The Inspiration of the Bible

What Jesus said of Scripture and the nature of apostolic teaching are two of the main issues in Rick Wade's examination of the inspiration of Scripture.

A question we often encounter when talking with non-believers about Christ is, "Why should I believe the Bible?" Or a person might say, "You have your Bible; Muslims have their Koran; different religions have their own holy books. What makes yours special?" How would you answer such questions?



These questions fall under the purview of apologetics. They call for a defense. However, before giving a defense we need theological and biblical grounding. To defend the Bible, we have to know what it is.

In this article, then, we'll deal with the nature of Scripture. Are these writings simply the remembrances of two religious groups? Are they writings consisting of ideas conceived by Jews and early Christians as they sought to establish their religion? Or are they the words of God Himself, given to us for our benefit?

The latter position is the one held by the people of God throughout history. Christians have historically accepted both the Old and New Testaments as God's word written. But two movements of thought have undermined belief in inspiration. One was the higher critical movement that reduced Scripture to simply the recollections and ideas of a religious group. The more recent movement (although it really isn't organized enough to call it a "movement") is religious pluralism, which holds that all religions—or at least the major ones—are equally valid, meaning that none is more true than others. If

other religions are equally valid, then other holy books are also. Many Christian young people think this way.

Our evaluation of the Bible and other "holy books" is governed by the recognition that the Bible is the inspired word of God. If God's final word is found in what we call the Bible, then no other book can be God's word. To differ with what the Bible says is to differ with God.

What do we mean by *inspiration*? Following the work of the higher critics, many people—even within the church—have come to see the Bible as inspired in the same way that, say, an artist might be inspired. The artist sees the Grand Canyon and with her imagination now flooded with images and ideas hurries back to her canvas to paint a beautiful picture. A poet, upon viewing the devastation of war, proceeds to pen lines which stir the compassion of readers. Is that what we mean when we say the Bible is inspired?

We use the word *inspiration* because of 2 Timothy 3:16: "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness." *Inspired* is translated from the Greek word *theopnuestos* which literally means "God-breathed." Some have said the word could be translated "ex-spired" or "breathed out." *Inspiration*, then, in the biblical sense, isn't the stirring of the imagination of the writer, but rather is the means by which the writers accurately wrote what God wanted written.

This idea finds support in 2 Peter 1: 20-21: "But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God."

What we need before proceeding is a working definition of inspiration. Theologian Carl F. H. Henry writes, "Inspiration

is a supernatural influence upon the divinely chosen prophets and apostles whereby the Spirit of God assures the truth and trustworthiness of their oral and written proclamation."{1} Furthermore, the writers were "divinely superintended by the Holy Spirit in the choice of words they used."{2} Although some things were dictated to the writers, most of the time the Spirit simply superintended the writing so that the writer, using his own words, wrote what the Spirit wanted.

The Historical View of the Church

The first place to look in establishing any doctrine is, of course, the Bible. Before turning to Scripture to see what it claims for itself, however, it will be worthwhile to be sure this has been the view of the church throughout history. Because of the objections of liberal scholars, we might want to see whose position is in keeping with our predecessors in the faith.

Historically, the church has consistently held to the inspiration of Scripture, at least until the 19th century. One scholar has said that throughout the first eight centuries of the church, "Hardly is there a single point with regard to which there reigned . . . a greater or more cordial unanimity."{3} The great Princeton theologian B. B. Warfield said, "Christendom has always reposed upon the belief that the utterances of this book are properly oracles of God."{4} In the 16th century, the Reformers Martin Luther and John Calvin were explicit in their recognition of the divine source and authority of Scripture.{5} B. B. Warfield, Charles Hodge, J. Gresham Machen, Carl F. H. Henry, J. I. Packer and other very reputable scholars and theologians over the last century and a half have argued forcefully for the inspiration of Scripture. And as Warfield notes, this belief underlies all the creeds of the church as well.{6}

The Witness of the Old Testament

Let's turn now to the Bible itself, beginning with the Old Testament, to see whether its own claims match the beliefs of the church.

The clear intent of the Old Testament writers was to convey God's message. Consider first that God was said to *speak* to the people. "God says" (Deut. 5:27), "Thus says the Lord" (Exod. 4:22), "I have put my words in your mouth" (Jer. 1:9), "The word of the Lord came to him" (Gen. 15:4; 1 Kings 17:8). All these references to God speaking show that He is interested in communicating with us verbally. The Old Testament explicitly states 3,808 times that it is conveying the express words of God.{7}

Furthermore, God was so interested in people preserving and knowing His word that at times He told people to write down what He said. We read in Exodus 17:14: "Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Write this in a book as a memorial and recite it to Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven.'" (See also 24:3-7, 34:27; Jer. 30:2; 36:2.)

The clear testimony of Old Testament writings is that God spoke to people, and He instructed them to write down the things He said. These writings have been handed down to us.

Of course, we shouldn't think of all the Old Testament—or the New Testament either—as having been dictated to the writers. In fact, most of the Bible was not. What we want to establish here is that God is a communicating God, and He communicates verbally. The idea that God is somehow unable or unwilling to communicate propositionally to man—which is what a number of scholars of this century continue to hold—is foreign to the Old Testament. God spoke, and the people heard and understood.

We should now shift to the New Testament to see what it says about inspiration. Let's begin with the testimony of Jesus.

The Witness of Jesus

Did Jesus believe in the doctrine of inspiration?

It is clear that Jesus acknowledged the Old Testament writings as being divine in nature. Consider John 10:34-36: “Jesus answered them, ‘Is it not written in your Law, “I have said you are gods”? If he called them “gods” to whom the word of God came—and the Scripture cannot be broken—what about the one whom the Father set apart as his very own and sent into the world?’” Jesus believed it was *God’s* word that came to the prophets of old, and He referred to it as Scripture that could not be broken. In Matt. 5:17-19, He affirmed the Law as being fixed and above the whims of men.

Jesus drew on the teachings of the Old Testament in His encounter with Satan (Matt. 4:1-11). His responses, “Man shall not live on bread alone” (Deut. 8:3), “You shall worship the Lord your God and serve Him only” (Deut. 6:13), and “You shall not put the Lord your God to the test” (Deut. 6:16) are all drawn from Deuteronomy. Each statement was prefaced by “It is written” or “It is said.” Jesus said that he only spoke what the Father wanted Him to (John 12:49). By quoting these passages as authoritative over Satan, He was, in effect, saying these were God’s words. He also honored the words of Moses (Mark 7:10), Isaiah (Mark 7:6), David (Mark 12:36), and Daniel (Matt. 24:15) as authoritative, as carrying the weight of God’s words.{8} Jesus even referred to an Old Testament writing as God’s word when this wasn’t explicitly attributed to God in the Old Testament itself (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:4,5).

In our consideration of the position of Jesus on the nature of Scripture, we also need to look at His view of the New Testament. But one might ask, “It hadn’t been written yet, how could Jesus be cited in support of the inspiration of the New Testament?

To get a clear picture of this we need to realize what Jesus

was doing with His apostles. His small group of twelve was being trained to carry on the witness and work of Jesus after He was gone. They were given a place of special importance in the furthering of His work (Mark 3:14-15). Thus, He taught them with clarity while often teaching the crowds in parables (Mark 4:34). He sent them as the Father had sent Him (John 20:21) so they would be witnesses of "all these things" (Luke 24:48). Both the Spirit and the apostles would be witnesses for Christ (John 15:26ff; cf. Acts 5:32). He promised to send the Spirit to help them when He left. They would be empowered to bear witness (Acts. 1:4,5,8). The Spirit would give them the right things to say when brought to trial (Matt. 10:19ff). He would remind them of what Jesus had said (John 14:26) and would give them new knowledge (John 16:12ff). As John Wenham said, "The last two promises . . . do not of course refer specifically or exclusively to the inspiration of a New Testament Canon, but they provide in principle all that is required for the formation of such a Canon, should that be God's purpose."{9}

Thus, Jesus didn't identify a specific body of literature as the New Testament or state specifically that one would be written. However, He prepared the apostles as His special agents to hand down the truths He taught, and He promised assistance in doing this. Given God's work in establishing the Old Testament and Jesus' references to the written word in His own teaching, it is entirely reasonable that He had plans for His apostles to put in writing the message of good news He brought.

The Witness of the Apostles

Finally, we need to see what the apostles tell us about the nature of Scripture. To understand their position, we'll need to not only see what they *said* about Scripture, but also understand what it meant to be an apostle.

The office of apostle grew out of Jewish jurisprudence wherein a *sjaliach* ("one who is sent out") could appear in the name of another with the authority of that other person. It was said that "the *sjaliach* for a person is as this person himself."{10} As Christ's representatives the apostles (*apostle* also means "sent out") carried forth the teaching they had received. "This apostolic preaching is the foundation of the Church, to which the Church is bound" (Matt. 16:18; Eph. 2:20).{11} The apostles had been authorized by Jesus as special ambassadors to teach what he had taught them (cf. John 20:21). Their message was authoritative when spoken; when written it would be authoritative as well.

