

BIBLICAL CHRISTIANITY



Letters from

Professor Allan A
MacRae, PhD

BIBLICAL CHRISTIANITY

Letters from

Professor Allan A
MacRae, PhD

Biblical Christianity

© 1994 by Allan A MacRae

ISBN 9971-991-38-1

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or any information storage or retrieval system without the prior consent of the publisher, except for brief quotations in critical reviews or articles.

Cover design by Victor Lee

Published by
Christian Life Publishers, Tampines PO Box 54,
Singapore 9152.

Printed in the Republic of Singapore.

CONTENTS

LETTER & SUBJECT	PAGE
Preface	xi
Prof. Allan A. MacRae	1
LANGUAGES	
1 The Origin of Language	9
2 Egyptian Hieroglyphics	11
BIBLE TEXTS	
3 The Hebrew and Greek Texts of Scripture	13
4 Determining the Correct Text of Scripture	16
5 Facts about the So-called Textus Receptus	21
BIBLE VERSIONS	
6 Translating the Word of God	27
7 Modern English Versions	32
8 Translation Problems	34
9 The Text of the King James Version	36
10 Is the King James Version the Actual Word of God?	38
11 The King James Version and Translation Problems	40
12 Is the King James Version Reliable?	45
13 Understanding the Bible	47
14 The Translators of the Revised Standard Version	50
15 "Thou" and "You" in the Revised Standard Version	51
16 The King James Version and the Revised Standard Version	52
17 Further Comments on the King James Version and the Revised Standard Version	55
18 The Scofield Bible, the King James Version, and the Revised Standard Version	57
19 The Scofield Bible	60
20 The New Scofield Reference Bible	61
21 The Berkeley Version and the Amplified New Testament	64

√vi *Biblical Christianity*

22	The Textus Receptus and English Bible Versions	65
23	G. M. Lamsa's Translation	68

BIBLICAL INERRANCY

24	A Brief Word on Biblical Inerrancy	70
25	Biblical Inerrancy and the Whole Bible	71

BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

26	The Bible -- A Proper Subject of Scholarly Study	72
27	The Pronunciation of Biblical Names	73
28	The Existence of God	76
29	The Meaning of <i>Echad</i>	78
30	The Keil and Delitzsch Commentary	79
31	The Creation - Six 24-Hour Days or Six "Age-Days"?	80
32	Lamech in Genesis 4:23	84
33	The Exodus and the Ten Plagues	85
34	Did God Make or Merely Reveal His Work of Creation in Six Days	88
35	Sabbath Observance, and the Law and the Gospel	89
36	The Blood Covenant	91
37	The Curse of Canaan	94
38	Judicial Blindness	95
39	Spiritism in 1 Samuel 28:12-19?	97
40	The Meaning of <i>Shamayim</i> in 2 Kings 2:11	98
41	The Island of the Innocent in Job 22:30	100
42	The Order of the Psalms and the Prophetic Books	102
43	"Shadow of Death" or "Darkness" in Psalm 23:4	104
44	Jesus in Isaiah 7:14	105
45	<i>Almah</i> (Virgin) in Isaiah 7:14	106
46	The Time of Fulfillment of Isaiah 23:15-18	108
47	God's Command or God's Permission in Hosea 1:2	112
48	Prediction or Analogy in Hosea 11:1	113
49	The Prophecy of Hosea	114
50	The Pagan Mother Goddess	115
51	Is Mary the Mother of God?	121
52	Wine in the Bible	123

53	The Holy Spirit, Law and Grace, and the Second Coming	124
54	The Date of the Gospel of John	127
55	Water and Spirit in John 3:5	130
56	Wind or Spirit in John 3:8?	132
57	God's Will in John 6:65	133
58	<i>Apostasia</i> (apostasy) in 2 Thessalonians 2:3	136
59	The Church of God and 1 John 5:7	138
60	The Old Testament Apocrypha	139
61	The Relation of the Dead Sea Scrolls to Christianity	141

HIGHER CRITICISM

62	A Critique of Higher Criticism	146
63	Facts about the J.E.D.P. Theory	149
64	Higher Criticism -- The J.E.D.P. Theory	154

BIBLICAL NUMERICS

65	Transmission of Numbers	160
66	Ancient Chronology	162
67	Ivan Panin's Numerics	163
68	Karl G. Sabiers's Numerics	165

BIBLICAL SEPARATION

69	Evangelicals and Fundamentalists	170
70	Heart Disease in Christ's Body	172

BAPTISM

71	Baptism - A Brief Statement of Belief	175
72	Baptism - The Presbyterian Heritage	176
73	The Mode of Baptism	178

DISPENSATIONALISM

74	When did the Church Begin? The Dispensational Interpretation of Scripture	180
75	Divine Sovereignty	181

ESCHATOLOGY

76	Daniel's Seventy Weeks	182
77	More Comments on Daniel's Seventy Weeks	184

BIBLICAL CHRISTIANITY

78	Pre-Tribulation Rapture	186
79	Premillennialism and Tyconius's Seventh Rule	188
80	Isaiah 66:12-24 and the Millennium	191
81	Premillennialism and Ordination to the Christian Ministry	193
82	The Prediction About Tyre	195
83	The Prediction about Memphis	198
84	A Glorious Future	201

EDUCATION

85	American Schools	218
86	The Study of Literature	220
87	Christianity and Culture	226
88	The Christian Study of History	228
89	The Cultural Mandate	229
90	Writing for Publication	230
91	Personal Problems	231
92	Sound Training	235
93	Examining Candidates for Ordination	236

COMMUNISM

94	Marxism	242
95	The Khazars and Jews Today	244
96	The Khazar Jews and Communism	247
97	The Khazar Jews and the Talmud	251

OTHER SUBJECTS

98	Locating Noah's Ark	257
99	Pentecostalism	259
100	Mormonism	260
101	British Israelism	263
102	The United Nations	265
103	The Moral Rearmament Movement	267
104	War and Social Studies	269
105	Hendrik Willem van Loon on Religious Art	271

ESCHATOLOGY

76	Daniel's Seventy Weeks	188
77	More Comments on Daniel's Seventy Weeks	190
78	Pre-Tribulation Rapture	192
79	Premillennialism and Tyconius's Seventh Rule	195
80	Isaiah 66:12-24 and the Millennium	197
81	Premillennialism and Ordination to the Christian Ministry	199
82	The Prediction About Tyre	201
83	The Prediction about Memphis	204
84	A Glorious Future	207

EDUCATION

85	American Schools	225
86	The Study of Literature	226
87	Christianity and Culture	233
88	The Christian Study of History	235
89	The Cultural Mandate	236
90	Writing for Publication	237
91	Personal Problems	239
92	Sound Training	242
93	Examining Candidates for Ordination	244

COMMUNISM

94	Marxism	250
95	The Khazars and Jews Today	252
96	The Khazar Jews and Communism	255

√x *Biblical Christianity*

97 The Khazar Jews and the Talmud 259

OTHER SUBJECTS

98 Locating Noah's Ark 265
99 Pentecostalism 267
100 Mormonism 269
101 British Israelism 271
102 The United Nations 273
103 The Moral Rearmament Movement 276
104 War and Social Studies 277
105 Hendrik Willem van Loon on Religious Art 279

PREFACE

The letters in this volume were not written with any thought of publication. Every one of them was composed in response to a letter asking for clarification on some point of biblical interpretation, Christian belief or activity. The idea that a wider group of Christian readers might benefit from seeing them had not occurred to me when Dr Quek Swee Hwa, a distinguished scholar from Singapore, suggested publishing such a volume.

He had come as a Visiting Professor to Biblical Theological Seminary, of which I was then President, and he was teaching a course on the Greek exegesis of Mark's Gospel. In addition to giving his course of lectures, Dr Quek showed his pastoral spirit by interviewing each student to give him personal advice and assistance. One day he asked my permission to examine the file of letters I had written in response to inquiries about a wide range of biblical and theological subjects. After his last day of teaching Dr Quek spent the entire night before his departure looking over the letters he had singled out and arranging them in logical order. On a later visit he made copies of the letters, added some pamphlets and began to prepare them for publication.

Dr Quek made the selection of letters to be included in this volume. I alone, of course, bear the entire responsibility for their contents.

I am grateful to Dr Quek for having suggested that these letters might be of value to a larger readership, and for his great assistance in preparing them for publication.

I am deeply indebted also to Rev Carl Martin, without whose help this volume would never have reached publication, and to my two secretaries, Miss Margaret Tredick and Rev John V. G. Koontz, for their many hours of faithful and competent work. Thanks also is due to a group of enthusiastic proofreaders and secretaries who worked with Dr Quek to expedite this publication. I would like to thank Mr Paul Wong of Christian Life Publishers for publishing this volume.

The book is sent out with a prayer that God will bring these letters to the attention of any who might particularly profit from them, and that their use may bring glory to our Lord Jesus Christ.

Prof. Allan A. MacRae

Prof. Allan A. MacRae

by Robert J. Dunzweiler
Associate Professor of Systematic Theology and Apologetics
Biblical Theological Seminary

*A Biographical Sketch and Appreciation of Dr MacRae
Presented on April 9, 1977, on the Occasion of the Celebration
of the 50th Anniversary of his Ordination*

The following was delivered on April 9, 1977 at the celebration of the Fiftieth Anniversary of Dr MacRae's ordination.

My purpose this evening is not to attempt the audacity of evaluating another man's life. It is much more modest. I wish merely to sketch some of the outlines of one man's lifetime of service, and to attempt to say something meaningful concerning his impact.

Allan Alexander MacRae was born to John MacRae, M.D., of Calumet, Michigan, and Eunice Jennison of Hartford, Connecticut, on February 11, 1902. The fruit of this union between descendants of Scottish Highlanders and English Puritans showed at an early age his inclination toward scholarly pursuits. In grammar school he studied Latin; and at home he often read the Latin of a six-language edition of the Bible. One Sunday afternoon a Boston preacher visiting Calumet saw Allan and his boyhood chum poring over the Latin text, and was so impressed that upon his return to Boston he proudly informed his fellow Bostonians in a newspaper article that Boston culture was alive and well in Calumet, Michigan! And in fact, Allan's home was a hub for the activities of literary clubs,

political groups, and church groups. Having come to Christ at an early age, he set himself the task of reading the entire Bible, often covering 20 or 30 chapters at a sitting.

When Allan was 10, his family went to Italy for several months for the benefit of his father's health. In Rome, Allan attended school in the morning, and in the afternoon he rolled his hoop through the ancient streets between visits to the Forum, the Arch of Titus, the Coliseum, the Appian Way, St. Peter's, the Vatican galleries, and many other sites about which he had previously read. It was probably in Rome that his desire to travel was born.

Soon after the family's return from Italy, Allan's father's health necessitated a move to a warmer climate; and so Allan's high school years, having begun in Calumet High School, were completed in Franklin High School in Los Angeles. During this stay in California, Allan got his first taste of real hiking and mountain climbing, an activity which was to become a lifetime hobby, and would lead to hiking trails and mountain peaks in 30 states and 15 foreign countries on four continents.

In 1918, at the age of 16, Allan entered Occidental College, a fine school with a conservative Presbyterian background, but one which was undergoing a transition to a more liberal emphasis. Allan was at the top of his class, a member of the varsity debating team, editor of the weekly school paper, and a Phi Beta Kappa. He majored in history and minored in English.

In 1922, Allan emerged as valedictorian of his graduating class. In his valedictory, he issued a stirring call for a return to the old faith! When he finished, one college official declared that he would never have another MacRae on the college platform!

Having earned his Bachelor of Arts degree, Allan returned to Occidental in the fall of 1922 to take his Master of Arts degree, which he completed in the spring of 1923.

During the 1923-24 school year, Allan attended the Bible Institute of Los Angeles, where he studied the Bible under the leadership of Dr R. A. Torrey. After one year at BIOLA, Allan was advised by Dr Torrey to go to Princeton Theological Seminary.

Back in Los Angeles after graduation, Allan came before a presbytery made up of both liberal and conservative ministers and elders, to be licensed and ordained. Following his introduction as a prodigy, the presbytery's committee meekly asked him who wrote the four gospels (and a few other rather simple questions), and then proceeded to ordain him!

Upon his graduation from Princeton, Allan had been awarded a fellowship to study Semitics at the University of Berlin; and thus, in the late summer of 1927, he proceeded to the next arena of learning. Between his studies in Babylonian Cuneiform, Egyptian Hieroglyphics, Arabic, and Syriac, Allan managed to find opportunity to do extensive hiking and climbing in the Tyrol, the Black Forest, the Swiss Alps, and the Austrian Alps. Feeling keenly his lack of fluency in the German language, he began talking to the natives on his hiking tours, and became so proficient in the language that when he later returned to the United States he dreamed in German for months!

During his second year at the University of Berlin, Allan made a four-month trip to Palestine, where he met a famous archaeologist, Sir Flinders Petrie; and where he studied in the American Schools of Oriental Research under another famous scholar, William F. Albright. Together with Dr Albright and two other students, Allan participated in the exciting discovery of the site of the Biblical city of Ham, mentioned in Genesis 14.

In 1929, Robert Dick Wilson invited Allan MacRae to join him as his assistant in the Old Testament Department of the new school which was being organized after the reorganization and consequent liberalization of Princeton Seminary. After some hesitancy, Allan interrupted his doctoral program at Berlin and returned to the United States to assume the assistant professorship of Old Testament in Westminster Theological Seminary.

During his eight years at Westminster, Allan resumed his doctoral studies, this time at the University of Pennsylvania Under Ephraim A. Speiser. This program was completed in 1936 when Allan received his Ph.D. degree. His dissertation was entitled "Semitic Personal Names at Nuzi."

