusion in the prophetic books of the Bible is their failure to understand the simple principle of duality in prophecy.

In the 40th and 41st chapters of Isaiah, God is challenging Israel to prove their idols and false gods. The test He proposes is one of prophecy—foretelling the future. In the process of challenging the idols to prove that they are indeed real gods, an important principle of prophecy is expressed:

Produce your cause, saith the Lord; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob. Let them bring forth, and shew us what shall *happen* [in the future]: let them shew the *former* things [fulfilled

prophecy], what they be, that we may consider them, and know the *latter end* of them; or declare us things for to come (Isaiah 41:21, 22).

This is something which God does repeatedly in prophecy. In preparing to give us the understanding of the latter end of a thing, He gives us a prophecy which will have *two* fulfillments. The former is *not* the *primary purpose* of the prophecy, but is merely a “type” a model which we can examine to understand the latter fulfillment. It is this latter fulfillment the “antitype” which, being far more comprehensive in its scope, is the main goal of the original prophecy.

Isaiah’s prophecies are this way and Isaiah himself knew it. He not only understood that prophecy was dual, but he understood *why* it was dual. It was not merely to help us understand the latter end of these prophecies it was also to *confound and confuse the skeptics*. [In so doing, God is able to prove that He is indeed God by making come to pass what He declared not only once, but TWICE to send a message that HE is doing it and not just mere “coincidence...” Some prophecies are corrective in nature, meaning God is punishing the nation or an individual for disobedience. A prior fulfillment serves as a warning that a second one is forthcoming, greater and more severe, if the nation or individual continues to disobey God!]

In Isaiah 28:9, Isaiah asks: “Whom shall he teach knowledge? And whom shall he make to understand doctrine? Them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts.” The spiritually immature will not understand. Isaiah goes on to say:

For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little... that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken (Isaiah 28:9-13).

God did not intend for scornful men to fully comprehend His Truth. Therefore, the prophecies of God are *purposely NOT* laid out in a simple, straightforward manner but are found “here a little and there a little.” And they are *dual* and it takes a *mind imbued with spiritual discernment to understand* (I Cor. 2:12-14). (Christ used the same technique when teaching in parables; parables were designed to *hide* the meaning; see Matthew 13:10-17.)

The critics only confound themselves, because it is utterly

impossible to confine Isaiah’s prophecy to any one historical context. The prophecies are deliberately *dual* and are obviously intended for people of *other* ages.

When the facts are considered, the criticism leveled at *all* the prophets becomes *transparent*. The critics have neither correctly evaluated the evidence nor logically combined it. They have started with an assumption that the authors of the prophets were completely of no divine inspiration. From this point on, all criticism degenerates into a simple effort to explain away the fact that God’s prophets foretell the future with stunning accuracy.

But why should anyone want to be rid of the prophet?

Paul characterized a group of men who seemed to want to get rid of God. Perhaps there’s a comparison [or similarity]:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress {marginal reading} the truth in unrighteousness ... because that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools... and even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind... (Romans 1:18-28).

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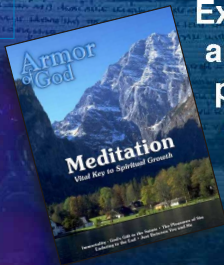
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