As the apostles were *witnesses* of the gospel they also were bearers of *tradition*. This isn't "tradition" in the contemporary sense by which we mean that which comes from man and may be changed. *Tradition* in the Hebrew understanding meant "what has been handed down with authority."{12} This is what Paul referred to when he praised the Corinthians for holding to the traditions they had been taught and exhorted the Thessalonians to do the same (1 Cor. 11:2; 2 Thess. 2:15). Contrast this with the tradition of men which drew criticism from Jesus (Mark 7:8).

Paul attributed what he taught directly to Christ (2 Cor. 13:3). He identified his gospel with the preaching of Jesus (Rom. 16:25). And he said his words were taught by the Spirit (1 Cor. 2:13). What he wrote to the Corinthians was "the Lord's commandment" (1 Cor. 14:37). Furthermore, Paul, and John as well, considered their writings important enough to call for people to read them (Col. 4:16; 1 Thess. 5:27; John 20:31; Rev. 1:3). Peter put the apostolic message on par with the writings of the Old Testament prophets (2 Pet. 3:2).

What was the nature of Scripture according to the apostles? Many if not most Christians are familiar with 2 Timothy 3:16: "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness."

This is the verse most often cited in support of the doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture. Paul was speaking primarily of the Old Testament in this passage. The idea of God "breathing out" or speaking wasn't new to Paul, however, because he knew the Old Testament well, and there he could read that "the 'mouth' of God was regarded as the source from which the Divine message came."{13}Isaiah 45:23 says, "I have sworn by Myself, The word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness and will not turn back" (see also 55:11). Paul also would have known that Jesus quoted Deuteronomy when He replied to the tempter, "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4; cf. Deut. 8:3).

Peter also taught that the Scriptures were, in effect, the speech of God. In 2 Peter 1: 20-21, he noted that prophecy was made by "men moved by the Holy Spirit [who] spoke from God." It didn't originate in men.

One further note. The Greek word *graphe* in the New Testament only refers to sacred Scriptures. This is the word used in 1 Timothy 5:18 and 2 Peter 3:16 to refer to the writings of the apostles.

The apostles thus were the ambassadors of Christ who spoke in His stead and delivered the message which was the standard for belief and practice. They had both their own recollections of what they witnessed and heard and the empowerment of the Spirit. The message they preached was the one they wrote down. The New Testament, like the Old, claims very clearly to be the inspired word of God.

Making a Defense

We now come to a very important part in our discussion of the inspiration of Scripture. It's one thing to establish the biblical teaching on the nature of the Bible itself. It's

quite another to give a defense to critics.

As I noted earlier, we frequently hear questions such as “Many religions have their own holy books. Why should we believe the Bible is special?”

When this objection comes from someone who holds to religious pluralism, before answering the question about the Bible we will have to question him on the reasonableness of pluralism itself. No amount of evidences or arguments for the Bible will make a bit of difference if the person believes that there is no right or wrong when it comes to religion.{14}

It’s easy for apologists to come to rely primarily on their arguments when responding to critics, which is something even Paul wouldn’t do (1 Cor. 2:3-5). What we learn from Scripture is the power of Scripture itself. “For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword,” Hebrews says (4:12). Isaiah 55:11 says that God’s word will accomplish his will. In Acts 2:37 we see the results of the proclamation of the word of God in changed people.

So, where am I going with this? I wonder how many people who object to our insistence that our “holy book” is the only true word of God have ever read any of it! Before we launch into a lengthy apologetic for Scripture, it might be good to get them to read it and let the Spirit open their minds to see its truth (1 Cor. 2:6-16).

Am I tossing out the entire apologetics enterprise and saying, “Look, just read the Bible and don’t ask so many questions”? No. I’m simply trying to move the conversation to more fruitful ground. Once the person learns what the Bible says, he can ask specific questions about its content, or we can ask him what about it makes him think it might *not* be God’s word.

The Bible clearly claims to be the authoritative word of God, and as such it makes demands on us. So, at least the *tone* of Scripture is what we might expect of a book with God as its

source. But does it give evidence that it *must* have God as its source? And does its self-witness find confirmation in our experience?

Regarding the necessity of having God as its source, we can consider prophecy. Who else but God could know what would happen hundreds of years in the future? What mere human could get 300 prophecies correct about one person (Jesus)?{15}

The Bible's insight into human nature and the solutions it provides to our fallen condition are also evidence of its divine source. In addition, the Bible's honesty about the weaknesses of even its heroes is evidence that it isn't just a human book. By contrast, we tend to build ourselves up in our own writing.

As further evidence that the Bible is God's word, we can note its survival and influence throughout the last two millennia despite repeated attempts to destroy it.

What Scripture proclaims about itself finds confirmation in our experience. For example, the practical changes it brings in individuals and societies are evidence that it is true.

One more note. We have the testimony of Jesus about Scripture whose resurrection is evidence that He knew what He was talking about!

In sum, the testimony of Scripture to its own nature finds confirmation in many areas.{16} Even with all this evidence, however, we aren't going to be able to prove the inspiration of the Bible to anyone who either isn't interested enough to give it serious thought or to the critic who only wants to argue. But we can share its message, make attempts at gentle persuasion and answer questions as we wait for the Spirit to open the person's mind and heart.

Notes

1. Carl F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority,* vol. 4, *The God Who Speaks and Shows* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1979), 129.
2. Class notes, *Introduction to Theology*, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, May 4, 1987. See also Warfield cited in Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority,* 4:141.
3. L. Gaussen, *The Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1949), 145. See the entire section, pp. 145-152.
4. Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1948), 107.
5. Warfield, 108-09.
6. Ibid., 110-11.
7. René Pache, *The Inspiration and Authority of Scripture* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1969), 81.
8.John W. Wenham, *Christ and the Bible* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1972), 24.
9. Wenham, 113.
10. Edward J. Young, *Thy Word is Truth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), 21.
11.Ibid.
12. Herman Ridderbos, "The Canon of the New Testament," in *Revelation and the Bible*, ed. Carl F. H. Henry ;(Grand Rapids: Baker, 1958), 192, 193.
13.Ibid., 193.
14. For help in dealing with relativism and religious pluralism, see these other Probe articles: Don Closson, How Do You Spell Truth? and Rick Rood, Do All Roads Lead to God? The Christian Attitude Toward Non-Christian Religions.
15. Josh McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, rev. ed. (San Bernardino, Ca.: Here's Life Publishers, ;1979), 144.
16. See Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Christian Evidences* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1953), esp. chaps. 8 and 9.

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Tradition and Scripture

While many evangelical Christians treat tradition with suspicion if not hostility, Dr. Michael Gleghorn makes a case for the value of tradition in understanding and supporting our faith.

Understanding Tradition

In this article we'll be thinking about tradition and its relationship to Scripture. Now I realize that some of you may already be asking, "Tradition! Can anything good come from there?" The answer of course is "yes"—for if it were not, then I wouldn't bother writing about it. Indeed, it's actually an important topic to address, for in our day many evangelicals seem to harbor an attitude of suspicion—if not outright hostility—toward the very notion of tradition.{1} In support of this attitude, some might point to what Jesus said to the religious leaders of his day: "You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions" (Mark 7:9 NIV). And if this is what Jesus said, then aren't we better off to simply dismiss tradition and focus solely on the teaching of Scripture?



Before we jump to that conclusion, we must first determine what we mean when we use the word "tradition." After all, in other passages Scripture speaks very favorably of tradition. Paul told the Corinthians, "Now I praise you because you . . . hold firmly to the traditions, just as I delivered them to you" (1 Cor. 11:2 NASB). Traditions, it seems, can sometimes be good—and sometimes bad. And this is

true even of the *Christian* tradition. But in order to talk intelligently about our subject, we must first understand precisely what we're talking about. What, then, is the meaning of "tradition"?

When theologians speak about the Christian tradition, they are typically referring to the ways in which the faith has been understood by previous generations of Christians. For example, what understanding did our Christian forbears have of worship and theology, and how did they express their understanding through creeds, confessions, sermons, and books? Stanley Grenz and John Franke describe the Christian tradition "as the history of the interpretation and application of canonical scripture by the Christian community, the church, as it listens to the voice of the Spirit speaking through the text."{2} And Richard Lints describes it as "the faith transmitted by the community of interpreters that has preceded us."{3}

Defined in this way, we must candidly admit that the Christian faith has been understood somewhat differently from one time and place to another. How are we to think about such differences? Should they always be viewed negatively, as a corruption of the original faith deposit? Or might they sometimes be seen as a positive and healthy development of this deposit?

Tradition: A Metaphor

In a fascinating discussion of these issues, Colin Gunton asks us to think of tradition as an organism.{4} He notes that just as a child or plant may grow larger and stronger over time, so too the content of Christian doctrine can become more elaborate and enriched with the passage of time. He then observes, "If revelation is something given in the beginning—as undoubtedly one dimension of it is, the faith once for all delivered to the saints—then it may be argued

that through tradition what began as a seed or a seedling is enabled to expand without falsifying its beginnings."{5} This comment helps us see the interconnectedness of tradition and revelation—an issue which we will return to later.