In the summer of 1937, when the need was felt for the founding of a new theological seminary stressing certain desirable distinctives, Dr Allan A. MacRae joined with Carl McIntire, Roy T. Brumbaugh, Harold S. Laird, and Frederick Paist to formulate a plan for the new school. Since they had no faculty, no property, no students, and really nothing but their faith, they decided to call it Faith Theological Seminary. Dr MacRae was asked to assume the presidency of the institution, and he accepted the position.

Almost at once, events occurred to move the dream toward reality. The Sunday school building of the First Independent Church of Wilmington, Delaware, was offered for classrooms; a fine faculty was assembled; and 25 students enrolled. Among the members of the entering class were Vernon Grounds, John W. Sanderson, Jr., Norman Jerome, and Jack W. Murray.

The new school grew steadily. By the 1943-44 school year, there were 62 students, including two women. One of these was Grace E. Sanderson, who, after a brief stint as a temporary secretary to Dr MacRae, discovered that he seemed to have more than a temporary interest in her. Following many long walks and much good-natured teasing from the students, Miss Grace Sanderson became Mrs Allan A. MacRae.

During the MacRae's honeymoon in the Grand Canyon of Arizona, three army fliers parachuted out of a bomber that appeared ready to crash. They floated down into the canyon, and spent the next ten days on an isolated plateau. The search for these airmen drew nationwide attention. A veteran park ranger, aware that Dr MacRae (a veteran of many long trips in the Canyon) was there at the time, sent word to join him in the rescue attempt. They went down from the north rim, located a narrow deer trail down the precipitous cliffs, and brought out the three fliers in good condition.

The story made all the newspapers and many magazines, including *Time*. As a result of this experience, Dr MacRae was besieged with invitations to relate his adventure; and he used these opportunities to drive home a gospel application to thousands of men and women in every type of organization and setting.

In November of 1948, John Phillip MacRae was born. At the

time, his parents could not have predicted that he would be called of God into the gospel ministry, would enter Faith Seminary, would complete his theological studies at Biblical School of Theology, and would become a successful pastor in Western Pennsylvania.

During the next several years, Faith Seminary was experiencing growing pains. For example, in 1951 the student body jumped to 120. Following a search for new quarters, the school moved in 1952 to the Widener estate in Elkins Park. The growth of the student body reached its high point in 1952-53, when it numbered 156.

Following a major disruption in 1956, Dr MacRae began the painstaking task of rebuilding the faculty and the student body, a task which occupied him over the next few years.

In 1960, Dr MacRae's car overturned on the Pennsylvania Turnpike. He suffered seven broken bones, and for six months carried around embedded in his arm an inch-long chunk of metal which the doctors who patched him up had failed to detect. The fact that the accident did not take a greater toll of life or limb was a wonderful instance of God's providential care.

in 1971, after 34 years as President and Professor of Old Testament of Faith Theological Seminary, and facing a crisis which threatened to destroy the approach and emphasis which he had sought to maintain at such personal cost for so many years, Dr MacRae displayed a new burst of pioneering dedication and spirit which, in collaboration with Dr Jack W. Murray and with the sponsorship of Bible Evangelism. Inc., led to the establishment of Biblical School of Theology.

Biblical began with a seasoned faculty team, 48 dedicated students, no library, no buildings, and no constituency of its own. Now, having completed its fourteenth year, the Seminary has a fine student body of 100, a splendid library, functionally excellent buildings, and a steadily growing loyal constituency. And it still has Dr Allan A. MacRae as its President.

When we attempt to assess the greatest area of impact in Dr MacRae's life, we may be tempted to think of his contributions to the lives and ministries of *Christian leaders*, through interaction at

conferences and conventions, through correspondence, or by his teachings and writings.

Or we may be led to think of his contributions to his *students*, whether made in the classroom, in the office, in the hall, or in the chapel. Any list of former students which includes the names of Francis A. Schaeffer, Joseph T. Bayly, Vernon C. Grounds, Kenneth S. Kantzer, Arthur F. Glasser, G. Douglas Young, Samuel J. Schultz, and Jack W. Murray must surely be considered remarkable.

Or we may be drawn to consider his contributions to the *Christian public* generally, through his articles, his many speaking engagements, or his large correspondence, in which he has dealt faithfully, carefully, and often at length with questions and problems of every kind.

Or we may be tempted to think of his contributions, to *Christian scholarship* through his teaching approach and method, his articles in technical and professional journals, his encouragement of younger scholars, his work on the *New Scofield Bible's* Revision Committee, his translation work for the *New International Version* of the Bible, his service as vice-president and president of the Evangelical Theological Society and as vice-president and honorary Fellow of the American Scientific Affiliation, his contributions to Bible commentaries, Bible dictionaries, Bible encyclopedias, or his soon-to-be-released book *The Gospel of Isaiah*.

Or we may be led to think of his contributions to theological education, through his role in the founding of three theological seminaries, his speaking opportunities at the baccalaureates, commencements, conferences, and chapels of a large number of Christian colleges and seminaries, or through his repeated articulation of a Christian view of education.

But I think that the impact of Dr MacRae's life may be seen most clearly in two emphases which he has consistently maintained over the past 50 years -- his faithfulness to the inerrancy of all that Scriptures teach, coupled with his stress upon the maintenance of vital spiritual life, manifesting itself (among other ways) in his carefulness to proclaim the gospel in every message that he has delivered.

√7 *Biblical Christianity*

I am certain that I speak for everyone gathered here tonight when I say to Dr MacRae:

IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS,
WE CANNOT REWARD EXCELLENCE;
WE CAN ONLY RECOGNIZE IT.
THEREFORE, DR MACRAE,
WE TAKE THIS OCCASION
TO RECOGNIZE THE PERVASIVE
EXCELLENCE OF YOUR LIFE,
AND THE OUTSTANDING
CONTRIBUTIONS WHICH YOU HAVE
MADE TO BIBLICAL SCHOLARSHIP,
THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION, AND
CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP DURING
50 YEARS OF CHRISTIAN MINISTRY!
DR MACRAE, WE HONOR YOU TONIGHT!

LETTER 1
1957

THE ORIGIN OF LANGUAGE

To call language "man's greatest achievement" is actually rather ridiculous. It would be better to call it man's greatest possession.

There is no evidence from a purely naturalistic viewpoint to show how language originated. Many theories have been formed but they clash with one another and there is no agreement about them. In primitive areas in many sections of the world, people are found speaking languages differing utterly from one another. These languages, however, are often highly developed, and some are far more complicated than the languages that are used in more developed areas.

It would seem to me to be quite evident that the human being has in himself a potentiality for language. He is not born with the knowledge of any particular language or type of language but with a language gift which is lacking in animals. He has the possibility of learning a language and becoming able to express even quite abstract ideas in it. A child learns the language from hearing people talk, and before many years is able to express quite complicated ideas. This is true even in the most primitive lands. Even if animals constantly hear human beings talking, they do not acquire a similar ability beyond a very rudimentary extent.

In view of the fact that there are so many languages, often utterly diverse from each other with no evidence of any actual relationship, if language were to be called man's greatest achievement it would be an achievement which has been performed by many different men in many different places in very different ways.

The greater portion of our western world is occupied by people who speak languages that are related to one another. It is quite evident that French, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Romanian, and certain other languages have all developed from the ancient Latin

in a process of change and adaptation extending over many centuries. Similarly we can show that English, German, Dutch, Danish, Swedish, Norwegian, and various other languages must go back to a common Germanic source, even though we have no actual evidence dating from the time when this source existed. The same is true of the various Slavic languages. The Latin language, the ancient Greek language, what we can infer to have been the proto-Slavic language, what we can infer to be the proto-Germanic language, and certain other early languages, can be shown to have a definite relationship, leading scholars to assume that they go back to one original source. Therefore we call all of these Indo-European languages, using the term simply to show the wide stretch of land inhabited by people who use them.

Thus it is held by linguistic scholars that at one time there was a single language which scholars call original Indo-European and that a group of languages developed from the precursors of the Slavic group of languages, of the Germanic group of languages, of Latin, of Greek, etc. Then each of these developed into a number of languages as we have them today. It is also thought that at one time there was an original Semitic language, which developed into the various Semitic languages we know, and at one time an original Hamitic language that developed into the various Hamitic languages of North Africa that exist today. Some scholars believe that at one time there was a single Hamitic-Semitic language, which broke into the precursors of the Hamitic and of the Semitic languages respectively, but the evidence for this is much less certain than that for a unity of the various Indo-European languages. There are a few scholars who hold that there was one original language from which the Hamitic-Semitic and the Indo-European languages divided, but this is highly questionable. However, I know of no scholar today who holds that the Hungarian language was originally related to any of these languages in any way whatever. There is no evidence at all to connect Chinese or Japanese with any of the languages mentioned. There are many languages spoken in different parts of India and of southern Africa, and also languages spoken by various groups of North American and South American Indians, which have no relationship with the Indo-European languages at all. As far as present evidence goes, it is quite clear that a great many unrelated languages have developed independently on this earth.

The primitive languages are often very complex. Some of them

can be shown to have hundreds of verb forms, and those who speak them, though they may seem primitive in many ways, have no difficulty in differentiating these hundreds of various forms of each particular verb. As languages develop they tend to become less complex rather than more, and to become less systematic and more lacking in reasonable coherence than in the earlier forms in which they are known to us, as, for instance, in English.

Man was created by God with a language potentiality which animals do not have. We do not know how individual languages have been developed among particular groups. The potentiality of language is clearly a gift of God, rather than a human achievement....

LETTER 2

1959

EGYPTIAN HIEROGLYPHICS

I do not like the term "hieroglyphics" or "sacred letters." Hieroglyphics is a term used to indicate the earlier form of Egyptian writing. In the later days it was still used by the priests on monuments and consequently the Greeks thought it was some sort of priestly writing and therefore called it hieroglyphics. Actually it is simply a form of picture writing.

The statement "the hieroglyphics or sacred letters which the LORD gave to man as a medium of writing, and which are preserved as far as the letter names are concerned in the modern Hebrew alphabet," is again pure speculation. I find no such teaching anywhere in the Bible. Archaeologists have uncovered considerable new material in recent years about the alphabet, but there is no suggestion in this material that it was a revelation of

God, or that it was even known until a comparatively late period in the course of Egyptian history. The earliest form of the alphabet seems to be in an order quite similar to that of the modern Hebrew alphabet, but contains various letters that fell out of use before our present Hebrew alphabet came into existence. These extra letters occur at various points in the alphabet and also at the end, if I recall correctly. Thus it is not my impression that Tau is actually the final letter in the earliest form of the alphabet that is now known. However, I cannot speak with certainty on this as my study of this material was quite a few years back and I do not have the time at the moment to look it up. The statement that "these letters, especially in their original forms and meanings, describe the Messiah in the many aspects of His redemptive career," impresses me as purely imaginative.

In a quick glance at Greek textual apparatus, I have not observed any textual variation in the words "I am alpha and omega." Many manuscripts include immediately after this the words "the beginning and the end." Whether John is reproducing the identical words of Jesus as He used the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet as symbols for the beginning and the end, or whether Jesus actually spoke in Hebrew or Aramaic, and John gave it in Greek, using the proper Greek letters to convey the correct idea to Greek readers, would be impossible to prove. There is, however, no proof that he did not speak in Greek and use the very words that Revelation quotes.

We have absolutely no knowledge of Nimrod except what is contained in Genesis 8-10, and Micah 5:6. The letter *tau* in its present form in the Hebrew alphabet does not look the least bit like a cross, but earlier forms of it are somewhat similar to a cross and the sign was used in early days to indicate a mark just as a man today may make a cross to indicate his mark. The comparison of the cross to the tree of life seems to me quite unlikely.

Revelation 17:8-11 describes the beast, but makes no reference to Nimrod. Isaiah 10:5 is speaking about the ancient Assyrian empire and has no reference to modern events. Isaiah 23:13 impresses me as a reference to the beginning of the Chaldeans in ancient times at a period possibly 2000 years after the time at which Nimrod lived. Micah 5:5-6 is a reference to events in the last days, but its only reference to Nimrod is as a means of identifying Mesopotamia. While a further allusion might be in the

mind of the divine writer, I do not see that we have any evidence on which to feel any certainty that this is the case.

LETTER 3
1977

**THE HEBREW AND GREEK
TEXTS OF SCRIPTURE**

Regarding the question you raised, I would point out first of all that the Greek New Testament has been preserved with remarkable accuracy, and that the differences between its manuscripts are not a fraction as great as those between the Septuagint (LXX) manuscripts. The majority of LXX manuscripts contain many serious errors. Although on the whole the LXX is a splendid witness to the general integrity of the Hebrew Old Testament and at places gives us valuable help towards its interpretation, yet its errors, whether due to the translators themselves or to their copyists, are such that I would say definitely that there is no reason to believe that the Holy Spirit prefers the LXX to the Massoretic Text (MT). Doubtless there are a few places where the LXX has correctly preserved the original, but I believe these are very few in number.

The care taken in copying manuscripts of the LXX was nowhere near as great as the care taken in copying manuscripts of the Hebrew. Examples of this, for instance, can be seen in the way the Hebrew *Tibni* appears as *Thamni* in the LXX, and *Omri* (Heb.) as *Zambri* (LXX) in III Regnorum (1 Kings) 16:21-22.

The text of the LXX is far from being uniform in quality. Whereas the Pentateuch translation closely follows the MT, the same cannot be said of the rest of the Old Testament books. A

rather glaring example of the freedom of amplification is seen in Job 2:9-10. Blaiklock ("Septuagint" in *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*) says:

Ezekiel is not well done, while Jeremiah renders a Hebrew text quite at variance with the traditional one. The tr. of Isaiah is a very free one, similarly at variance with the MT.