For now, it's important to notice what this metaphor does for us. It enables us to see tradition, like the growth of a child or a plant, as something *natural* and *healthy*—indeed, something to be *hoped for, encouraged,* and *expected*. This is an important reminder for those of us who might be tempted to view tradition solely in negative terms.

At the same time, however, Gunton is aware that things can always go wrong. He writes, "The organism might become diseased, and require surgery; or it might simply grow too many branches, or branches in the wrong places, and require pruning."{6} In this case, instead of the tradition developing in a natural and healthy way from the original revelation, it develops in an unnatural and unhealthy way. We might identify this latter situation with the unpleasant possibility of heresy—something which needs to be corrected or even surgically removed so that the organism doesn't die or mutate into a completely different, unrelated life-form. If that were to happen, then while we might still have tradition of a sort, it could no longer be properly thought of as *Christian* tradition.{7} It will be helpful for us to keep this metaphor in mind as we continue to reflect on the role of tradition and its relationship to Scripture, particularly because we must now deal with a problem that this discussion inevitably raises.

Scripture and Tradition: A Problem

Stanley Grenz and John Franke view tradition as a "source or resource" of the Christian church, which can aid in the church's task of both theological construction and lived performance.{8} Some of the specific elements of the Christian

tradition which they see as especially valuable in informing how we accomplish these tasks are the histories of worship, liturgy, and theology, as well as the "classic" theological formulations of the church, such as creeds and confessions. Of course, they are careful to point out that while these resources are extremely valuable, they "must always and continually be tested by the norm of canonical scripture."{9}

In a similar way, Richard Lints describes the "goal of theology" as bringing "the biblical revelation into a position of judgment on all of life," including tradition.{10} But this raises a bit of a problem, for in order to bring tradition under the authority of Scripture, Scripture must first be interpreted. And many scholars maintain that the Christian tradition primarily consists of the scriptural interpretation and application of faith communities from the past. Indeed, this is basically how Lints himself defines the term. "In the discussion that follows," he says, "*tradition* will signify the faith transmitted by the community of interpreters that has preceded us."{11}

Moreover, Lints rightly believes that we neglect this tradition at our peril. For in banishing past interpretations of Scripture from our present consideration in doing theology, we can easily become ensnared "in a web of subjectivism" regarding our own interpretation of the Bible.{12} And this would be an incalculable loss to the church in her ongoing task of preaching and teaching the Bible. The fact of the matter is that these past interpretations are a necessary aid, both in revealing our own biases and blind spots, and in helping us avoid "what C. S. Lewis aptly called 'chronological snobbery'—the conceit that we are necessarily wiser than our forbears."{13}

But this leads to the following problem: If Scripture is to be brought into a position of judgment over all of life (including the Christian tradition), it must first be properly interpreted. But it would be irresponsible to engage in this

interpretative task without the aid of the very tradition of past interpretation over which Scripture is to sit in judgment. How can this difficulty be resolved? Does Scripture occupy a place of authority over tradition, or does tradition rather occupy a place of authority over Scripture?

Scripture and Tradition: A Solution

Before we attempt to respond to this question, we should first take time to remember just how it was that Scripture came into being in the first place. As Grenz and Franke remind us,

> [T]he community precedes the production of the scriptural texts and is responsible for their content and for the identification of particular texts for inclusion in an authoritative canon to which it has chosen to make itself accountable. Apart from the Christian community, the texts would not have taken their particular and distinctive shape. Apart from the authority of the Christian community, there would be no canon of authorized texts. In short, apart from the Christian community the Christian Bible would not exist.{14}

It might now be interesting to ask what the Christian community and the Christian Bible have in common. According to Grenz and Franke, it is the work of the Holy Spirit—a work that grants to each one its respective authority. They write,

> In this conception, the authority of both scripture and tradition is ultimately an authority derived from the work of the Spirit. Each is part of an organic unity, so that even though scripture and tradition are distinguishable, they are fundamentally inseparable. . . . The authority of each—tradition as well as scripture—is contingent on the work of the Spirit, and both scripture and tradition are fundamental components within an interrelated web of beliefs that constitutes the Christian faith. To misconstrue the

> shape of this relationship by setting scripture over against tradition or by elevating tradition above scripture is to fail to comprehend properly the work of the Spirit.{15}

Does this mean, then, that there is no sense in which all of life (including tradition) should be brought under the judgment of Scripture? This does not seem to be what Grenz and Franke are saying. Although they do contend that the triune God "is disclosed in polyphonic fashion through scripture, the church, and even the world," they then qualify this by noting, "albeit always normatively through scripture."{16} In their view, Scripture is still theology's "norming norm," but since Scripture must always be interpreted, it cannot be easily separated from tradition. Scripture still holds the place of prominence in doing theology, but in a carefully nuanced and qualified way that gives appropriate weight to God's other mediums of revelation, such as tradition, creation, and the church.

Tradition in Scripture and Theology

In one of his 1993 Warfield Lectures, the late Colin Gunton observed that two of the narrative sections in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians contain possibly the most easily recognizable accounts of "the working of tradition in the New Testament."{17} In both 1 Corinthians 11, where Paul discusses the Lord's Supper, and 1 Corinthians 15, where he refers to Jesus' death and resurrection as the heart of the gospel, Paul specifically declares that he is delivering to the Corinthians certain traditions about Jesus which he himself had previously received. In other words, the biblical writings themselves are seen to be "part of a tradition of interpretation of that which is in certain respects prior to them."{18}

The unique revelation of God in the person of Jesus Christ is *prior* to the traditions about Him which Paul had received. And the traditions which Paul had received, including the meaning

given them by the early church and Paul himself, are also *prior* to his deliverance of them to the Corinthians (as well as those of us who have subsequently read this letter). Tradition, it seems, cannot always be so easily separated from the Bible itself.

Of course, very few Christians would disagree that traditions like those passed on by the Apostle Paul to the Corinthians are "authoritative for the faith and life of the church."{19} The problem rather arises with how the original revelation "is interpreted and handed on by those who follow the . . . apostles: the way in which revelation is mediated by tradition."{20} How should we understand this relationship?

For one thing, we should probably grant a certain degree of freedom, in response to the Spirit's guidance, to the way in which the tradition is articulated in different cultural and historical contexts. This allows the tradition to grow in a healthy way which, at the same time, is still amenable to correction when necessary. Granted, we are speaking of the development of tradition in something like an ideal setting, and the world in which we now live is certainly not ideal. But if tradition is one of the means which God has chosen for mediating revelation from one generation to another, then for better or worse, it will (and should) continue to play an important role in the life of the church. As Gunton wisely concludes, "although we may and must be critical of tradition, as the action of fallible and sinful human beings, we may not lay aside the means which God has himself chosen."{21}

Notes

1. Stanley J. Grenz and John R. Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 109.
2. Ibid., 118.
3. Richard Lints, *The Fabric of Theology: A Prolegomenon to Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1993),

84.
4. Colin E. Gunton, *A Brief Theology of Revelation* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), 85-87.
5. Ibid., 85.
6. Ibid., 86.
7. Ibid., 87.
8. Grenz and Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 120-29.
9. Ibid., 124.
10. Lints, *The Fabric of Theology*, 82.
11. Ibid., 84.
12. Ibid., 93.
13. Ibid., 96.
14. Grenz and Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 115.
15. Ibid., 117.
16. Ibid., 117-18.
17. Gunton, *A Brief Theology of Revelation*, 93.
18. Ibid., 95.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid., 102-03.

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"Are You Relativistic Toward Moderate Muslims?"

This article is no longer available. We regret any disappointment or inconvenience this may cause.

Probe Ministries Administrator

“Sue Bohlin a Hypocrite for Teaching at Probe.org”

If women are not to teach men or have authority over them, I find it odd that Sue Bohlin responds to questions on this website. Doesn’t that constitute teaching authority???? And doesn’t the fact that she writes a response ABOUT women in ministry absurdly ironic (i.e., if women are not to teach men or have authority over them by instructing them, then a woman speaking about women in ministry is absurd)???

Scripture does not forbid men to learn from women. It says we are not to be in teaching authority over men. I have no authority over anyone. I just offer my perspective on this website. If a man chooses to consider what I say and learn from it, that’s fine, but it’s a very different (and indirect) thing than me standing in the pulpit or on a platform in a position of spiritual leadership over him.

Thanks for writing.

Sue Bohlin

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God in Our Nation’s Capital

U.S. Capitol Building

In our minds, lets take a walking tour through Americas capital city, Washington, DC. What we will be seeing in our minds eye comes from the book *Rediscovering God in America: Reflections on the Role of Faith in Our Nations History and Future*.{1} As we consider what religious symbols are found in the buildings and monuments, I think we will gain a fresh appreciation for the role of religion in the public square.

We will begin with the U.S. Capitol Building. No other building in Washington defines the skyline like this one does. It has been the place of formal inaugurations as well as informal and spontaneous events, such as when two hundred members of Congress gathered on the steps on September 12, 2001, to sing God Bless America.

President George Washington laid the cornerstone for the Capitol in 1793. When the north wing was finished in 1800, Congress was able to move in. Construction began again in 1803 under the direction of Benjamin Latrobe. The British invasion of Washington in 1812 resulted in the partial destruction of the Capitol. In 1818, Charles Bulfinch oversaw the completion of the north and south wings (including a chamber for the Supreme Court).{2}

Unfortunately, the original design failed to consider that additional states would enter the union, and these additional representatives were crowding the Capitol. President Millard Fillmore chose Thomas Walter to continue the Capitols construction and rehabilitation. Construction halted during the first part of the Civil War, and it wasnt until 1866 that the canopy fresco in the Rotunda was completed.

The religious imagery in the Rotunda is significant. Eight different historical paintings are on display. The first is the painting *The Landing of Columbus* that depicts the arrival on the shores of America. Second is *The Embarkation of the*

Pilgrims that shows the Pilgrims observing a day of prayer and fasting led by William Brewster.

Third is the painting *Discovery of the Mississippi by DeSoto.* Next to DeSoto is a monk who prays as a crucifix is placed in the ground. Finally, there is the painting *Baptism of Pocahontas*.

Throughout the Capitol Building, there are references to God and faith. In the Cox Corridor a line from America the Beautiful is carved in the wall: America! God shed His grace on thee, and crown thy good with brotherhood, from sea to shining sea!{3}

In the House chamber is the inscription, In God We Trust. Also in the House chamber, above the Gallery door, stands a marble relief of Moses, the greatest of the twenty-three law-givers (and the only one full-faced). At the east entrance to the Senate chamber are the words *Annuit Coeptis* which is Latin for God has favored our undertakings. The words In God We Trust are also written over the southern entrance.

In the Capitols Chapel is a stained glass window depicting George Washington in prayer under the inscription In God We Trust. Also, a prayer is inscribed in the window which says, Preserve me, God, for in Thee do I put my trust.{4}

The Washington Monument

The tallest monument in Washington, DC, is the Washington Monument. From the base of the monument to its aluminum capstone are numerous references to God. This is fitting since George Washington was a religious man. When he took the oath of office on April 30, 1789, he asked that the Bible be opened to Deuteronomy 28. After the oath, Washington added, So help me God and bent forward and kissed the Bible before him.{5}

Construction of the Washington Monument began in 1848, but by

1854 the Washington National Monument Society was out of money and construction stopped for many years. Mark Twain said it had the forlorn appearance of a hollow, oversized chimney. In 1876, Congress appropriated money for the completion of the monument which took place in 1884. In a ceremony on December 6, the aluminum capstone was placed atop the monument. The east side of the capstone has the Latin phrase *Laus Deo*, which means Praise be to God.

The cornerstone of the Washington Monument includes a Holy Bible, which was a gift from the Bible Society. Along with it are copies of the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution.

If you walk inside the monument you will see a memorial plaque from the Free Press Methodist-Episcopal Church. On the twelfth landing you will see a prayer offered by the city of Baltimore. On the twentieth landing you will see a memorial offered by Chinese Christians. There is also a presentation made by Sunday school children from New York and Philadelphia on the twenty-fourth landing.

The monument is full of carved tribute blocks that say: Holiness to the Lord; Search the Scriptures; The memory of the just is blessed; May Heaven to this union continue its beneficence; In God We Trust; and Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

So what was George Washingtons faith? Historians have long debated the extent of his faith. But Michael Novak points out that Washingtons own step-granddaughter, Nelly Custis, thought his words and actions were so plain and obvious that she could not understand how anybody failed to see that he had always lived as a serious Christian.{6}

During the first meeting of the Continental Congress in September 1774, George Washington prayed alongside the other delegates. And they recited Psalm 35 together as patriots.

George Washington also proclaimed the first national day of thanksgiving in the United States. In 1795 he said, When we review the calamities which afflict so many other nations, the present condition of the United States affords much matter of consolation and satisfaction. He therefore called for a day of public thanksgiving and prayer. He said, In such a state of things it is in an especial manner our duty as people, with devout reverence and affectionate gratitude, to acknowledge our many and great obligations to Almighty God and implore Him to continue and confirm the blessings we experience.{7}

The Lincoln Memorial

The idea of a memorial to the sixteenth president had been discussed almost within days after his assassination, but lack of finances proved to be a major factor. Finally, Congress allocated funds for it during the Taft administration. Architect Henry Bacon wanted to model it after the Greek Parthenon, and work on it was completed in 1922.

Bacon chose the Greek Doric columns in part to symbolize Lincolns fight to preserve democracy during the Civil War.{8} The thirty-six columns represented the thirty-six states that made up the Union at the time of Lincolns death.

Daniel Chester French sculpted the statue of Abraham Lincoln to show his compassionate nature and his resolve in preserving the Union. One of Lincolns hands is tightly clenched (to show his determination) while the other hand is open and relaxed (to show his compassion).

Lincolns speeches are displayed within the memorial. On the left side is the Gettysburg Address (only 267 words long). He said, We here highly resolved that these dead shall not have died in vain, that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom.

On the right side is Lincolns second inaugural address (only

703 words long). It mentions God fourteen times and quotes the Bible twice. He reflected on the fact that the Civil War was not controlled by man, but by God. He noted that each side looked for an easier triumph, and a result less fundamental and astounding. Both read the same Bible, and pray to the same God; and each invokes his aid against the other.

He concludes with a lament over the destruction caused by the Civil War, and appeals to charity in healing the wounds of the war. With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nations wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.

It is fitting that one hundred years after Lincolns second inaugural, his memorial was the place where Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered his most famous speech, I have a dream. An inscription was added to the memorial in 2003 that was based upon Isaiah 40:4-5: I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, and every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together.

At a White House dinner during the war, a clergyman gave the benediction and closed with the statement that The Lord is on the Unions side. Abraham Lincoln responded: I am not at all concerned about that, for I know that the Lord is always on the side of the right. But it is my constant anxiety and prayer that I and this nation should be on the Lords side.{9}

The Jefferson Memorial

Thomas Jefferson was Americas third president and the drafter

of the Declaration of Independence, so it is surprising that a memorial to him was not built earlier than it was. In 1934, Franklin Delano Roosevelt persuaded Congress to establish a memorial commission to honor Jefferson. After some study the commission decided to honor Pierre LEnfants original plan, which called for the placement of five different memorials that would be aligned in a cross-like manner.{10}

The architect of the memorial proposed a Pantheon-like structure that was modeled after Jeffersons own home which incorporated the Roman architecture that Jefferson admired. The original design was modified, and the memorial was officially dedicated in 1943.

When you enter the Jefferson Memorial you will find many references to God. A quote that runs around the interior dome says, I have sworn upon the altar of God, eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the minds of man.

On the first panel, you will see the famous passage from the Declaration of Independence: We hold these truths to be self-evident: That all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

On the second panel is an excerpt from A Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom, 1777. It was passed by the Virginia Assembly in 1786. It reads: Almighty God hath created the mind free. . . . All attempts to influence it by temporal punishments or burdens . . . are a departure from the plan of the Holy Author of our religion. . . . No man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship or ministry or shall otherwise suffer on account of his religious opinions of belief, but all men shall be free to profess, and by argument to maintain, their opinions in matters of religion. I know but one code of morality for men whether acting singly or collectively.

The third panel is taken from Jeffersons 1785 Notes on the State of Virginia. It reads: God who gave us life gave us liberty. Can the liberties of a nation be secure when we have removed a conviction that these liberties are the gift of God? Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just, that His justice cannot sleep forever. Commerce between master and slave is despotism. Nothing is more certainly written in the book of fate than that these people are to be free.

The Supreme Court

Of the three branches of government, the Supreme Court was the last to get its own building. In fact, it met in the Capitol building for over a hundred years. During that time, it met in many different rooms of the capitol until it finally settled in the Old Senate Chamber in 1860.

Supreme Court Justice William Howard Taft (who also had served as president) persuaded Congress to authorize funds for the Supreme Court building. It was modeled after Greek and Roman architecture in the familiar Corinthian style and dedicated in 1935.

It is ironic that the Supreme Court has often issued opinions which have stripped religious displays from the public square when these opinions have been read in a building with many religious displays. And it is ironic that public expressions of faith have been limited when all sessions of the court begin with the Courts Marshal announcing: God save the United States and this honorable court.

In a number of cases, the Supreme Court has declared the posting of the Ten Commandments unconstitutional (in public school classrooms and in a local courthouse in Kentucky). But this same Supreme Court has a number of places in its building where there are images of Moses with the Ten Commandments.

These can be found at the center of the sculpture over the east portico of the Supreme Court building, inside the actual courtroom, and finally, engraved over the chair of the Chief Justice, and on the bronze doors of the Supreme Court itself.{11}

Nevertheless, the Supreme Court has often ruled against the very kind of religious expression that can be found in the building that houses the court. Former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich says in his book *Rediscovering God in America*, that we see a systematic effort . . . to purge all religious expression from American public life. He goes on to say that for the last fifty years the Supreme Court has become a permanent constitutional convention in which the whims of five appointed lawyers have rewritten the meaning of the Constitution. Under this new, all-powerful model of the Court, and by extension the trail-breaking Ninth Circuit Court, the Constitution and the law can be redefined by federal judges unchecked by the other two coequal branches of government.{12}

This is the state of affairs we find in the twenty-first century. If five justices believe that prayer at a public school graduation is unconstitutional, then it is unconstitutional. If five justices believe that posting the Ten Commandments is unconstitutional, it is unconstitutional.