Blaiklock concludes:

In short, the LXX, besides manifesting those faults of carelessness, weariness, and ignorance common enough in tr., shows also attempts to correct an existing text which may be well- or ill-founded, deliberate tampering with the story, and a quite unusual freedom in interpolation, improvisation, and modification. It is an uneven tr.

There are a few cases where the MT became corrupted in the course of copying. This was especially true in the case of the letters *daleth* and *resh*, which were very similar in the ancient Hebrew writing, and were easily confused. In parallel passages in Kings and Chronicles sometimes one will have *daleth* and the other *resh* (e.g. 2 Samuel 8:3-10 as compared with 1 Chronicles 18:3-10. See also 2 Samuel 12:31 with 1 Chronicles 20:3 where *resh* appears to have been defectively written for *mem*. Consequently, *hard labor* rather than *mutilation* or *liquidation* is the intended meaning). In such cases the LXX may preserve the original Hebrew before a corruption came in. There are not many such instances, but there seem to be a few.

When a New Testament writer wished to call attention to an Old Testament teaching he would use the familiar Greek translation, if this translation clearly brought out the idea he wished to convey. If it did not do so he would make his own translation directly from the Hebrew, as seems often to be the case in Matthew's Gospel, which shows considerable independence of the LXX. A good example of this is Matthew 8:17 where Matthew made use of the Hebrew text which has "sicknesses" rather than the LXX which has "sins". In this verse Matthew is dealing with Jesus' healing ministry, which Isaiah had predicted. John's Gospel uses the LXX quite freely as does Acts. In about half of his OT quotations Paul makes little change from the LXX; and in the remainder his translation is altered so as to be nearer to the actual Hebrew.

The MT, the LXX, and the NT have all become corrupted to some extent in the course of transmission, though the MT and the NT text have been far less corrupted than the LXX. All our manuscripts today are copies of copies of copies of copies of the originals which we do not have. But we believe that many of the extant manuscripts are a close approximation to the original autographs, and God has permitted a few transcriptional errors to come in so that we may realize that we must compare Scripture with Scripture and not hang too much weight on any one verse taken by itself.

Every evangelical student who examines the matter carefully will come to the conclusion that the MT is a very close approximation to the original, though in a few places it may be corrected in the light of the LXX; also in the NT we have a very close approximation to the original. The Holy Spirit inspired the writers of the original manuscripts of the MT and of the NT so as to keep them from error, and He has providentially preserved the manuscripts to a very great extent. There is no reason to believe that the Holy Spirit prefers the LXX to the MT.

LETTER 4
1983

**DETERMINING THE CORRECT
TEXT OF SCRIPTURE**

Dear Dr MacRae,

.... In the New Scofield Reference Bible and the NIV there are footnotes for Mark 16:9-20, John 5:4 and John 7:53-8:11 which state that these verses were not found in the most ancient manuscripts. In fact John 5:4 is left out of the NIV. Are these verses the Word of God? If not, why are they a part of the Bible, and why are they used as references in footnotes....

Dear ...

Jesus Christ set His approval upon the Old Testament as the Word of God and authenticated the New Testament in advance. These 66 books are God's revelation of the facts He desires us to have. They include all that we need to know in order to live our lives in accordance with His will.

Since printing is now so common it is easy to forget that it was not invented until the 15th century. During the thousands of previous years all books were contained in manuscripts, each of which was individually written by hand.

As originally written the words of the Bible were absolutely free from error. Yet God did not choose to have these original copies preserved. They were probably copied and recopied many times before any copy was made that still exists.

It would be extremely difficult to copy a substantial part of the Bible by hand without making a number of mistakes. Even after careful comparison with the manuscript being copied it is very hard to avoid making an occasional error in copying.

Most of those who made copies of Bible books took extraordinary care to try to avoid errors in copying. Though the books of the Old Testament were originally written centuries before the

time of Christ they have been preserved with remarkable care, though occasionally mistakes have crept in.

God has prevented the continued copying of any mistake that would be harmful to His people or would cause real misunderstanding. Most of the few mistakes in Old Testament manuscripts either produce a sentence that is impossible to understand with certainty or involve a variation with regard to some point of history or geography that is of little significance. Thus a king of Syria called Hadadezer is mentioned seven times in 2 Samuel 8. In the parallel passage in 1 Chronicles 18 some of these verses are almost identical, except that in that chapter his name is spelled Hadarezer. Since Hadad is a common part of Syrian names and Hadar is not, it must have been obvious to those who copied the Old Testament that Hadarezer was a mistake for Hadadezer, particularly since in ancient times the Hebrew letters "d" and "r" were sometimes written in such a way that they were easily confused. Yet the Hebrew scribes copied the text of the Old Testament exactly as they received it, thus showing that they considered themselves as copyists, not as revisers. The degree of dependability of the preservation of the Old Testament books is quite unique.

The New Testament books, which Jesus Christ had authenticated in advance, were written in various parts of the Roman world and copies of them were distributed to the scattered groups of Christians. As these copies wore out new ones were laboriously written by hand. Aside from a few pieces of papyrus that have been recently discovered, every New Testament manuscript that is now known to exist was copied several centuries after the time of Christ. Only a few of these manuscripts date from the 4th or 5th century A.D., but Christians now possess more than two thousand New Testament manuscripts that were made in later centuries.

On the whole there is very close agreement among the New Testament manuscripts that were made between the 6th and 16th centuries (though no two of them agree in every detail).

Far more manuscript material is available for determining the correct text of the New Testament than of any other ancient Greek book. No difference in text that is supported by any sizable number of manuscripts would change any important biblical teachings.

Although only a few New Testament manuscripts that were copied between the 4th and 6th centuries after Christ still exist, there are far more differences between these early manuscripts than between the later ones, and some of the earlier manuscripts lack certain verses that occur in most of the later ones.

In the attempt to determine the exact original text of the New Testament three different approaches are made. Some feel that where there are differences between manuscripts we should accept the reading of the majority of the hundreds of existing manuscript copies of portions of the New Testament. All copies of the Bible were manuscript copies until after the invention of printing in the 15th century. Since most of these copies were made hundreds of years after the time of the original writing many scholars feel that this is not a safe method for determining the correct text.

A second method that is now widely followed is to take the very earliest manuscripts that are available and build our Scripture entirely on them. When the earliest manuscripts discovered to date became available, during the latter part of the 19th century, some scholars carried this method to a rather absurd extreme, sometimes even declaring that a reading or omission found only in one manuscript that was copied a few centuries after the time of Christ should be given more weight than the readings of all the others put together. Hardly anyone would now go to such an extreme, but the tendency among most New Testament scholars today is to pay special attention to the small group of early manuscripts and generally ignore all that were copied later.

A third approach, advanced by a small but extremely vociferous group of people, really amounts to taking the few manuscripts that were known to those who made printed copies of the New Testament between 1515 and 1611 as the sole factor in deciding on the text of the New Testament. Those who follow this approach base their view on the assumption that the Greek text used by the scholars who prepared the King James Version of 1611 must be accepted as right in all respects. If the text is to be based only on a small number of manuscripts, this view must be considered as far less reasonable than the view of those who pay attention only to the earliest manuscripts.

Supporters of this approach declare that they consider the *textus receptus* as the inspired text of God's Word. This phrase, *textus receptus*, did not come into use until a few years after the

publication of the King James Version, when a new edition of the Greek New Testament, with a considerable number of text changes from the edition used by those who prepared the King James Version, was published. The Latin preface to that edition contained the unsupported claim that "this is the text received by all," and somehow the Latin phrase *textus receptus*, which means "received text," came to be used to identify the text used by the translators of the King James Version. Personally I see absolutely no warrant for this third approach, particularly since the *textus receptus* contains a few words or phrases that are missing not only from the earliest manuscripts that still exist, but also from nearly all the later ones.

The Bible is not a series of magical words or verses. It is a collection of books that present the truth that God wants His people to have. Men can often find ways of twisting or reinterpreting the words of any one particular verse but when all the verses that relate to a particular subject are carefully examined, a conclusion can be reached that truly presents the mind of God. After this has been done we often find one verse that clearly summarizes the truth that has been gathered from the study of many, and can then present this verse as a wonderful summary of what God wants us to know.

It is probably because of the natural human tendency to take one verse by itself and try to draw from it more than its words will really bear, that God did not cause any of the original Bible manuscripts to be preserved, but had it passed down to us through a series of many copyings and recopyings, in the course of which minor errors came in at a very few places. These errors are comparatively few but enough to show that we should build our knowledge of truth on Scripture as a whole rather than on any one verse taken by itself.

Most of the passages that are marked in the Scofield Bible as not occurring in some of the ancient manuscripts are found in most of the later manuscripts. A few of them occur in no ancient manuscript; others occur in some ancient manuscripts and are missing in others. There is a great difference in the amount of evidence for or against each group of words that is missing in one or more of the early manuscripts, but none of these questions affect any Christian doctrine.

A good illustration of this is Mark 16:9-20. The two earliest

manuscripts of Mark that have yet come to light do not contain this passage but simply leave a space between Mark 16:8 and the beginning of Luke. I certainly do not believe that Mark ended with the words, "for they were afraid." There must have been an original ending, which may have been lost at an early time. Various endings occur in some of the early manuscripts. Actually the question whether these verses were contained in the Gospel of Mark does not affect our faith at all, since almost everything stated in them is also found in the Gospel of Luke and is certainly true.

Some readers are a bit afraid of these verses because of one statement in them that is not found in Luke. It reads: "They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them."

This statement is a good illustration of how easy it is to misunderstand a verse. Some have taken it as meaning that any Christian should be able to take up poisonous snakes and not be injured, and have given exhibitions to try to prove this. (Some who have done so have even lost their lives.) While this would be a possible interpretation of the verse it is certainly not required. It is equally possible and far better to take it as simply a prediction that there will be occasions on which God will protect from injury a Christian who takes up a poisonous serpent. That prediction was definitely fulfilled by Paul at Malta, as told in Acts 28:3-6. There have doubtless been other cases in which this promise was fulfilled. We do not know whether it was in the original gospel or not, but, rightly interpreted, it is certainly true.

Thus I do not think it is extremely important whether the few verses about which questions have been raised were in the original Scripture or not. None of them present anything that is not clearly taught elsewhere in the Scripture. It may be wise to put less stress on them than on other passages, but it should always be remembered that God does not want us to build too much on any one verse but to consider Scripture as a whole....

LETTER 5

**FACTS ABOUT THE
SO-CALLED "TEXTUS RECEPTUS"**

How did the term "Textus Receptus" originate?

It originated through a highly exaggerated statement -- actually a publisher's blurb -- in the preface to the second edition of the Greek New Testament that was published in Holland in 1633 by the Elzevir brothers. In this Latin preface they called their book "the text which is now received by all, in which we give nothing changed or corrupted." This is how this Latin term Textus Receptus (received text) came to be applied to a particular text of the Greek New Testament. On the European continent, aside from Great Britain, the first Elzevir edition (pub. 1624) was for a long time the standard edition of the Greek New Testament.

Did the King James translators use this Textus Receptus as the basis for their translation?

No. Even the first Elzevir edition was not published until 13 years after the date of the KJV.

What was the Greek text on which the KJV New Testament was based?

It was based on the third edition of the Greek New Testament, issued by the Parisian publisher Stephanus (Latinized form of Estienne) in 1550.

Was the text of Stephanus on which the King James Version was based identical with the later Textus Receptus?

No. The two differed in 287 places.

How many Greek manuscripts agree exactly with the edition published by Stephanus, and how many agree exactly with the edition published by Elzevir?

There is no Greek manuscript that agrees exactly with either of these. Both of them are conflate texts.

Were the scholars who prepared the King James Version convinced that their text was absolutely correct?

No. They recognized the possibility of copyists' errors, and showed this by making marginal notes to variant readings at 13 places. For instance, in Luke 17:36 their marginal note reads: "This 36th verse is wanting in most of the Greek copies." In Acts 25:6, where their text reads: "When he had tarried among them more than ten days," they inserted the following marginal note: "Or, as some copies read, no more than eight or ten days."

What was the source of most of the readings found both in the edition of Stephanus and in that of Elzevir?

Most of the readings in both of these follow the edition of the Greek New Testament prepared by Erasmus, the great enemy of Luther, and published in 1516, the year before the Reformation began.

How many manuscripts agree exactly with Erasmus's edition of the Greek New Testament?

There is no Greek manuscript that agrees exactly with it. Erasmus made it by combining the readings of several manuscripts, none of them earlier than the tenth century A.D., and most of them still later. In some parts of the New Testament he had no manuscript at all, but simply retranslated from the Latin Bible.

To whom was the Greek New Testament prepared by Erasmus dedicated?

It was dedicated to Pope Leo X, the pope who later condemned Luther and the Reformation. It is believed that this pope gave Erasmus's publisher the exclusive right to publish the Greek New Testament for a period of time.

Have better manuscripts been discovered than those on which the Textus Receptus was based?

During the three and one-half centuries since the King James Version was made dozens of manuscripts have been found that were copied many centuries earlier than any manuscript used by Erasmus. The manuscripts he used were copies of copies of copies of copies. When material is copied a number of times by hand, extra words and phrases generally find their way into the text in

the course of copying and occasionally the eye of a copyist may jump from one word of a phrase to a similar one, and thus omit something or perhaps copy it twice.

Does this mean that the Textus Receptus is a harmful text?

The additions in the Textus Receptus do not contain any idea that is not taught elsewhere in the New Testament in parts that agree with the earlier manuscripts. The differences consist mainly of repetition of ideas already contained elsewhere in the Scripture.

Then why bother to hunt for early manuscripts? Why not simply follow the Textus Receptus?

God inspired the manuscripts that came from the hands of the original writers. It is impossible to copy a book of any length without making some mistakes. In the case of the New Testament we have more evidence for determining the text of the original writers than for any other book from ancient times. While there is rarely anything harmful in the later manuscripts, it is desirable, if we truly wish to know God's Word, to base our text, as far as possible, on early manuscripts.

What is meant by the Byzantine text?

Shortly before A.D. 400 the Roman empire was divided into two parts, the western Roman empire and the eastern or Byzantine empire. Within a century after this division the western empire came to an end, and western Europe sank into a state of near barbarism. The Byzantine empire continued, though often in a greatly weakened state, until A.D. 1453.

For about a thousand years, the Greek language was completely unknown in western Europe, but remained the official language of the Byzantine empire. During this time both portions of the former Roman empire contained many monasteries in which the monks were required to do a certain amount of work each day. One way to fulfill this work requirement was to copy manuscripts. In the western monasteries Latin manuscripts, including the Latin Bible, were copied and recopied by the monks. In the Byzantine monasteries Greek manuscripts were copied, including copies of the Greek Bible. Some of these scribes were greatly interested in what they were copying, but to others the copying was merely an assigned task. In the course of copying,

little mistakes invariably came in, so that no two manuscripts of the Latin Bible or of the Greek Bible are exactly the same. During this period, as visitors passed from one Byzantine monastery to another, and manuscripts were interchanged from time to time, the tendency naturally developed to bring the manuscripts into harmony with one another. Where early manuscripts differed slightly there was a tendency to combine the readings. Thus there developed a text which was found, with many variations, in the manuscripts copied in the Byzantine empire in the later middle ages.

Sometimes a whole verse is said to be missing from the best manuscripts. Would not such an omission be obvious because of the verse number being skipped?

Our system of numbering verses is not found in Greek manuscripts. The first publication in which the New Testament was divided into numbered verses was the 4th edition by Stephanus, which he published in Geneva in 1551, after fleeing from Paris.

Some say that the last twelve verses of the Gospel of Mark were not part of the original. What do you think of this?

There is a strong possibility that the end of the Gospel of Mark was lost from certain important manuscripts at a very early time. Some early manuscripts stop abruptly at the end of v.8 of the last chapter. Yet there was doubtless an ending, for it is extremely unlikely that the Gospel of Mark stopped with the words "and they were afraid." It may have been the short ending that is found in some ancient manuscripts, or it may have been the longer ending that occurs in the later manuscripts. Practically everything in this longer ending is also clearly stated in the Gospel of Luke. The question whether it was also stated at the end of the original Gospel of Mark is interesting, but not of any great importance for Christian life or thought. There is only one statement of importance in Mark that is not in Luke: "They shall take up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them." Whether this was part of the original Gospel of Mark or not, it is certainly true that God can protect His people in this way when ever He chooses to do so, as is shown by the experience of Paul described in Acts 28:3-6.

Do early manuscripts omit the word Christ at many places where it is included in the Textus Receptus and thereby show themselves to be unchristian?

The Gospels always speak of our Lord as Jesus. The book of Acts uses the word "Jesus" alone 35 times, "Jesus Christ" 10 times and "the Lord Jesus Christ" 6 times in the KJV. It would be quite erroneous to conclude from this that the author of Acts does not like the word "Christ." Different writers show different preferences in this regard. As scribes copied manuscripts in century after century it was easy for a scribe unintentionally to write a longer form even where a shorter one occurred, so the word Christ occurs more frequently in later manuscripts than in earlier ones. Yet even in the latest manuscripts we find that Jesus is often called by shorter terms. The use of longer phrases in referring to the Lord does not necessarily show greater piety or greater loyalty to Christ.

It is sometimes said that since God gave an inerrant Bible in the original we can be sure that He would cause that it be preserved without error. What do you think of this statement?

This is the sort of argument that rests on human ideas and not on God's revelation. One might as well say that if God gave His Son to die for the sins of all who will believe on His name we can then be sure that every person who has lived since that time would be fully informed about Him. We know that this is not true. Millions of people have died without ever hearing about Christ. There are people in this country who have attended church faithfully all their lives, but have only heard the Social Gospel and have never been told how they could be saved through Christ. We know that whatever God does is best, but we do not have the wisdom to say that He must have done things in a certain way.

God has caused that the books of the Bible should be marvelously preserved. We can get extremely near to the precise text as it came from the hands of the authors, but there are many minor points on which we cannot be sure. None of these points affect any important fact of Christian doctrine or life.

God could have caused His Word to have been written on tables of stone and preserved in a room kept at exactly the same temperature, protected from any change, like the authoritative

standards kept by the U.S. government. He did not choose to do so. This is a simple fact. No two manuscripts of the New Testament exactly agree. No manuscript agrees exactly with the Textus Receptus.

There is more material available to see how the Bible has been translated and to try to get near to the exact words of the original authors than of any other book from ancient times. We can be very sure that we are very near to the original text. We cannot say that we have it exactly. Maybe some of us would have done it differently, but this is the way God did it.

What about such statements as: "Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." (Matt 5:18) and "the scripture cannot be broken." (John 10:35)?

Jesus did not say that not a jot or tittle would pass from the law till every tiniest part had been copied perfectly. What He said was that no tiny part of the meaning of the Word of God as given to the original writers would fail to be fulfilled in exactly the way that God intended. Man cannot break what God has ordained. These verses refer to fulfillment, not to precise copying.

What is your opinion of the New American Standard Bible?

No translation is perfect. There are always places at which it is extremely difficult to render a passage into a different language. The KJV was very excellent for its day, but some of its renderings are questionable. The New American Standard Bible was prepared by consecrated Christian scholars and represents an attempt to give an accurate presentation in modern English of the text found in the older manuscripts of the Bible, with occasional notes pointing out differences in late manuscripts. Christians should be grateful for the devoted effort that has gone into this excellent translation.

Should a denomination or association of churches oppose a version solely on the ground that it is not based on the textus receptus?

The important thing about a version is its accuracy in translating the text of the Bible. The KJV was greatly used of God for 300 years until much of its language became quite archaic, as the English language changed. It is foolish to ask young people to

learn the language of 300 years ago in order to read the Bible. Even mature Christians do not know what is meant by such phrases as "we do you to wit" (2 Corinthians 8:1) and "thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing" (Psalm 5:6). God's people need an accurate translation in the language of today. This is extremely vital. It is wrong to ask Christians to oppose a translation because it tries to follow the ancient manuscripts rather than a text based largely on Erasmus's edition. To do so is to make an idol of the Textus Receptus, or of the King James Version. God does not want His people to be idolaters!

LETTER 6
1967

TRANSLATING THE WORD OF GOD

God gave us His Word in Hebrew and Greek -- not in an artificial or antiquated language, but in the language of the people who were living when the books of the Bible were written. Through these wonderful writings, and through the messages of those who studied them, He led people to turn to Himself and showed them the marvelous riches of salvation.

The spread of the Gospel took a tremendous step forward when Luther put the Bible into the language of the people in Germany and when Tyndale did the same for the people of England. For three and a half centuries the King James Version of the Bible has been a great blessing to the English-speaking world.

There probably never was a better translation of any book into any language than the King James Version into the language of the people of its time. The committee that prepared it included many of the best scholars of the day, and all of them were godly

Bible-believing men. It is true that the publicizers of the Revised Standard Version have declared that there was criticism of the doctrine of the King James Version when it was issued, but the only actual evidence that I have ever known them to give of any such claim is the fact that the editors of the King James Version stated in advance that they supposed that their doctrine would be criticized. I know of only one outstanding man of that time who attacked the King James Version. He was one of the best scholars of the day, but had such peculiar personal characteristics that it was very difficult to work with him. Although he criticized it roundly it is not my impression that he ever questioned the loyalty of its editors to belief in the absolute inerrancy of God's Word.

The Modernism of the present day, with its denial of dependability of Scripture, is a recent development. At the time of King James most Christians accepted without question the absolute inerrancy of God's Word. Consequently they were not as careful about stating the doctrine as we have to be today when it is so blatantly attacked in many quarters. I have seen attempts made even to claim that Calvin and Luther did not believe in inerrancy, because of the rather confused interpretations that they sometimes made of particular verses of Scripture. However, from each of them we have many clear statements of their thorough going belief that God's Word is true, and that when we find in it statements that we do not understand we can be sure that if we knew all the facts we would see that the Word of God is absolutely dependable.

The question as to whether the Gideons should continue to distribute the King James Version or to substitute some other version is to quite an extent a practical problem, and its determination requires examination of certain facts to which only you have access. [The correspondent was an Executive Director of Gideons International.] Only you can decide whether the copies in the hotel rooms are having the same life-giving effect upon casual guests as was the case forty or fifty years ago. If the proportion of such results is the same, we can safely conclude that the King James Version will still be an effective instrument for Gideon work for some time to come. If, however, your evidence should prove that these results, while still very impressive, are definitely inferior to those of the past, it is very possible that this may mean that the substitution of a version which is almost

identical with the King James Version, but in which the archaic words have been replaced with words that are understandable to the average person today, would be the correct procedure. If, as a third possibility, you should find that the results are so much less than those of forty years ago as to lead you to think it probable that the average man with no biblical background, on picking up the Bible and beginning to read at random, would find the language so strange to him that he would have little urge to read further, you might then safely conclude that the time has come when it is necessary to give very careful consideration to the possibility of substitution of a version in the language of today.

As a member of the Committee on Revision of the Scofield Bible, which met in Chicago twice a year from 1954 to 1960, I presented at the very first meeting of the Committee the desirability of changing those words which had become quite archaic, or which had completely changed their meaning. As a result, the Committee, while leaving the syntax of the King James Version intact, and practically never making any change in word order or in sentence structure, altered about an average of one word per page, showing the reading of the KJV in the margin. This New Scofield Reference Bible, which is to be published by the Oxford University Press on April 13, contains a minimum number of changes in the language of the King James Version, trying, as it does, to maintain the identical meaning of the original version, but to replace words which have become completely archaic with words that will give the same meaning in modern English. It is a comparatively slight step, and yet it adds tremendously to the readability of the text.

If the third alternative should seem to you to be necessary, you do indeed face a difficult problem, since today so many biblical scholars have been infected with rationalism and disbelief in the Word of God. I enclose a copy of my tract on the Revised Standard Version. In it I deal particularly with the Old Testament. I have confined myself to instances where it seems to me to be easy to demonstrate the fact that a strong prejudice against belief in the possibility that God might predict details of the life of Christ hundreds of years in advance led the translators of the RSV to produce renderings that go contrary to all the evidence. This was indeed unfortunate, since they managed to retain a large amount of the splendid literary quality of the King James Version. I do not feel nearly so bad about their New Testament as I

do about their Old Testament.

To my mind one of the great reasons for the excellence of the King James Version was the fact that the committee that prepared it had before them the results of eighty years of effort on the part of many scholars to render the Bible into the English of their day. There are thousands of places in the Bible where a glance at the original Hebrew or Greek brings out ideas, even to one whose knowledge of these languages is fairly rudimentary, that are not easy to include in a translation into another language. Translation is a very difficult problem. The features of every language are unique, and when two languages are as different from each other as Hebrew and English it is very hard to reproduce ideas that are quite obvious in the original in approximately the same number of words with at least a certain amount of word-to-word correspondence. While it is important, for careful biblical interpretation, that men be well trained in the original languages, the great problem in a translation is not so much determining the meaning as finding a way to express this precise meaning briefly and clearly in English. The translators of the King James Version had the advantage of many efforts that had been made to do this. Even a rather poor translation will sometimes hit upon an excellent way to render a certain idea, and the translators of the King James Version were thus able to pick words and phrases from many different translations in making their version. I wish that we were in a position today where a group of scholars could examine a great number of efforts that had been made to translate the Bible into present-day English and could select from them the best phrases and thus could prepare a version for our day as good as the King James Version was for its day. Of course this could be done only by Bible-believing scholars, since those whose naturalistic presuppositions make it impossible for them to believe what the Bible says are naturally led to avoid many ideas that are clearly taught in the original.

At present an effort is being made in this direction by a committee on which a prominent member is Dr Burton L. Goddard of Gordon Theological Seminary in Wenham, Massachusetts. There have been many efforts to translate the New Testament into English in recent years, and it is entirely possible that this committee may be able from them to select the words and phrases that will enable it to make a version of the New Testament in present day English that will be worthy to stand alongside the King

James Version. I do not believe that a sufficient number of such efforts to translate the Old Testament have yet been made, or that it is possible as yet to produce an Old Testament translation that will be comparable in value with the King James translation of the Old Testament.

I suppose that you are familiar with many of the translations into English that have been made in recent years. Some have been made by Bible-believing scholars, some by those who thought the Bible contained error, some even by those who felt that it was simply a relic of ancient ideas. Some, like the New English Bible and the version of J. B. Phillips, are paraphrases in which no attempt is made to stick to the order of words or to make anything like a word-for-word translation, but simply to give the general idea of the original. My wife feels that the J. B. Phillips paraphrase of the Epistles of Paul was very well done, but that the Gospels and Revelation are not nearly so well done. I myself have not made sufficient examination of it to form a judgment. The New English Bible seems to have departed far more from being a real translation than the Revised Standard Version did, and is much more of a paraphrase.

Ultimately the question boils down to what your results from the use of the Bible throughout the English-speaking world show as to whether a change is needed. If so, the next question is: What change is available? Perhaps Dr Goddard might have suggestions, if you should care to get in touch with him. Only harm could come from circulating any version prepared by men who are not thorough Bible-believers.