If the trend continues, one wonders if one day they may rule that religious expression on public monuments is unconstitutional. If that takes place, then you might want to invest in sandblasting companies in the Washington, DC, area. There are lots of buildings and monuments with words about God, faith, and religion. It would take a long time to erase all of these words from public view.

The next time you are in our nations capital, make sure you take a walking tour of the buildings and monuments. They testify to a belief in God and a dynamic faith that today is often under attack from the courts and the culture.

Notes

1. Newt Gingrich, *Rediscovering God in America: Reflections on the Role of Faith in Our Nation's History and Future* (Nashville, TN: Integrity House, 2006).
2. Ibid., 77.
3. Ibid., 81.
4. Ibid., 2.
5. Ibid., 35.
6. Ibid., 39.
7. Ibid., 40.
8. Ibid., 50.
9. Ibid., 54.
10. Ibid., 44.
11. Ibid., 87.
12. Ibid., 132.

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"There Is No Compelling Reason to Accept the Books of the Bible as Special"

I have some comments and questions regarding your article on the church canon—in particular, the last paragraph. You state that:

> **"We show that it is true to unbelievers by demonstrating that it is systematically consistent."**

However, there are numerous inconsistencies throughout the bible—in both the old and new testaments—and in particular

throughout the gospels and the accounts of the life and death of Jesus—as most non-believers can readily point out. While the inconsistencies as a whole do not negate the viability of the scripture, it does indicate that the canon as it stands is NOT systematically consistent.

You also state that:

> **"We make belief possible by using both historical evidence and philosophical tools."**

Philosophical, yes—but historical, no. Archeological and historical research has done as much to prove as disprove the scripture—at best a 50-50 balance.

And you also state:

> **"Once individuals refuse to accept the claim of inspiration that the Bible makes for itself, they are left with a set of ethics without a foundation."**

True—however, it is not sufficient to take the word of one source in regards to origin or inspiration. In other words, just because one book of the bible (a collection of documents written at very different times and by very different authors) says so isn't sufficient to make it so for the whole. At the time that portion of the bible was written, the whole did not yet exist and the reference to inspiration could only be referring to the work in which it appears.

If that is the argument—then there is no need for philosophical or historical tools to aid in believe. You cannot "have your cake and eat it too" in this case—either use science (history, etc.) to prove the reliability and uniqueness of the canon or base it on faith—one or the other, not both.

It seems to me——that despite an otherwise well researched and argued explanation of the canonization of the current

bible—there still is no compelling reason for the current books of the bible to be held in any higher esteem than those of the apocrypha or the writings of early church fathers.

Thank you for the thoughtful response to my essay on the canonization of the Bible. Let me briefly respond to some of your points.

> *However, there are numerous inconsistencies throughout the bible in both the old and new testaments—and in particular throughout the gospels and the accounts of the life and death of Jesus as most non-believers can readily point out. While the inconsistencies as a whole do not negate the viability of the scripture, it does indicate that the canon as it stands is NOT systematically consistent.*

The question of consistency regarding the Gospels has been hotly contested. Perhaps the problem partly lies in defining what we mean by consistency. No one denies that the writers were attempting to give different perspectives regarding the events and ministry of Jesus. My view and the view of conservative theologians is that the teachings of the four Gospels are consistent even though individual details might differ. Where some see inconsistency and conflict, others see different perspectives of a single or similar event. The Gospels were not written as a history text or as a biographical work in the modern sense, to hold these texts to this kind of standard would be placing unwarranted restrictions on the writings.

> *Archeological and historical research has done as much to prove as disprove the scripture at best a 50-50 balance.*

The role of archaeology and historical evidence in affirming the NT writings is also a complex one. You seem to be arguing that if one places their faith in the teachings of the NT they cannot use historical and archaeological evidence to defend the texts in any manner. While I would agree that neither

archaeological nor historical evidence can prove that the teachings of the Bible are theologically true, they can affirm a number of things about the nature of the texts. First, they give us expanding knowledge of the geographical setting of the events that are described. Second, they help us to understand the religious milieu of the time (ex. Nag Hammadi findings). Third, they constrain the attempts of some to mythologize the NT. The discoveries of the Well of Jacob, the Pool of Siloam, the probable location of the Pool of Bethesda, and the name of Pilate himself on a stone in the Roman theater at Caesarea lend historical credibility to the NT text. Certainly the reliability of the NT writings can benefit from positive archaeological and historical evidence.

> *At the time that portion of the bible was written, the whole did not yet exist and the reference to inspiration could only be referring to the work in which it appears.*

The high regard that the church Fathers had for the OT writings did not transfer to the NT texts until the church was forced to respond to threatening issues. Since some had been disciples of Apostles, the urgency to define the canon was not intense. Once given the need to do so in the second and third centuries, believers held to those writings that affirmed the tradition that had been handed down from the beginning. The place given to the Apocrypha by the early church is another issue which I address in my essay on those writings.

Thanks again for your comments.

Sincerely,

Don Closson

“What About the Apocrypha?”

The Catholic institution claims the apocrypha is inspired. Protestants don’t. Therefore, within the Body, there are two different lists of supposedly God-inspired authoritative Scripture.

So… How can we claim the Bible is authoritative when there are two differing lists of supposed Scriptures within Christianity…Two different Bibles? My next question is akin to the first: How do we know with certainty which list is THE list?” Both of these questions center on authority. Who do we trust as our God approved authority able to testify for us on behalf of Scriptures?

It is no wonder that the other religions of the world do not take true Christianity seriously when such fundamental divisions exist within the Body.

The Apocrypha is not included as part of the inspired text because it does not meet the criteria of the inspired canon. Here are just a few examples.

The Apocrypha contains historical errors. In Judith 1:1 Nebuchadnezzar is reigning in Ninevah instead of Babylon.

The Apocrypha contains unbiblical teaching. 2 Maccabees 12 teaches to pray for the dead. Tobit 12:9 teaches faith by works, a clear contradiction to the Bible (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Jesus and the Apostles do not quote the Apocrypha. We do not see it directly quoted in the New Testament.

Finally Jesus tells us where the inspired canon ends in Luke 11:51. He says the prophets extend from Abel (Genesis 4) to Zechariah (2 Chronicles 24:20-21). So the line of prophets ends with the Jewish Old Testament, the Masoretic text that Jesus used as authoritative.

The history of the Apocrypha is interesting. It was not part of the Catholic Church's inspired canon until 1545 AD. No council recognized it in the first four centuries. The historical evidence goes against the Apocrypha. It was incorporated by the Catholic Church in response to the Protestant challenge to several unbiblical teachings such as praying for the dead and penance. Hope this helps.

Patrick Zukeran
Probe Ministries

"Why Doesn't the New Testament Violate the Command Not to Add to Scripture?"

Revelations 22:18 states that, "I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book; if anyone adds to them, God shall add to him the plagues which are written in this book."

I have heard this verse used to explain why the Book of Mormon is not to be considered a later divinely inspired revelation. However, in Deuteronomy 4:2 and Proverbs 30:6, these same warnings about adding to God's word are stated, so why wouldn't the New Testament fall into the same category of unacceptable additions to the Bible? Why is it an acceptable addition and revelation when the Book of Mormon—or, for that matter, the Koran—is not?

I personally believe that Revelation 22:18 should be

interpreted more narrowly as referring only to the content of the book of Revelation. In other words, I don't believe John is necessarily forbidding (or excluding) the possibility of later revelations from God; he is rather simply warning against adding or subtracting anything from the book which he has just written. I think the wording of verses 18-19 supports this view. Notice how often John specifies "this" book (i.e. the book of Revelation), and the book of "this" prophecy, as the content of what should not be added to or subtracted from. Thus, I don't think John's warning necessarily forbids additional revelation from God in OTHER books; he is simply warning against tampering with what is written in his own. What he has written is the word of God and it should be kept pure and undefiled. Of course I realize that not everyone will share this view, but this is what I think John intended the verse to communicate.

I would basically take Deut. 4:2 the same way. Moses is writing the word of God, and God does not want His message polluted with the additions and subtractions of sinful human beings. He wants His word kept just as He gave it and not altered to suit human fancies or inclinations. What this forbids is purely HUMAN additions or subtractions; it does not mean that God cannot give additional revelation in the future. Indeed, if that were so, not only would the NT be called into question, but the remainder of the OT would as well (for Deuteronomy is the last book of Moses)!

Finally, I think Proverbs 30:5-6 also fits this interpretation. Verse 5 begins, "Every word of God is tested." In v. 6 we are forbidden to add to HIS words. God may reveal additional truth to man at some later time, but man is not to take it upon himself to add to, or subtract from, what God has already revealed.

So what about the Book of Mormon, or the Koran? Why not accept these books as additional revelation from God? My answer to this is simple: whatever the source of these books, it is NOT

the God of the Bible. How do we know this? Because both books teach beliefs and practices which are CONTRARY to the Bible. The "God" of Mormonism and the "God" of Islam are NOT the same God as the God of the Bible. In addition, not only do Mormonism and Islam teach a different doctrine of God than that revealed in the Bible, they also teach a different doctrine of man, sin, the afterlife, salvation, etc. If we apply the law of non-contradiction to these different "revelations" we see that while they can all be false, they cannot all be true. Furthermore, if one of these IS true, the others must be false (because they contradict each other on essential beliefs and practices). See the point? If the Bible is truly the word of God, neither the Book of Mormon nor the Koran can qualify as His word.

It is for this reason that I think the Book of Mormon and the Koran should be rejected as later "revelations" from God; not because of Revelation 22:18.

Michael Gleghorn
Probe Ministries

The Old Testament Apocrypha Controversy – The Canon of Scripture

Don Closson analyzes the controversial issue of the Apocrypha, weighing the evidence on the canonicity of these books, affirming their value, but agreeing with the Protestant tradition which does not regard them as inspired Scripture.

The Source of the Controversy

A fundamental issue that separates Roman Catholic and Protestant traditions is the question of the Old Testament Apocrypha. Catholics argue that the Apocrypha was an integral part of the early church and should be included in the list of inspired Old Testament books. Protestants believe that the books of the Apocrypha are valuable for understanding the events and culture of the inter-testamental period and for devotional reading, but are not inspired nor should they be included in the canon, the list of books included in the Bible. This disagreement about which books belong in the Bible points to other differences in Roman Catholic and Protestant beliefs about canonicity itself and the interplay between the authority of the Bible and the authority of tradition as expressed in the institutional church. Catholics contend that God established the church and that the Church, the Roman Catholic Church, both gave us the Bible and verified its authenticity. Protestants believe that the Scriptures, the writings of the prophets and apostles, are the foundation upon which the church is built and are authenticated by the Holy Spirit, who has been and is active in church congregations and councils.

The books of the Apocrypha considered to be canonical by the Roman Catholic Church are first found in Christian era copies of the Greek Septuagint, a translation of the Hebrew Old Testament. According to Old Testament authority F. F. Bruce, Hebrew scholars in Alexandria, Egypt, began translating the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek around 250 B.C. because the Jews in that region had given up the Hebrew language for Greek.{1} The resulting translation is called the Septuagint (or LXX) because of legend that claims that seventy Hebrew scholars finished their work in seventy days, indicating its divine origins.

The books or writings from the Apocrypha that the Roman

Catholic Church claims are inspired are Tobit, Judith, Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, 1 & 2 Maccabees, Letter of Jeremiah, additions to Esther, Prayer of Azariah, Susanna (Daniel 13), and Bel and the Dragon (Daniel 14). Three other Apocryphal books in the Septuagint, the Prayer of Manasseh, and 1 & 2 Esdras, are not considered to be inspired or canonical by the Roman Catholic Church.

This disagreement over the canonicity of the Apocryphal books is significant if only for the size of the material being debated. By including it with the Old Testament one adds 152,185 words to the King James Bible. Considering that the King James New Testament has 181,253 words, one can see how including the books would greatly increase the influence of pre-Christian Jewish life and thought.

This issue is important for two other reasons as well. First, there are specific doctrines that are held by the Roman Catholic Church which are supported by the Apocryphal books. The selling of indulgences for forgiveness of sins and purgatory are two examples. Secondly, the issue of canonicity itself is reflected in the debate. Does the church, through the power of the Holy Spirit, recognize what is already canonical, or does the church make a text canonical by its declarations?

As believers who have called upon the saving work of Jesus Christ as our only hope for salvation, we all want to know what is from God and what is from man. The remainder of this article will defend the traditional Protestant position against the inclusion of the Apocrypha as inspired canon.

The Jewish Canon

As we are considering the debate over the canonicity of the Old Testament Apocrypha or what has been called the “Septuagint plus,” we will first look at evidence that Alexandrian Jews accepted what has been called a wider canon.

As mentioned previously, Jews in Alexandria, Egypt, began translating the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek (the Septuagint) hundreds of years before Christ. Because the earliest complete manuscripts we have of this version of the OT includes extra books called the Apocrypha, many believe that these books should be considered part of the OT canon even though they are not found in the Hebrew OT. In effect, some argue that we have two OT canons, the Hebrew canon of twenty-two books, often called the Palestinian canon, and the larger Greek or Alexandrian canon that includes the Apocrypha.

F. F. Bruce states there is no evidence that the Jews (neither Hebrew nor Greek speaking) ever accepted a wider canon than the twenty-two books of the Hebrew OT. He argues that when the Christian community took over the Greek OT they added the Apocrypha to it and "gave some measure of scriptural status to them also."{2}

Gleason Archer makes the point that other Jewish translations of the OT did not include the Apocryphal books. The Targums, the Aramaic translation of the OT, did not include them; neither did the earliest versions of the Syriac translation called the Peshitta. Only one Jewish translation, the Greek (Septuagint), and those translations later derived from it (the Italia, the Coptic, Ethiopic, and later Syriac) contained the Apocrypha.{3}

Even the respected Greek Jewish scholar Philo of Alexandria never quotes from the Apocrypha. One would think that if the Greek Jews had accepted the additional books, they would have used them as part of the canon. Josephus, who used the Septuagint and made references to 1 Esdras and 1 Maccabees writing about 90 A.D. states that the canon was closed in the time of Artaxerxes I whose reign ended in 423 B.C.{4} It is also important to note that Aquila's Greek version of the OT made about 128 A.D., which was adopted by the Alexandrian Jews, did not include the Apocrypha.

Advocates of the Apocrypha argue that it does not matter if the Jews ever accepted the extra books since they rejected Jesus as well. They contend that the only important opinion is that of the early church. However, even the Christian era copies of the Greek Septuagint differ in their selection of included books. The three oldest complete copies we have of the Greek OT include different additional books. Codex Vaticanus (4th century) omits 1 and 2 Maccabees, which is canonical according to the Roman Catholic Church, and includes 1 Esdras, which they reject. Codex Sinaiticus (4th century) leaves out Baruch. which is supposed to be canonical, but includes 4 Maccabees, which they reject. Codex Alexandrinus (5th century) includes three non-canonical Apocryphal books, 1 Esdras and 3 and 4 Maccabees.{5} All of this points to the fact that although these books were included in these early Bibles, this alone does not guarantee their status as canon.

Although some may find it unimportant that the Jews rejected the inspiration and canonicity of the Apocrypha, Paul argues in Romans that the Jews have been entrusted with the "very words of God."{6} And as we will see, the early church was not unanimous regarding the appropriate use of the Apocrypha. But first, let's consider how Jesus and the apostles viewed the Apocrypha.

Jesus and the Apostles

Those who support the canonicity of the Apocrypha argue that both Jesus and his followers were familiar with the Greek OT called the Septuagint. They also argue that when the New Testament writers quote Old Testament passages, they are quoting from the Greek OT. Since the Septuagint included the additional books of the Apocrypha, Jesus and the apostles must have accepted the Apocrypha as inspired scripture. In other words, the acceptance of the Septuagint indicates acceptance of the Apocrypha as well. Finally, they contend that the New Testament is full of references to material found in the

Apocrypha, further establishing its canonicity. A number of objections have been raised to these arguments.

First, the claim that the Septuagint of apostolic times included the Apocrypha is not certain. As we noted previously, the earliest manuscripts we have of the entire Septuagint are from the 4th century. If Jesus used the Septuagint, it may or may not have included the extra books. Also remember that although the 4th century copies do include the Apocryphal books, none include the same list of books. Second, F. F. Bruce argues that instead of using the Septuagint, which was probably available at the time, Jesus and his disciples actually used the Hebrew text during His ministry. Bruce writes, "When Jesus was about to read the second lesson in the Nazareth synagogue . . . it was most probably a Hebrew scroll that he received."{7} It was later, as the early church formed and the gospel was carried to the Greek-speaking world, that the Septuagint became the text often used by the growing church.

Bruce agrees that all the writers of the New Testament made use of the Septuagint. However, none of them gives us an exact list of what the canonical books are. While it is possible that New Testament writers like Paul allude to works in the Apocrypha, that alone does not give those works scriptural status. The problem for those advocating a wider canon is that the New Testament writers allude to, or even quote many works that no one claims to be inspired. For instance, Paul may be thinking of the book of Wisdom when he wrote the first few chapters of Romans. But what of the much clearer reference in Jude 14 to 1 Enoch 1:9, which no one claims to be inspired? How about the possible use of a work called the *Assumption of Moses* that appears to be referenced in Jude 9? Should this work also be part of the canon? Then there is Paul's occasional use of Greek authors to make a point. In Acts 17 Paul quotes line five from Aratus' *Phaenomena*, and in 1 Corinthians he quotes from Menander's comedy, *Thais*. No one

claims that these works are inspired.