LETTER 7
1972

MODERN ENGLISH VERSIONS

Your question about the best version to make available for Indian students is not an easy one. We who were brought up on the King James Version tend to feel that its language is perfectly intelligible. Yet a few years ago I thought I would enjoy reading the *Essays of Montaigne* and purchased a copy. I found that the Preface stated that the translation by Florio (made at about the same time as the King James" Version) preserves the flavor of Montaigne better than any subsequent translation, and therefore would be the translation used in this edition, even though its language is somewhat archaic. I began to read it and soon found myself bogged down with so many unfamiliar words that my interest lagged and I never did read more than a small part of the book. I fear that this is the experience of many Americans when they undertake to read the King James Version. It was a most excellent translation in the English language as it was spoken several hundred years ago, but the language has greatly changed since that time, and it must be even more difficult for Indian students who have learned contemporary English, since so many of its verb forms and word usages are those of a bygone day.

Most scholars believe that in the course of the years copyists introduced minor errors, since it is impossible to copy a book of any length by hand without some mistakes creeping in. In some cases they believe that a copyist put a note in the margin indicating his interpretation of a passage, and then a later copyist thought these marginal notes to be part of the text, so that manuscripts from later centuries include quite a number of words that were not in the manuscripts of the early centuries.

About a century ago two great English scholars named Westcott and Hort advanced a theory that would discard every thing that is not found in the two earliest manuscripts that we possess. Their theory doubtless went too far, for there were probably some omissions and some mistakes in those two early manuscripts. Most scholars today think that the truth is somewhere

between their view and the one that accepts every word in the Textus Receptus, based largely on Erasmus's comparison of the few late manuscripts that he possessed.

I do not know of any case where the omission of words that most present-day scholars think were erroneously inserted in the later manuscripts makes any important difference in the sense or affects any doctrine. Yet it does mean that there are a number of minor differences between the Greek text that most scholars use today and the one that was used by the makers of the King James Version.

It would have been entirely possible for God to have had the Scripture written on tables of stone, preserved in a room kept at constant temperature like the place in Washington where the standard foot measure is kept, so as to retain every letter exactly as it was in the original. It does not seem, however, that this is what He did, since no two manuscripts are exactly alike, though differences are usually of very slight importance. However, the differences in the Greek text used in most recent translations are comparatively slight. Unfortunately many of these versions, such as the Revised Standard Version and the New English Bible, depart very radically, particularly in the Old Testament, from the text that they say they are translating, and at some points make translations that do away with the deity of Christ.

You refer to *The Living Bible -- A Paraphrase* by Taylor. Many parts of this paraphrase are very good. It often makes the sense clearer than a direct translation could, but sometimes, like any paraphrase, it gives the idea of the translator, and thus goes beyond what can be clearly proven from the original.

The Berkeley Version of the New Testament is rather good, particularly in the recent new edition (Zondervan). Its Old Testament version is less good.

I have not myself used the New American Standard Bible as yet. I am told that it sticks very closely to the text, but is somewhat wooden.

I have given some assistance to the New York Bible Society in preparing the NIV translation of the Old Testament.

LETTER 8
1975

TRANSLATION PROBLEMS

There is great need of a version in good English that is truly accurate. Sometimes I have great hopes for the NIV and at other times I tend to become a bit discouraged, particularly about the Old Testament section.

The reason for my discouragement could be briefly summarized under two headings:

1. Sixty years ago there were a few very conservative scholars in established seminaries, but hardly anyone who held to an evangelical viewpoint was involved in giving a doctoral program in Semitics or Old Testament. In recent years a very considerable number of bright young fellows have taken doctorates in the Semitic field, but practically every one of these has done the greater part of his advanced work under scholars with critical or radical viewpoints. Although I believe that everyone who is working on the NIV desires that it be entirely true to the Scriptures, it is my impression that most have been influenced by liberal and critical teachings in ways they do not realize. This inevitably affects the translation at many points.

2. It has particularly bothered me that Kohler-Baumgartner is often quoted as an authority.

Examining a list of meanings is only a very superficial expedient, as words in different languages rarely correspond exactly. There is only an overlapping; generally each word in either language has areas and possibilities of meaning not found in connection with the other. Inevitably each covers certain aspects of the meaning of the other and includes possible meanings that the other does not cover. When using Kohler-Baumgartner this problem is further compounded by the fact that the meanings were stated in German and the English is only a translation of the German, and sometimes a mistranslation. As a result English meanings are sometimes given that have comparatively little

relationship to the actual Hebrew. I am not particularly interested in what these two modernists thought a word meant, though I am greatly interested in what evidence they may give from usage, *which is really the only proper basis for deciding the meaning of a word.*

In his inaugural address as Professor at Princeton Theological Seminary Dr Robert Dick Wilson told of his irritation at hearing a great debate between two prominent Presbyterian theologians in which the argument was largely based on statements in dictionaries that had been written by unbelievers and he declared his determination to get behind the dictionary makers in his study of Hebrew and investigate the real evidence of usage.

Many seem to think of the dictionary by Brown, Driver, and Briggs as antiquated since it has not been revised for many years. Yet the value of BDB is not to learn what these three modernists thought to be the meaning of a word but to see their full list of passages for each suggested meaning. This is given far more fully in BDB than in any other dictionary I know of. In BDB one can note at a glance when they present 20 or 30 (or sometimes far more) instances where they consider a certain meaning applicable, and when they suggest a very different meaning in only one or two instances. In all such cases the one or two should be carefully checked in the original to see just what the evidence is and to draw a conclusion unaffected by the modernist bias of the three dictionary makers. When there are a large number of instances they may be wrong (and in important passages their ideas should be checked), but the chances of error are much smaller. Simply quoting a meaning from Köhler-Baumgartner, as has been done in many cases, can easily lead to erroneous conclusions and is in my opinion very dangerous. It seems to me that a good concordance of the original is actually of far greater value in determining what a word really means than the book by Köhler-Baumgartner.

I have recommended the NIV New Testament to many people and am pushing it whenever I get an opportunity. It pleases me greatly whenever I see it coming into use. Most to whom I have given copies or to whom I have recommended it have spoken very enthusiastically about it. Yet it has bothered me recently to note that in the New Testament there are many instances in which the Greek word *sarx* is translated "the sinful nature." Does not

this go a long way toward making it a paraphrase rather than a translation? I wonder whether *sarx* is ever used outside of Christian writings to mean "the sinful nature." Would it not be better simply to give what the original says and let the student interpret it for himself, perhaps with a footnote about unusual usages, rather than to give a paraphrase? I do hope that the Old Testament will be a sound evangelical and accurate version and will not be too much affected by Köhler-Baumgartner or by ideas lingering in the back of the heads of individuals who have studied under modernist scholars.

LETTER 9
1986

THE TEXT OF THE KING JAMES VERSION

I was sorry to read your statement that "there are increasing numbers of individuals holding or turning to the concept that the King James Version is the only word of God in the English language." It was indeed a very fine version, remarkably accurate, though, like all translations, containing a few mistakes. It was written in beautiful English, and the English language of nearly four hundred years ago was a far more beautiful language than the English language as spoken and understood today.

Unfortunately, the English language has so greatly changed in the course of the centuries that there is probably no one living who easily understands the meaning of all its verses. The average reader misses a great deal of its content because of his ignorance of the meaning of words in the English of the 17th century, the usage of syntactical forms, etc.

Thus, although the KJV always follows strict grammatical principles as to the difference between "thou" and "thee" and the difference between "you" and "ye", I have never come across a person who could tell me without investigation exactly what is the difference in meaning between these four words. Some will say that the use of "thou's" shows reverence. If so why did Jesus wish to show reverence to Satan (or to Peter) in Matthew 16:23? Such differences are minor in comparison to the many points at which the average reader must have the meaning explained to him or else he will receive a false impression, not through any error on the part of the King James translators, but simply from the fact that the English language has so greatly changed.

Ministers of churches that use the New International Version or some other of the good modern translations, report that they are able to cover much more ground in a sermon since they no longer have to spend a fourth of their time explaining what that antiquated language means.

Of course it must be recognized that the English language was not even in existence when the original Bible was written and the really important questions are: (1) how true is a translation of the New Testament to the original Greek? and (2) how near is the Greek text that is translated to the autographs, of which no copies exist? In my opinion there are two valid procedures for determining the proper Greek text of the New Testament. One is to base it on the very earliest manuscripts and give them tremendous importance, sometimes even allowing one of them to offset the readings of hundreds of later manuscripts. A second is to take the reading of the majority of the manuscripts, even though some of these are copies of copies of copies, etc. I believe that the proper course would be between the two, paying attention to both. The KJV follows neither of these methods, since most of the manuscripts (including all of the earliest ones) were not available when it was made. Its Greek text is based on the few manuscripts that happened to be in Basel when Erasmus prepared the first printed Greek New Testament. During the next century a few changes were made on the basis of a very few other manuscripts. A publisher who printed an edition of the Greek New Testament twenty years after the KJV was issued declared in his blurb that his publication was "the text received by everybody", using the Latin

words *textus receptus*. Even if all the people at that time had received that particular text, which probably was not the case, this was a misleading claim for the accuracy of that particular edition.

There were two printings of the KJV in 1611, which differed slightly in dozens of places. No one can prove which of the two printings was the earlier. A number of other changes were made in succeeding years....

English-speaking people in the 17th century were fortunate to have had a very excellent translation in the language that they spoke. No one today can fully understand Elizabethan English. Even if a translation were not quite as good as that one, but is understandable by the average person today, it would be a far better means for studying and propagating the Word of God....

LETTER 10
1984

IS THE KING JAMES VERSION THE ACTUAL WORD OF GOD?

Satan is always trying to get Christians to take their eyes off Christ and center their attention on secondary matters. One of his cleverest devices is to make people think that the KJV of 1611 is the actual Word of God. In fact the Bible was written partly in Hebrew and partly in Greek and all of it was completed before A.D. 100, more than 1500 years before the KJV was written. The language used in the KJV of 1611 did not even exist at that time. During the ages many attempts have been made to render the Bible into the languages that people spoke at various times, and translations have been made into hundreds of languages. There are many good English translations.

Actually it is impossible to make an exact translation from one language to another. It is for this reason that our School puts great emphasis on learning Hebrew and Greek so as to be able to understand the original Scripture.

More than 370 years ago God gave the English-speaking world a wonderful treasure in the KJV of 1611. It is one of the finest translations that has ever been made of any book into any language. This was a great blessing to the English-speaking world. Unfortunately, there was another side to it. A person living in 1611 would have had great difficulty in understanding a book written in English 370 years earlier, for the language had greatly changed. Now the language has greatly changed again. No one today can really understand every word in the KJV. Some words have so changed their meaning that they are absolutely meaning less to people today. This is not half so important a problem as the fact that hundreds of words have changed their meaning a little and consequently give an entirely wrong idea today. Personally I use the New International Version published by the Zondervan Company. I was one of the hundred or so scholars who helped in the translation of this version. I consider it an excellent version, not quite as good as the KJV was for its day but far better for our day than a translation made in a language that few really understand now.

It grieves me to see people led by the Devil into fighting over secondary matters and particularly to see them trying to persuade people to put their faith in something that has so many verses that are not really intelligible to people living today. I do not wish to oppose such people for most of them are real believers in Christ but I would like to free them from this foolish obsession. The arguments they present to support their claim that 370 years ago God enabled a group of men to make a perfect translation of his Word simply do not make sense.

In recent years many ancient manuscripts of the Bible that were not known when the KJV was made have been found. They do not make any great difference and do not affect any vital doctrine, but they enable us to know what the original Scripture said with greater exactitude than was possible over 300 years ago.

It is utter nonsense to say that God enabled people in 1611 to know more than anyone knew during the many centuries before or since....

LETTER 11
1982

**THE KING JAMES VERSION
AND TRANSLATION PROBLEMS**

Thank you for your letter of April 6 in which you said, "I am not a Ph.D. or a scholar, only a sinner saved by grace." Personally I would gladly echo your statement. While I have spent many years studying the Scriptures in the original languages and investigating related areas of thought, I know that nothing I have ever done is worth even mentioning in comparison with the great blessing of being saved by grace. God sent His Son to this earth to save us from our sins. Apart from Jesus Christ there is no hope for any of us.

My heart was stirred by the account of your experience with the junior boys. At their age they are ready to accept almost anything they are told. When they are a little older they will be ready to reject almost anything they are told unless they can be given sufficient reason. At their present impressionable age it is tremendously important that we give them a true picture. If we do so they are far more apt to stand true in the years ahead than they will be if they have an oversimplified idea of what Christians believe. If their understanding should be hazy it would be easy for unbelieving instructors to make them waiver or even abandon Christianity altogether.

Some time ago I heard about a child who had been told that Satan Claus came down the chimney every Christmas Eve bringing presents for the children. The child reached an age at which the parents decided he should be informed that this had been just a pleasant fantasy, so they told him that Santa Claus didn't really exist at all. The child then said, "Oh, and isn't there any Jesus either?" If the children are to have an understanding that can stand the onslaught of modern unbelief, we need to distinguish carefully between the truth and any false ideas that may have gathered around it. If they believe that the black-covered book

they use in Sunday School is in some way a magical thing, or that the English words that it contains are the very words that Jesus spoke, they are apt to become easy prey later on for those who would destroy their faith.

God did not leave us in ignorance. He revealed Himself to the prophets of old and led them as they wrote down his message, part of it in Hebrew, part in Aramaic, and part in Greek. When we study it in the original languages and compare Scripture with Scripture, every idea that we can properly draw from it represents God's truth and is without error. If we take only one or two verses alone we can easily misunderstand them, and may even adopt ideas that are false, since almost any sentence in any language, if taken by itself, can be interpreted in more than one way.

If one spends a substantial amount of time studying any foreign language he soon discovers that there is no such thing as an exact translation from one language to another. When I first went to Germany to study I did not know German very well. When I finished my first meal in a restaurant I was anxious to get my bill so I could leave. I looked up "bill" in my little dictionary and found two German words for it. One of them meant "an account" and the other meant "the bill or beak of a bird". If I had asked for the wrong one the waiter would have wondered what I meant!