Recognizing the fact that the Septuagint was probably available to both Jesus and his disciples, it becomes even more remarkable that there are no direct quotes from any of the Apocryphal books being championed for canonicity. Jesus makes clear reference to all but four Old Testament books from the Hebrew canon, but he never directly refers to the apocryphal books.

The Church Fathers

Those who support the canonicity of the Apocrypha argue that the early church Fathers accepted the books as Scripture. In reality, their support is anything but unanimous. Although many of the church Fathers held the books in high esteem, they often refused to include them in their list of inspired books.

In the Eastern Church, the home of the Septuagint, one would expect to find unanimous support for the canonicity of the "Septuagint plus," the Greek OT and the Apocrypha among the early Fathers. However, such is not the case. Although the well-known Justin Martyr rejected the Hebrew OT, accusing it of attempting to hide references to Christ, many others in the East accepted the Hebrew canon's shorter list of authoritative books. Melito of Sardis, the Bishop of Sardis in 170 A.D., listed the OT books in a letter to a friend. His list was identical to the Hebrew canon except for Esther. Another manuscript, written about the same time as Melito's by the Greek patriarchate in Jerusalem, listed the twenty- four (see footnote on how the books were counted) books of the Hebrew OT as the canon.{8}

Origen, who is considered to be the greatest Bible scholar among the Greek Fathers, limited the accepted OT scriptures to the twenty-four books of the Hebrew canon. Although he defends the use of such books as the History of Susanna, he rejects their canonicity. Both Athanasius and Gregory of Nazianzus

limited the OT canon to the books of the Hebrew tradition. Athanasius, the defender of the Trinitarian view at the Council of Nicea, wrote in his thirty-ninth festal letter (which announced the date of Easter in 367) of his concern about the introduction of "apocryphal" works into the list of holy scripture. Although he agreed that there are other books "to be read to those who are recent converts to our company and wish to be instructed in the word of true religion," his list of OT agrees with the Hebrew canon. Gregory of Nazianzus is known for arranging the books of the Bible in verse form for memorization. He did not include the "Septuagint plus" books in his list. Eventually, in the 1600's, the Eastern Church did officially accept the Septuagint with its extra books as canon, along with its claim that the Septuagint is the divinely inspired version of the OT.

In the Latin West, Tertullian was typical of church leaders up until Jerome. Tertullian accepted the entire "Septuagint plus" as canon and was willing to open the list even wider. He wanted to include 1 Enoch because of its mention in Jude. He also argued for the divine nature of the *Sibylline Oracles* as a parallel revelation to the Bible.{9}

However, Jerome is a pivotal person for understanding the relationship between the early church and the OT canon. Having mastered both Greek and eventually Hebrew, Jerome realized that the only satisfactory way to translate the OT is to abandon the Septuagint and work from the original Hebrew. Eventually, he separated the Apocryphal books from the rest of the Hebrew OT saying that "Whatever falls outside these (Hebrew texts) . . . are not in the canon."{10} He added that the books may be read for edification, but not for ecclesiastical dogmas.

Although Augustine included the "Septuagint plus" books in his list of the canon, he didn't know Hebrew. Jerome later convinced him of the inspired nature of the Hebrew OT, but Augustine never dropped his support for the Apocrypha. The

early church Fathers were anything but unanimous in their support for the inspiration of the Apocrypha.

The Question of Canonicity

The relationship between the church and the Bible is a complex one. The question of canonicity is often framed in an either/or setting. Either the infallible Roman Catholic Church, having absolute authority, decides the issue, or we have absolute chaos with no possible guidance whatsoever regarding the limits of what is inspired and what isn't.

In a recent meeting of Catholics, Protestants, and Eastern Orthodox theologians called the Rose Hill conference, evangelical theologian Harold O. J. Brown asks that we hold a dynamic view of this relationship between the church and the Bible. He notes that Catholics have argued "that the church—the Catholic Church—gave us the Bible and that church authority authenticates it."{11} Protestants have responded with the view that "Scripture creates the church, which is built on the foundation of the prophets and apostles."{12} However, he admits that there is no way to make the New Testament older than the church. Does this leave us then bowing to church authority only? Brown doesn't think so. He writes, "[I]t is the work of the Spirit that makes the Scripture divinely authoritative and preserves them from error. In addition the Holy Spirit was active in the early congregations and councils, enabling them to recognize the right Scriptures as God's Word." He adds that even though the completed canon is younger than the church, it is not in captivity to the church. Instead, "it is the 'norm that norms' the church's teaching and life."{13}

Many Catholics argue that the additional books found in the Apocrypha (Septuagint plus) which they call the deutero-canon, were universally held by the early church to be canonical. This is a considerable overstatement. However, Protestants have acted as if these books never existed or played any role

whatsoever in the early church. This too is an extreme position. Although many of the early church fathers recognized a distinction between the Apocryphal books and inspired Scripture, they universally held them in high regard. Protestants who are serious students of their faith cannot ignore this material if they hope to understand the early church or the thinking of its earliest theologians.

On the issue of canonicity, of the Old Testament or the New, Norman Geisler lists the principles that outline the Protestant perspective. Put in the form of a series of questions he asks, "Was the book written by a spokesperson for God, who was confirmed by an act of God, who told the truth in the power of God, and was accepted by the people of God?"{14} If these can be answered in the affirmative, especially the first question, the book was usually immediately recognized as inspired and included in the canon. The Old Testament Apocrypha lacks many of these characteristics. None of the books claim to be written by a prophet and Maccabees specifically denies being prophetic.{15} Others contain extensive factual errors.{16} Most importantly, many in the early church including Melito of Sardis, Origen, Athanasius, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Jerome rejected the canonicity of the Apocrypha, although retaining high regards for its devotional and inspirational value.

A final irony in this matter is the fact that even Cardinal Cajetan, who opposed Luther at Augsburg in 1518, published a *Commentary on All the Authentic Historical Books of the Old Testament* (1532) in which he did not include the Apocrypha.{17}

Notes

1. F. F. Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 43.
2. Ibid., 45.
3. Gleason L Archer., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*

(Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1974), 73.
4. Merrill F. Unger, *Introductory Guide to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970), p 99.
5. Archer, 73.
6. Romans 3:2 (NIV)
7. Bruce, 49.
8. Ibid., 72. Ezra and Nehemiah were often combined into one book, as were Lamentations and Jeremiah and the twelve minor prophets.
9. Ibid., 87.
10. Ibid., 90.
11. Christopher A. Hall, *Reading Scripture With The Church Fathers* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 187.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. Norman L. Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House Company, 1999) 85.
15. Ibid., 32.
16. Unger, 109-111.
17. Geisler, 31

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Jonah in the Whale – An Actual Event Pointed to by Jesus Christ

Probe founder Jimmy Williams considers the question: was Jonah a real man experiencing real events or is it an allegorical story? Upon examining Jesus' use of the book, the testimony of

first century commentators, and the characteristics of modern day whales and fish, he concludes that Jonah is a record of actual events.

The book of Jonah—is it history, allegory, or romance? Was he really swallowed by a great fish as Scripture records? Or was he even a real person? Did he really go to Nineveh and preach so effectively that an entire city repented and escaped divine judgment? These are important questions that not only involve the integrity of Scripture, but that of our Lord Jesus Christ, who referred to Jonah as a real person.

Like the Sadducees of Jesus' day who rejected all things "miraculous" (Remember their question posed to Jesus about the woman who married seven brothers one after the other and their concern about whose wife she would be in the resurrection in Luke 20:33?), modern scholars have had a field day with this book. Here is an example:

> *The Book of Jonah is unlike any of the other prophetic books in that it is not primarily a record of the utterances of the prophet. Rather it is a short story, clearly fictional. The hallmarks of fiction rest in its anachronisms and its elements of fantasy. . . . Since the book is fiction, it would be best to consider the "great fish" an element of fantasy, a mythological monster, and let it go at that. . . .Popularly, Jonah's fish is considered to have been a whale. . . . If it was a whale that swallowed Jonah, then we are left with the fact that the only type of whale with a throat large enough to swallow a man is the sperm whale. . . . Sperm whales are not found in the Mediterranean and, in the course of nature, it is completely unlikely that a man should be swallowed by one there, or still further, survive three days and nights of incarceration. . . . All difficulties disappear, however, if it is remembered that the Book of Jonah is a fantasy.{1}*

Always keep in mind that a large proportion of all modern criticism of the Bible comes from one philosophical presupposition: **miracles do not occur.** Locked into this naturalistic view of reality, it is not surprising that skeptical theologians encounter difficulties throughout the Bible. Given their premise, every miracle in Scripture must be explained away by either tacit rejection, in in the previous quotation, or by giving the "miracle" some feasible, naturalistic explanation. Their attempts to accomplish this throughout the Bible are often so ludicrous, varied, and contradictory, that we turn with relief back to the Bible, preferring the miraculous to the ridiculous!

This always reminds me of the illustration Dr. Norman Geisler alludes to in his many debates: A man visited a psychiatrist to share a problem which greatly concerned him.
"Doctor, I have a terrible problem."
"Please tell me about it," said the doctor.
"Well, I believe that I am dead."
"Hmmmm, that is a heavy concern. May I ask you a question?"
"Of course," replied the man.
"Do you believe that dead men bleed?"
"Of course not. That's preposterous," said the patient.
The psychiatrist reached over and picked up a long hat pin, took the man's hand, and pricked his finger with it. As the blood began to flow, the man stared at his finger and exclaimed, "Well, what do you know! Dead men bleed after all!"