It is rare that a word in one language exactly corresponds to a word in another language. Many have two different meanings, sometimes not at all related. "Light" may be the opposite of "heavy" or it may be the opposite of "dark". In almost any other language these would be two different words. That other language in turn would have words that contain two ideas that English would have to express by different words. A word is not a point; it is an area of meaning, and the areas rarely correspond in different languages.

If children get the idea that the words of any English translation are exactly what God originally said they become easy targets for the unbelief that they will encounter in almost any public school or university. If they know what we really mean when we say that the Bible is a revelation from God, and understand what a translation really is, it will be far more difficult to lead them astray from the great truths that are plainly taught in any translation that has been honestly made.

Any translation is only an approximation. Four centuries and a half ago William Tyndale determined to make a good translation of the Bible into English. The church leaders, who were accustomed to reading the Bible in the excellent Latin translation that St. Jerome had made a thousand years earlier, did not see any need for a change, but Tyndale persisted, and after a great deal of hard work he was able to publish a very good translation of the Bible. During the next eighty years many different groups prepared and published Bible translations. Some of these were excellent in one way and some in another.

King James was stupid in some ways. In some respects he was really a scoundrel. He put many hindrances in the way of the Bible believers in England, and himself wrote a book on the divine right of kings. Yet he rendered one excellent service by picking a group of qualified scholars and setting them free to select the best phrases and sentences out of the many translations that had been made during the previous eighty years and fitting them together to try to give the sense of the Bible in the English of their time. The result of their work came to be called the King James Version.

The King James Version is a very excellent translation, but, like every translation, it has its faults, and there are a few places where its translation is definitely in error. It was a marvelous gift to its own day but as the language gradually changed many of its sentences came to obscure the truth rather than to express it, not because of faults in it but because the English Language has changed.

Every language is constantly changing. These changes come slowly and often we are not aware of them at all. When I was a boy everyone used the word "terrific" to mean "horrible" or "very bad". When a young man asked me, a few years ago, to give three lectures to a group of Christian students at a university, I named three topics. The young man immediately said, "Oh, that's terrific!" I thought he meant that it was very bad and I should think of other subjects, but I soon saw by his facial expression that he meant the exact opposite. To almost anyone who is now over 50 years of age the word "terrific" means "horrible" or "very bad": to almost anyone under 50 it now means "very good" or "excellent".

There are probably about 60 words in the King James Version

that very few people of today understand at all, and there are perhaps another hundred that have changed their meaning enough to give a contemporary reader a false impression when he reads them in the Old English. One of the great verses in the King James Version begins with the words, "Be careful for nothing" (Philippians 4:6). It really means "Do not be anxious about any thing." No one today uses the word "careful" to mean "anxious". Its meaning has completely changed. We urge our children to be careful about everything and would be shocked if someone told them not to be careful. Another verse begins with the words, "Moreover, brethren we do you to wit." These words which begin 2 Corinthians 8:1 do not convey any meaning in today's English.

All my life I have gloried in the words of the King James Version, but now that I am also using a modern version I begin to realize how many of them were just words to me. Thus I often recited the words in John 1:16, "And of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace," but I never stopped to think, what does "grace for grace" mean? In modern English the natural interpretation of these words would be that we receive God's grace in exchange for our grace. Yet this would be quite contrary to the biblical teaching of the free grace of God. The New International Version translates it, "From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another," and that is probably the exact idea that an English-speaking person three hundred years ago would have received from the words "grace for grace." The New American Standard Version and the New International Version are accurate translations of the Bible in today's language, made by earnest, consecrated Christian scholars.

It is a shame that the Modernists realized this need and undertook to fill it before we did. Over thirty years ago they appointed committees to prepare translations in today's language and the results were the Revised Standard Version and The New English Bible. There are many points at which these translations give excellent renditions of the precise meaning of the original text, but unfortunately both of them are seriously marred by the fact that they have so twisted almost every Old Testament prediction of Christ as to conceal its meaning, and some of their mistranslations are entirely without warrant aside from the prejudice of the translators. Later on two different groups of Bible believing scholars were formed, one of which prepared the New

American Standard Bible and the other the New International Version. More recently a third group has been working on a version to be issued by Thomas Nelson, Inc. I know that the intention of all three groups of consecrated Christians has been to be absolutely true to the Scripture and to its great doctrines, but to put it into the language of today, just as the makers of the King James Version attempted to put it into the language of their time.

The Latin translation of St Jerome was a great blessing to the people of his day as it gave them a dependable translation in the language they actually spoke. When the Bible was translated into English, Christianity took a big step forward because the people now had the Bible in the language that they themselves spoke. The King James Version was a very fine version for its day, but today the progress of the Gospel is greatly hampered by the fact that, apart from extensive research to determine what its various words and expressions meant nearly 400 years ago, nobody really understands what all its statements mean.

We live in a day when unbelief is spreading widely. If Satan can get us to obscure the Word of God by insisting that people read it in archaic language he is accomplishing one of his greatest victories. God's people need a Bible in the language they speak today.

LETTER 12
1969

IS THE KING JAMES VERSION RELIABLE?

You ask whether the King James Version can be considered a reliable Bible today, and also say: "In the light of these manuscripts, can the Williams translation and the New English Bible be considered accurate and reliable?" In answer I would say that the New English Bible is not really a translation but a paraphrase which presents the ideas that its modernistic committee thinks are either contained in the Bible, or should be. It may occasionally use expressions that are helpful in bringing out the thought of the original, but anything that it says needs to be carefully checked with other versions before one can safely place dependence upon it. Although I have not studied it as much as I have studied the Revised Standard Version, I have been informed by those who have done so that it is far less dependable than even the Revised Standard Version.

As to the Williams translation, it is my impression that it was made by a good man who tried to render the original as accurately as he could. He doubtless made mistakes, as any man will. There is apt to be a greater check on such matters in a translation made by a group than is possible when a translation is made by an individual. No doubt there are particular matters in the Williams translation that are not fully accurate, but it is my impression that it is quite generally reliable.

As to the King James Version one can safely say that there is little manuscript evidence to show inaccuracies in the King James Version. There may be particular points at which new light can be thrown on certain minor matters, but there is no point of major importance at which the King James Version is definitely unreliable. Sometimes careful study of the original can suggest a much better rendering than the King James Version contains, but these are generally at points where more than one interpretation of the original is possible.

It is often difficult for those who have not themselves done translation work to realize that no version can be absolutely accurate and reliable. This is because it is impossible to make an absolutely accurate and reliable translation of anything from one language to another. It is comparatively seldom that a particular word in one language has exactly the same meaning in another language. The precise meanings of expressions and verb forms, and particularly of prepositions, vary greatly from language to language. Almost every sentence in any language has various possibilities of interpretation. The possibilities will be very different in any translation from what they are in the original. The translators of the King James Version did a very careful and scholarly job. One can safely say that there has never been a better translation from one language to another than this translation of the Bible into the English language as it was spoken at that time. The greatest difficulty with the King James Version comes from the fact that in the past 300 years the English language has so changed at many points that a word will have a different meaning. Thus "science" in the King James Version means what we would mean by "philosophy" today, and "philosophy" in the KJV indicates what we would call "science" today. The word "let" was often used to mean "hinder," as when Paul said that he wanted to go to Rome, "but was let hitherto." Many words have developed less significant changes of meaning which can sometimes be confusing. New manuscripts can give us additional light on minor points here and there, but all the additional manuscripts have simply increased our certainty that on most of the vital matters the manuscripts that were available in the time of King James were generally quite accurate.

The Book of Isaiah as contained in the Dead Sea Scrolls, and in the King James Version, are for all practical purposes identical. Unfortunately, this particular scroll was a rather poor copy, and contains many minor mistakes. On all major matters it agrees with the Book of Isaiah as it has been handed down to us. I have been informed that in the RSV there were a few instances where renderings were changed in view of the Dead Sea Scroll of Isaiah, but that in later sessions of the committee it was decided to abandon most of them, since this particular scroll is so very similar to the manuscripts of Isaiah that we already possess.

In my opinion one of the great needs of our day is a translation that accurately presents the Word of God in the English language

as it is spoken today. Neither the RSV nor the New English Bible is such a version. In the New Scofield Reference Bible, of which I was one of the editors, we changed about one word on a page, on the average, so as to make it more understandable to present day readers. We tried to keep the meanings exactly as in the KJV, since we were not making a new translation, but simply making the KJV more usable for today. Many people have spoken very highly of the great improvement in understanding that this has given. In all such cases we placed the rendering of the KJV in the margin. The only valid reason for needing a new version today is the way that the English language has changed. Those who try to belittle the accuracy or reliability of the KJV in favor of the RSV are merely showing their ignorance and lack of scholarship.

LETTER 13

1977

UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

It was indeed a pleasure to hear from you, and to read your commendation of my stand for the inerrancy of God's Word. I have always had the highest regard for your evangelistic and pastoral work. In those very important areas of activity in which you have accomplished so much, I confess myself to be utterly inferior to you.

My own life has been devoted to Hebrew and Greek scholarship and I believe I know something about these areas. I do not feel that it is at all egotistical for me to consider that my competence in technical biblical studies is just as much greater than yours as is your competency in the field of evangelism and pastoral work as compared to mine.

It is good of you to offer to send me a copy of Wilbur Pickering's book. He was so gracious as to send me a copy himself. Seeing this evidence of the great amount of work that he had

done, I wrote thanking him and asking for more information about himself -- what his present activities are.... I was disappointed to get no answer to this letter for I would have been interested to learn more about him.

It grieved me to see that Pickering devotes a great part of his book to discussing the theory of Westcott and Hort. This is like whipping a dead horse! I do not know of anyone living today who follows the theory of Westcott and Hort, though I remember how strongly it was supported by Dr Machen, that great defender of the faith.

God has caused the Bible to be so well preserved that every idea that can be legitimately drawn from its contents is absolutely true and without error. He has so preserved the New Testament that if we make a consensus of the readings of any considerable group of Greek manuscripts, it clearly presents all the basic Christian doctrines without including anything that is erroneous. There is nothing anywhere else comparable to the wonder of this fact. The variations that God permitted to arise show that He does not want us to waste our time arguing about minutiae, for no two manuscripts are exactly the same. Paul sometimes refers to Jesus, sometimes to Christ Jesus, sometimes to Christ, and sometimes to Jesus Christ. It does not make the slightest difference whether in a particular passage he uses the full phrase or only the divinely given name Jesus. In either case the truth is exactly the same.

It is obvious to anyone who studies Hebrew and Greek that God has not preserved His Word without allowing small verbal differences between manuscripts to creep in, though He has kept everything vital entirely free from error. Thus in I Samuel 13:1 the Massoretic text says "Saul was one year old when he became king, and he reigned over Israel two years." Of course this makes no sense, so the King James Version changed it to "Saul reigned one year; and when he had reigned two years over Israel, Saul chose him three thousand men of Israel." In about a dozen other cases where a king's reign is introduced, exactly the same Hebrew phrases are used, and the translation I have given above is the correct one for these words. The reason for the confusion is obvious. At an early time one end of two lines of a manuscript was torn off, so his age and the number of tens in the length of his reign disappeared. Although that result made no sense, later scribes copied exactly what they found, and this has continued to

this day, a remarkable evidence of the determination of the scribes to copy exactly what was written, even if it was obviously wrong. No one knows how old Saul was when he became king or how long he reigned. Some translations insert "twenty," but this is purely a guess. However, no error is introduced by this miscopying. There are a number of other places in the Old Testament where it is equally clear that copying errors have occurred. It would be natural for a larger number to be found in the New Testament, since there were a number of years in which its books were passed around separately before they were combined into one volume.

I am greatly interested in any effort to increase the confidence of God's people in the complete inerrancy of His Word, but I am equally interested in every effort that is made by consecrated Christians to put the Bible into the language that is actually spoken today. Comparatively few young people who are not already consecrated Christians will read the Bible in the language of nearly 400 years ago. If we ask them to read "doth," "thinkest," "thou," and "thee," they will soon lose interest. When they hear such phrases as "I do you to wit," or see requests that the Lord should keep us from "leasing" and protect us from the "counsel of the froward," the result is confusion or boredom.

One of the leading causes of the great revivals connected with the Reformation of the 16th century was the fact that the Bible was translated into the language that people actually spoke. The King James Version was the end-product of nearly 80 years of efforts by many people to express the precise thought of the Hebrew and Greek in the language that people of their day would understand. Every effort of consecrated Christian scholars to render a like service deserves our support, and working toward this objective is far more important than arguing about whether a certain verse says "Jesus Christ," or "Christ Jesus."

May the Lord bless all the great work that you have done for the achievement of His Gospel. May He prevent the time that you have devoted to fighting for minutiae from confusing those who should be giving their support to every effort to make it possible for people in the English-speaking areas to read the Bible in language they understand.

1967

THE TRANSLATORS OF THE REVISED STANDARD VERSION

Your letter of February 23 has reached me and I was glad to know that you had found value in my pamphlet: 'Why I Cannot Accept the Revised Standard Version.' Nothing has led me in any way to change my opinion about the matter since writing this pamphlet a decade ago.

Ten years ago I spent considerable time studying the Revised Standard Version. In my pamphlet I discussed some of the places where I found it unsatisfactory, but I limited the pamphlet to places where its anti-Messianic bias is clearest, giving evidence to prove that the translators refused to translate the Hebrew as it stands, if doing so would involve recognition that God actually predicted the coming of Christ hundreds of years before our Saviour was born.

I know of no proof that the actual translators included anyone who believed that the Bible is free from error and absolutely dependable.

Although I have not personally investigated the relationship of these men to communist-front groups, it is my impression that many of them have allowed their names to be used by such organizations. I do not know of any who forsook one such organization.

When people give up faith in the Word of God and in the necessity of salvation through the sacrifice of Christ, they naturally seek another outlet in communist-front organizations. In a number of cases such men have actually become communists.

I hope that the above information will be of some help to you.

LETTER 15
1958

**"THOU" AND "YOU" IN THE
REVISED STANDARD VERSION**

As to what pronoun one should use in addressing God, this is a matter of custom and of individual preference. The Bible was not written in English but in Greek and in Hebrew. In those languages, as in Old English, there is one pronoun for addressing an individual and another for addressing a group of individuals. In our formal services we frequently follow the Old English custom and use its pronoun for addressing an individual. Thus I recall hearing Mr Horner baptizing a child and saying, "I baptize thee in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Mr Horner, of course, was not showing reverence to the child; he was merely using the Old English form of addressing an individual.

In Matthew 16:23 we read that when Jesus wished to show his anger toward Peter, he said to him: "Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." In this case Jesus was not showing reverence to Peter, or certainly not to Satan, by using the words "thee" and "thou", which are merely forms of the individual pronoun in Old English.

As time went on, people began to honor the king by addressing him as if he was more than one person and calling him "you". William Penn refused to do this. He declared that since the king was only a man, and not a god, he would not address him with "you" as if he were several individuals, but would use the ordinary English "thou" just as he addressed other human beings.

Since that time it has become customary to address all human beings with the plural form "you", and it has almost entirely taken the place of the singular. Since God is a Trinity I personally like to show reverence to the Lord Jesus Christ by including all three members of the Godhead in my prayer and using the pronoun "you", instead of seeming to exclude Him by merely speaking to the Father alone and using the Old English singular "thou."

This is only an individual preference and I have never urged anyone else to do it. It impresses me as a rather wise course to follow, and I am somewhat pleased when others follow my example, but I have never suggested that they do so. It really does not make much difference. The Lord understands all languages and it makes little difference to Him whether we address him in Hebrew, in Greek, in Latin, in Old English as "thou" or in present day English as "you". What does matter is that we should not make a distinction between the way we address God the Father and the way we address God the Son, and thus seem to deny the deity of Christ. Both Dr McIntire and I feel very strongly that the Revised Standard Version made a terrible mistake at this point, and it is one of the reasons why neither of us feels that we can in any way support that particular version of the Bible.

LETTER 16
1967

THE KING JAMES VERSION AND THE REVISED STANDARD VERSION

Ever since Satan entered into the Garden of Eden this world has been a mixture of what is right and what is wrong. No perfect man has ever lived except the Lord Jesus Christ, and no inerrant book has ever been written except the Bible. When I studied with Dr R. A. Torrey I was impressed on a number of occasions by hearing him say that he had always found it a mistake to put complete trust in any human being. He said that when he completely trusted any human being, sometimes that person failed him, but when he put his entire trust in the promises of God they never failed.

I fear that it is impossible to recommend all the material disseminated by any publisher. There is a need for men who, like myself, have spent many years of study and research so that they can delve into the intricacies of difficult problems and can tell how much is dependable and how much is not.

You may have noticed that in my brochure on "Why I Cannot Accept the Revised Standard Version" my great stress was on the fact that so many of the Messianic promises of the Old Testament were twisted in such a way as to get rid of the Messianic teaching. This was natural, since the men who made the translation were incapable, from their viewpoint, of believing that a prophet living hundreds of years before Christ could actually make a prediction that would be specifically and literally fulfilled in Christ. Therefore it was necessary for them to make a translation that would seem to them to make sense, rather than to take the words in their ordinary meaning, even if this natural meaning was itself quoted in the New Testament as having its fulfillment in Christ. When, however, these liberal scholars translated the New Testament, they were facing an entirely different problem. They might think that the New Testament writers were rather ignorant and misguided men who had a great many queer ideas, but they had no question as to what those New Testament writers believed. As a result, their New Testament translation did not reflect their liberal bias to as great a degree as their translation of the Old Testament.

The English language has changed greatly since the King James Version was written. I wish that we had a sound and dependable translation today that would be as accurate for our day as the King James Version was for its day. Since I do not know of any that is in this category, I still principally use the King James Version. Nevertheless I often find that it is necessary to determine exactly what a particular English word meant 350 years ago in order to know what the King James translation means at a certain point. Of course I rarely bother to investigate the meaning of the obsolete English word. Instead I look at the Greek and Hebrew and see what the original language says. The average person, unfortunately, is unable to do this.

Many people find it much easier to get the sense of the Bible from the RSV with its beautiful English than from the rather antiquated English of the King James Version. The worst thing about the RSV is the way it makes the Old Testament and New

Testament contradict each other by mistranslating the Messianic passages of the Old Testament. There are naturally many other places where to a greater or lesser extent the liberal bias of the translators affects their translation. Some people may feel that it is better to put up with this bias than to have the difficulty of reading language that is so different from that spoken today. Personally I prefer what is true, even if difficult, to what contains more error, even if it is easier to read. Yet I can understand why some would feel the other way.

I am not personally familiar with Unger's Bible Handbook. I know Professor Unger personally, and on the whole have been very well impressed, both with his attitude and with his knowledge. Whether the decision to use the RSV in his handbook was his own or was made by the publisher is unknown to me. I do not believe that it is the policy of the Moody Bible Institute or of the Moody Press to adopt the RSV. It would surprise me greatly if they were to take any such action. Yet I am not personally acquainted with the present managers of the Moody Press, and so am unable to make a judgment.

In this wicked world I would say that whatever we read, except for the Bible, must always be read with a watchful, careful eye. Everything must be checked by the Word of God. Some publishers who in the past were absolutely true to the Word of God and had as their primary objective making good Christian literature available to Christian people, have been led away by the desire for popularity or increased wealth to the point where they published material that is against the Bible instead of for it. This is the history of most Christian institutions. Starting with the desire to be loyal to Christ they gradually are led astray. Each one of us needs to keep his eye on the Lord.

In Matthew 16:17 Christ greatly praised Peter for his recognition of Jesus' Messiahship, yet only six verses later He called him Satan and condemned him most strongly. If even a wonderful man like Peter was not dependable when he was speaking by his own wisdom instead of following the Word of God, it is not surprising that all other human beings have to be tested by the Word of God.

FURTHER COMMENTS ON THE KING JAMES VERSION AND THE REVISED STANDARD VERSION

(This was written before the RSV Old Testament was published.)

The problem of Bible translation is a very complicated one. The Christian world has had a remarkable blessing in the King James translation for nearly three centuries and a half. This is one of the finest translations that have ever been made of any book into any language.

The very fact that the English speaking world had such a wonderful translation has also had an unfortunate result. The translation seemed so much superior to what any individual could hope to do that there has been a tendency simply to be satisfied with it instead of striving to improve it.

During the past three and a half centuries the English language has been constantly changing. Many words used in the King James Version are absolutely meaningless to us today. In other cases the words are used so differently today that the old version may easily lead us to serious misunderstanding. The problem of translation is always difficult anyway. You cannot render expressions word for word from one language into another. If you do, the result does not give a true idea of the meaning but often a very false one instead.

Any translation of the Bible that is made with even a fair degree of honesty will bring out the great truths of salvation rather clearly. When one gets beyond these into the finer points of meaning one can never trust any translation completely. The meaning of the original simply cannot be expressed exactly in another language. One translation will express certain ideas very excellently and be rather poor in the translation of other sections. Another translation will be good in different parts, and possibly poor in some of the verses where the first was especially good.

One of the great advantages of the King James Version was

that it came at the end of a century in which man after man had done his best at making a Bible translation. Numerous translations had been published, and the KJV translators were able to pick the best renderings from each of them.

Before it can be hoped that a translation into the language of our day will be anywhere near as good as the King James Version was for its day, it will probably be necessary that many different translations be prepared and that various students succeed in making useful suggestions on many different sections of the Bible. It would be misleading to recommend any present day translation as altogether dependable. Much work still needs to be done.

As far as the Revised Standard Version is concerned, a rather mixed verdict must be given. It labors under the great disadvantage that it was prepared by a committee of men, most of whom did not believe in the truth of the clear teachings regarding salvation. It is hard to see how the prejudices and misconceptions of men of this type could fail to interfere with the usefulness of the translation which they made.

Over against this may be noticed another fact. Most of these men were quite different from the liberals of a generation ago. Those liberals were anxious to show that the writers of the Bible held views different from those of the Christian church today. Most of the real liberal scholars of today recognize that Jesus and Paul taught something quite different from what they personally believe. They seem to have made a definite attempt to give a picture, not of what they themselves believe, but of what Jesus and Paul actually said. Some of these individuals had spent years in the study of the Greek New Testament. They had a background of scholarship which would be hard to duplicate today.

Many individuals, including myself, were most pleasantly surprised by the version when it appeared. We expected that a group of liberals would prepare a translation which would be of little use. Instead, we found that at point after point they had given a good rendering in modern English of what the Greek actually meant. In comparatively few places would we find clear evidence that the liberal background had caused a false picture of the views of the original author to be given. I personally could not help thinking that it would be a wonderful thing if true Christians would make great use of this version of the New Testament. We

could say to the world: here is a version which liberals have prepared. No fundamentalist bias can be said to be the cause of the translation of any verse. Yet the great doctrines in which we believe can be clearly traced in the phrases of this version. Let an unbeliever read this version with sincere desire to find the truth, and he can learn how to be saved.

Others had a different feeling. They saw the liberal bias of the translators; they knew the liberal books which many of these men had written. They felt that any translation from such a source must be dangerous to the Christian world.

In my personal opinion, one of the greatest needs of the Christian world today is a version of the Bible into modern English which would be as excellent and as dependable as the King James Version was for its day. I fear that no such version has yet appeared. Yet I believe that the Revised Standard Version of the New Testament has made a valuable step in that direction. To one who recognizes its danger and its background, it can be a most useful help, if it is handled with due caution.

LETTER 18
1960

**THE SCOFIELD BIBLE,
THE KING JAMES VERSION, AND
THE REVISED STANDARD VERSION**

The Lord has called me to a special work, involving intensive study of the details of our faith. It is His will that we should stand uncompromisingly on all those points that are essential, and that we should carefully investigate all points of secondary importance, in order that we may constantly learn more and more of what God's message means for us.

The Bible is a long book. The great truths of salvation are so clearly taught in it that a wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein. Yet it also deals with a multitude of other matters. These matters are often difficult to understand. We need to study them carefully. They do not affect our salvation, but may be important in connection with the advance of our Christian life.

If this were not the case there would never have been any need of the issuance of a Scofield Bible. Dr Scofield studied the writings of great men of God who had carefully studied the Scriptures, and gathered from them a great deal of extremely valuable material that would not be obvious to the average reader. He put this material in footnotes and marginal notes, in order to help Christian people understand what the Word of God means. Dr Scofield issued the first edition of his valuable work in 1909 and by 1917 he had found enough points at which the statements could be clarified or improved to lead him to issue a second edition of the work, which he called a "New and Improved Edition."

In subsequent years many people have devoted a great amount of study to the Scofield Bible, and God has truly blessed the advancement of His truth. Yet, as scholars studied it, they had the same experiences that Dr Scofield had in 1917. They found that the notes of the Scofield Bible, like all other human works, can be improved with further study. Dr Scofield did an excellent work, but like all human beings, he sometimes made mistakes.

Occasionally a contradiction crept in between his note in one place and that in another. Sometimes in his zeal to express one clear truth, he spoke a little too strongly in one direction and thus unintentionally denied another aspect of truth. If Dr Scofield were living today, I am sure that he would be anxious to issue a third edition of his reference Bible embodying the results of thought and investigation by godly people during the years that have passed since his second edition was issued.

Ever since 1954, I have been meeting twice a year with a group of men who have devoted many years to the study and presentation of the truths of Christianity, and who have made extensive use of the Scofield Bible. Every one of them is a servant of the Lord who is anxious to do His will and to follow the teachings of His Word. On the primary points of interpretation, I find myself very closely in agreement with most of them, though

there are occasional differences at secondary points. On the great points of the Gospel we are thoroughly agreed. During these years we have spent many hours of many days working over every detail of the Scofield Bible, in order to see what can be done to make the third edition as fine as we can make it. Naturally there will be mistakes in it as there are in all human books. It is my belief that the new edition will result in enabling the Scofield Bible to continue its great service to the cause of Christ for many years to come. I wish you would pray that God will give us wisdom in the two remaining four-day sessions of the committee, and that He will lead us in order that the work may be exactly as He would have it to be.

I feel that I must say a word also about your references to the King James Version. We do not hold to the King James Version with any idea that it is inspired of the Lord. The inspired Bible was originally written in Hebrew and Greek. The King James Version is a very excellent translation of it into English, made by godly men in the light of the best knowledge available in their time. It was a very excellent version and has rightly stood as the Bible of the English-speaking world for three and one half centuries.

Now the English language has greatly changed and there are many points in the King James Bible at which it is difficult for the reader of today to understand just what is meant. It would be a wonderful thing if we had a Bible that was just as true to the original as the King James Version is, but written in the language that is spoken today, so that all of us could understand all of it. Various Bibles in modern speech have been published by godly Christian people. Not one of them is good enough to displace the King James Version, but all of them are helpful at many points, to give us a clearer understanding of the truth that the King James writers were trying to express in the language of their day.

We do not oppose the Revised Standard Version because it is different from the King James Version, but because it has departed at many places from the statements of the original languages, in order to give us renderings that do not fit with the great doctrines of the Scriptures.... I regret greatly the unbelief in the Revised Standard Version and feel it necessary that I do every thing I can to combat it. Until we have a really first-class version in the language of our own day, probably the best for us to do is

to stick to the King James Version. It is not, however, the King James Version that is inspired but the original Greek and Hebrew manuscripts from which it was translated.