The real question is not, "Are miracles possible?" but rather, "**Does God Exist**?"

The Bible declares that "With God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26). Those who prefer this presupposition (and there is good reason to prefer it) acknowledge that God has, and can activate, for His Sovereign purposes, the prerogative to intervene, to override the natural laws of the universe created by His Hand.

Historical Considerations

Jonah 1:1 declares, “The word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai.”

Is there any other biblical evidence that Jonah was a real person? Yes. In 2 Kings 14:25 we read, “He (king Jeroboam II of Israel) restored the coast of Israel from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain, according to the word of the Lord God of Israel, which he spake by the hand of His servant Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet which was by (from) Gath-hepher.”

Here we discover that Jonah gave a prophetic word concerning this king, Jeroboam, the greatest and longest-reigning monarch of the Northern Kingdom, Israel. Substantial archeological data has been recovered concerning Jeroboam (II) from the city of Samaria (the royal Capital of the Northern Kingdom) and Megiddo, including a jasper seal by Schumacher and inscribed, “Shema, servant of Jeroboam.”{2}

The reference in 2 Kings also informs us as to the time Jonah lived and ministered. It is thought by some that Jonah may have been numbered among the “schools of the prophets” and was a contemporary of Elisha the Prophet (eighth century B.C.)

With respect to the narrative itself, there is no indication within it, nor among any of the early Judaic traditions that would suggest that it is not historical. Interestingly enough, during the third century B.C., the time which most modern critics assert the book of Jonah was composed, we discover one of the fourteen books of the Apocrypha, the Book of Tobit, makes mention of Jonah. The Apocryphal books are those included in the Catholic Bible but not in the Protestant Bible. They were early considered “suspect” for one reason or another and were not regarded by the Jews as canonical. However, they do have historical and literary merit for biblical studies. Tobit, addressing death-bed comments to his

son, Tobias, says: “Go into Media, my child; for I surely believe all the things which **Jonah the prophet spake of Nineveh**, that it shall be overthrown.”{3}

Two Jewish writers of the first century A.D., Philo, the philosopher, and Josephus, the historian, also consider Jonah to be an historical book. And one of the most prominent biblical scenes found in the Catacombs of Rome is of Jonah and his Fish . . . no doubt for the hope of resurrection symbolized by the book, and confirmed by Christ.

Jesus

In Matthew 12:39-40 Jesus says, “An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it but the sign of the prophet Jonas; for as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whales’s belly, so shall the son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”

Here Jesus refers to Jonah and his experience as historical. Critics have offered the explanation, based on their “no miracles” presupposition, that Jesus (actually aware that it was really a myth) merely *accommodated* Himself to the naïve perspective of His first century, unsophisticated hearers, as someone might refer to King Lear or Don Quixote.

But this is not the *only* mention of Jonah by our Lord. He goes on to say in Matthew 12 about Nineveh: “The men of Nineveh shall stand up with *this* generation at the judgment and shall condemn it because *they* repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, something greater than Jonah is here” (v. 41).

Here Jesus is comparing and linking the real people listening to His words (“this generation”) with the generation of Jonah’s day and foresees the Day when both groups will be evaluated and *judged* on the basis of how they responded to the divine light given them in their day! The *context* does not

allow an inference that one generation is parabolic and the other historical. It does not allow for the "accommodation" theory of the modern critics. With these words in Matthew 12, Christ clearly confirms the historicity of the book of Jonah.

Whale or Fish?

The Bible doesn't say that Jonah was swallowed by a whale. Only the King James Version of 1611 does that. Jonah 1:17 says "God prepared a great fish (*dag gadol*)," not a great whale. And the Matthew passage (12:40) in Greek refers to the animal as a "sea monster" (*ketos*), not a whale. It may or may not have been a whale. Let's explore the possibilities, beginning with the question of "*Could* it happen?" Are there marine creatures capable of swallowing a human being?

Whales

There are two basic types of whales if differentiated by their mouth and throat structures: *baleen*, and *non-baleen* (toothed whales).

Baleen whales are by far the most numerous species in the oceans and include the Blue, Gray, Humpback, and Right (Bowhead). All of these whales are distinguished by the presence of a baleen "curtain" or "strainer" in their mouths. They have a very small throat (like a funnel) and feed by straining krill, plankton, and small crustaceans as they swim through the water with their mouths open. It would be impossible for any of these whales to swallow a human, so they can be ruled out.

The "toothed" whales can be given some consideration. These include the dolphin, porpoise, Beluga, Narwhal, Orca (Killer whale), none of which is large enough to swallow a whole human being, and the Sperm whale, which definitely *is.*

The Sperm whale is the largest of the toothed whales, adult males measuring over sixty feet in length (walk into your

garage and multiply the length by four!). They are most prominent in the Pacific Ocean, but not unknown in the Atlantic and a favorite of Norwegian whalers. This whale's diet consists of giant squid, large sea-bottom and mid-water sharks, skates, and fishes.{4}

The Sperm whale has a *huge* capacity in its gullet to store food. In his book, *Sixty-three Years of Engineering,* Sir Francis Fox tells of a manager of a whaling station who indicates that the whale can "swallow lumps of food eight feet in diameter, and that in one of these whales they actually found 'the skeleton of a shark sixteen feet in length.'{5}

In the *Daily Mail* of December 14th, 1928, Mr. G. H. Henn, a resident of Birmingham, England recounted the following story:

> *My own experience . . . about twenty-five years ago, when the carcass of a whale was displayed for a week on vacant land in Navigation Street, outside New Street station . . . I was one of twelve men, who went into its mouth, passed through its throat, and moved about in what was equivalent to a fair-sized room. It's throat was large enough to serve as a door. Obviously it would be quite easy for a whale of this kind to swallow a man."{6}*

This could only have been a sperm whale. On the coast of England, Mr. Frank Bullen in his book, *The Cruise of the Cachalot* (another name for the Sperm whale), notes that the *sperm whale always ejects the contents of its stomach when dying*. He himself witnessed such an incident and described the huge masses of regurgitated contents, estimating their size as about "eight feet by six feet into six feet, the total equal to the bodies of six stout men compressed into one!"{7}

It is argued that Sperm whales are not found in the Mediterranean. But who is to say that was the case 2800 years ago? There are a lot of marine creatures not found today due to the intense, world-wide fishing pressure of the past 300

years. If a Sperm whale beached itself on the west coast of England in this century, who's to say a Sperm whale might not have found its way into the Mediterranean? We know all whales migrate toward warm water to bear their young. One would also suspect that if a Sperm whale did find itself east of Gibraltar, it probably would not fare well in the shallower depths and could well be very hungry! [One story has circulated for years about the whale ship *Star of the East*, which lost a sailor named James Bartley. The story is that he was swallowed by a large sperm whale, and found alive inside the whale's stomach when it was killed and brought aboard. Mr. Bartley was found unconscious and with his skin bleached by the whale's gastric acid, but alive nonetheless. We have just discovered that this is, regrettably, an urban legend, and therefore cannot be used to support our argument. Here is a link to the debunking of this urban legend: http://www.ship-of-fools.com/Myths/04Myth.html]

Other Prospects

Baxter also notes a more recent incident:

We have come across the following news-item in the Madras (India) *Mail* of November 28th, 1946:

> *Bombay, November 26. — A twelve-foot tiger shark, weighing 700 lbs., was dragged ashore last evening at the Sasson Docks. When the shark was cut open a skeleton and a man's clothes were found. It is thought that the victim may have been one of those lost at sea during the recent cyclone. The shark was caught by fishermen thirty miles from Bombay.*

The Tiger is a medium-size shark. The Great White is much larger, over thirty feet in length and weighing four tons. This shark has attacked swimmers all along the Atlantic seaboard on both sides of the ocean.

Which bring us to another important point: It *is* possible that

Jonah actually *did* die. There are several indications in chapter 2 (vs. 2, 5, 6). There are also several miracles recorded in this book: God preparing the great fish, the hearts of the people of Nineveh, the gourd plant, the east wind. If Jonah did die in chapter 2, another miracle involving his resuscitation after the watery sojourn would not be anymore difficult for God to perform than the other miracles in the book. God chides Abraham when he doubts a child could come forth from the deadness of Sarah's womb and says, "Is anything too difficult for the Lord?" (Gen. 18:14). In Genesis or Jonah the answer is the same: "No."

If Jonah actually did die, this simply records one more person among the several in Scripture who were resuscitated for God's intended purpose, and it makes Jonah a still more remarkable type of Christ and His resurrection . . . which is without a doubt the *main* reason this little book is included in the Sacred Canon!

The main *personal* application of the Book of Jonah is simply this: **Before God can *use* the prophet, He must first *break* the prophet!**

"And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm strengthen, and establish you. . . . Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time." (1 Pet. 5:10, 6).

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