LETTER 19
1963

THE SCOFIELD BIBLE

I am glad to hear that you are a steady reader of the Scofield Bible. God has greatly blessed this edition and used it to make His Truth clear to many people.

In 1909 Dr Scofield issued the first edition of his Reference Bible. In 1917 he put out what he called the "new and improved edition". This second edition agreed on all vital points with the first edition but made a number of improvements and included additional notes. If Dr Scofield had not died in 1921 I am sure that he would have continued getting out a new edition every ten years or so. As it is, his second edition has continued to be used for nearly fifty years and has been a blessing to multitudes of people.

Naturally during the years individual points have come to light at which helpful improvements could be made. Nearly ten years ago a group of nine men met in Chicago to consider the preparation of a new edition. Several of these were men who had used the Scofield Bible continuously for thirty or more years and knew its contents very thoroughly. Each of them had noticed points at which improvements could be made. All were earnest Bible believers. No change was contemplated in any vital teaching but only such improvements as Dr Scofield himself would have made if he had lived longer.

As you say, one has to be very careful in these days to avoid being misled. Satan has been very clever in subtly altering many publications that had formerly been known for their loyalty to God's Word. I am glad to be able to assure you that the new edition of the Scofield Bible will preserve all the excellencies of the old one. Everyone who has received blessing from the second edition will receive even more from the third.

The details of preparing such a book for printing are extremely numerous. Every word is being carefully checked to ensure the highest possible degree of accuracy. Please pray that God will watch over these important activities at every step and that He will use this new edition to lead many souls to the knowledge of salvation and to help His people to grow in their usefulness to our wonderful Saviour.

LETTER 20
1967

**THE NEW SCOFIELD
REFERENCE BIBLE**

Thank you for your statement of appreciation about the New Scofield Reference Bible. It is always gratifying, after having done so much work on a publication, to hear that it is considered to be a valuable product. The nine members of the Committee attended meetings in Chicago on thirteen occasions during a period of seven years, sometimes for as much as five days at a time. The production is very definitely a group work. Probably no one of the nine would personally have approved of everything in it. It represents, however, a collective wisdom that may be much better than what any smaller number of us could have produced by ourselves.

The question that you raised about Mr Rumball's comments on Matthew 1:1 is indeed an interesting one. What would a modern reader naturally think was meant by the words, "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ"? The ordinary reader, seeing this word, would think of our common use of the noun "generation" as meaning the people who are contemporaries during any certain period of time, or the length of time in which an average group of people would pass through the active portion of their careers.

Since Matthew is neither an account of all the many people who lived at the time of Jesus Christ nor of all the varied outstanding events in the course of a single generation of history, neither of these meanings would particularly fit. Thus the word "generation" would seem to be rather archaic in this context.

If a man has done much Bible reading he doubtless would have a strong impression in his mind of the many uses of the word "generations" in the Book of Genesis, where it is generally used to introduce genealogies. As a result I have little doubt that at least ninety percent of such readers simply assume, when they read Matthew 1:1, that "generation" here means "genealogy," and is therefore a natural introduction to the following verses, which present the human genealogy of Christ.

All this, of course, while interesting, is not particularly important. The important question is, what is the real meaning of the Greek word actually used here? That word is *genesis*, which is the word used to describe the first book of the Bible, and ordinarily means "beginning." It occurs only five times in the New Testament. The other four are Matthew 1:18 and Luke 1:14, where it is translated "birth," James 1:23, where it is translated "natural," and James 3:6 where it is translated "nature." (In Matthew 1:18 and Luke 1:14 the older manuscripts do not contain the word *genesis* but a different word that is quite similar.) In various passages in Genesis where a genealogy is introduced by the word "generations" (plural), the ancient Greek translation renders it by the plural of *genesis*. Thus "genealogy" is a very natural interpretation of this word. The great majority of Biblical commentators interpret it in this sense in Matthew 1:1 and understand it to be an introduction to the genealogy that occupies the greater part of the chapter.

There are, however, a few interpreters who think that the first verse of Matthew ought to introduce the book as a whole.

consequently, they like to render it "beginning," thus considering all the activities of the God-man during His first advent as a beginning. This is a possible interpretation of the word, but impresses us as being less likely.

The English word "generation" does not really convey either of these two ideas in any adequate way. I feel that a very definite improvement was made by substituting "genealogy" in the New Scofield Reference Bible.

It is unfortunate that people should attack the Revised Standard Version for the good things that it did. If it were as good on the whole as it is in this particular feature, we could rejoice in using it. Unfortunately, it has certain very severe blemishes which, to my mind, make it unsuitable for evangelical Christians.

I wonder whether you have seen my little tract on the Revised Standard Version. It deals almost entirely with the treatment of the Messianic passages in the Old Testament. Time and again the New Testament quotes an Old Testament statement as having been fulfilled in connection with Christ and there is a footnote referring to the Old Testament passage. Then when the Old Testament is examined it is found that the translation there is quite different from the New Testament quotation. I carefully examined a number of these cases in my pamphlet, and gave evidence to show that the natural interpretation of the words exactly fits the Messianic interpretation, and that the editors of the RSV have in many instances given a rendering that has no factual evidence in its favor. This, to my mind, is the greatest flaw in the RSV. Unfortunately, some people are ready to oppose almost any departure from the King James Version on extremely minor points, including matters on which the RSV contains a translation that actually can give the reader of today a much clearer idea of what the Hebrew or Greek means.

I expected that our New Scofield would receive many such criticisms, and have been surprised at the small number that came.

LETTER 21
1960

**THE BERKELEY VERSION AND
THE AMPLIFIED NEW TESTAMENT**

The Berkeley translation is a good honest translation of the Bible. It varies in quality, being much better in some sections than in others. Occasionally modernist interpretations have influenced the translators, but the cases are not frequent. The style is not as good as it might be, but is, on the whole, not at all bad. In many passages it makes the meaning of the original much clearer than one is apt to get from the old English of the King James Version. There are occasional footnotes which seem to me to present an incorrect interpretation, though not an unchristian one.

The so-called Amplified New Testament is, I believe, simply the King James Version with explanatory notes in parentheses. It is a very nice idea to make explanations of the meaning thus available to the reader. Sometimes these notes are helpful and sometimes they are not at all good. It can be a help in understanding the New Testament, but one should be very careful not to consider the material in parentheses as necessarily authoritative. In some instances it is quite wrong.

One will get a far better idea of what the Bible means with even a little knowledge of Greek and Hebrew and the use of a good concordance. With Young's Concordance you can look up the word in the King James Version and see what different Greek words it translates, and in what context these are used. You can look at the Greek word and see the different ways it has been rendered into English in the King James Version. Often this will shed a flood of light on the meaning of the passage and be much more helpful than such a work as the Amplified New Testament. However, it takes a bit more trouble, and the Amplified New Testament may be easier to use as a preliminary help.

LETTER 22
1976

**THE TEXTUS RECEPTUS AND
ENGLISH BIBLE VERSIONS**

We live in a day when most people are building their lives on the shifting sands of human theories and human ideas, and in this day the Word of God stands as the only rock on which we can safely rest. No explanation of life that humanists have advanced leads to anything but ultimate despair. Only in the Bible is found hope and joy and peace as we receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

This rock is very displeasing to Satan. There is nothing he desires more than to induce true Christians to argue about secondary matters and to turn their attention to fighting one another, instead of presenting the gospel of salvation through Christ to the multitudes that need Him so badly. I have been grieved time after time as I have seen Christians making unfortunate divisions over minor points and failing to stand strongly on the great essential doctrines revealed in God's Word.

You speak of the "controversy between the Textus Receptus and the Westcott and Hort texts." I can assure you that no translation that has appeared in recent years is based on the Westcott and Hort text. I know of no contemporary Biblical scholar who now regards the Westcott and Hort text as the correct text. Westcott and Hort spent many years studying the earliest manuscripts that were available in their time. Much new material has been found since then. Westcott and Hort presented some suggested principles that were very good, and also some that I believe were completely wrong. They deserve credit for their effort to get back to early copies of the New Testament instead of basing the text on manuscripts that are copies of copies of copies, etc. In this they were pioneers and for it they deserve credit.

Erasmus did a great service to the Christian world when he prepared the first published copy of the Greek New Testament. Unfortunately he had only a handful of late manuscripts at his

disposal. The fact that these manuscripts correspond in most regards to the earlier manuscripts discovered since his time is evidence of the wonderful way in which God providentially preserved His Word. There was no false doctrine contained in them. There is no great truth contained in the original Scripture that was not still preserved in them. Yet there were many very minor points in which they differed from the early manuscripts. In addition there are portions of the New Testament for which Erasmus had no manuscript available. These he himself translated back into Greek from the Latin Bible of the Roman Catholic church. One of these is a verse that is contained in no known Greek manuscript written before the time of Erasmus. Erasmus did a great service, but he was not inspired.

In the next few years some other manuscripts became available to Bible students, and a few changes were made in Erasmus's text. Yet his text was substantially the same as that used by the translators of the King James Version. The term *Textus Receptus* did not originate until some years after the publication of the King James Version, and then was applied to a text that differs in hundreds of cases from the text used in preparing that excellent version of the Bible.

In recent years a great number of early manuscripts have been discovered. Comparing these with one another, new texts have been prepared. These have some points in common with the pioneer suggestions of Westcott and Hort, but differ from them at many places. These texts do not differ in any significant way from the text used for the King James Version or from the later so-called *Textus Receptus*. A man can come to Christ through either text, and he can learn the principal doctrines of the Scripture from either text.

It is humanly impossible to copy by hand as much as twenty chapters of the Bible without making at least one mistake. Most of us would make several mistakes in making such a copy. Old books that have thus been copied and recopied are often so different from the original that one cannot even recognize the similarity. Thus there was a story of Alexander the Great, written at his time, in which his twelve companions were named. This manuscript was copied and recopied in subsequent years. There is in existence a copy written a few centuries after the time of Alexander in which it is impossible to find a similarity between the name of any one of the twelve companions and any of the

names contained in the earlier copy. When the preservation of secular works is examined, it is easy to see that God providentially worked a near miracle in the wonderful preservation of the New Testament manuscripts.

Yet these manuscripts do contain hundreds of differences. These differences consist mostly of places where a scribe remembered a phrase from another passage and thoughtlessly inserted it again in a place where it had not been in the original, or where a title that was written in a short form was copied in a longer form. I would not urge anyone to turn away from the King James Version. It was wonderful for its day.

I believe that it is extremely important that people have a translation in the language of our own day. Many words in the King James Version convey no meaning to us. Still more serious is the fact that there are many words that have so changed their meaning that they give a false impression to a present reader.

Consecrated Christian scholars prepared the New American Standard Bible and the New International Version. Each of these is an accurate presentation of the original. No translation can be precise. There are places at which I would differ from either of these, but on the whole I would say that they are excellent translations. The text that they have used tries to follow early manuscripts rather than the late manuscripts used by Erasmus. These late manuscripts differ greatly among themselves. There is no such thing as one unified text that can be called the *Textus Receptus*. There is no manuscript that exactly agrees with the *Textus Receptus*. God allowed variations to come into the manuscripts as early as the first two centuries A.D., but none of these affect any important doctrine.

You mention the last few verses of Mark. The earliest manuscripts are broken at the end of Mark so it seems likely that the original conclusion of Mark was lost. What we now have is a summary of the end of Luke. It contains only one statement that is not already contained in Luke. That is the statement that Christians will pick up snakes and not be injured. This verse gives no authorization for being foolhardy or careless. It points to God's providential care which was displayed when He delivered Paul from the bite of a snake in Melita (Acts 28:3-6) and has protected other Christians ever since in various situations. It certainly does not mean that there will not be cases in which He allows a

Christian to die from a snake bite. Except for this one statement our present ending of Mark contains only a summary of what is contained in Luke. Whether Mark wrote it or not, we can say that it is true and free from error.

The Bible is not a set of magical sounds that have virtue in themselves, but a presentation of divine thoughts in human words. Human words constantly change their meaning and are subject to various interpretations. God so inspired the Bible that it was kept from error. No erroneous thought is included in any considerable number of Greek manuscripts, early or late. Yet when we are making a new translation it seems reasonable to use earlier manuscripts rather than late ones.

God could have caused His Word to be written on tables of stone and preserved in a room kept at an even temperature so that no slightest change could take place, and so that manuscripts could be constantly compared with the original, but He did not do so. There are a few places in the Bible where it is absolutely certain that very early copying mistakes were made, and we do not know exactly what was in the original. I believe that God permitted these changes to occur in order that we should not put our faith in individual words, but in the teachings that we find stressed and repeated in His Holy Word.

LETTER 23
1970

G. M. LAMSA'S TRANSLATION

On several occasions I have been asked to review George M. Lamsa's so-called translations. When his alleged renderings "from the original Aramaic" have been carefully checked they have usually proved to be quite erroneous.

The fact that a young man grew up in a community where Aramaic is spoken today does not necessarily mean that he would have much understanding of the meaning of the language as it was spoken two thousand years ago. Every language is constantly changing. I wonder whether you have happened to notice that the very common present-day word "nice" does not occur at all in the King James Version of the Bible. According to the Oxford Dictionary this word meant "foolish" or "ignorant" 400 years ago. Three hundred years ago it meant "wanton" or "lascivious." It is indeed strange that today it should have become one of our commonest words to express an idea so different from what it meant just a few centuries ago.

The English language has greatly changed since the days of King James, and at that time it had already changed greatly from the time of Chaucer. It is only about 600 years since Chaucer lived (as compared with nearly 2000 years since the New Testament was written), but I would be greatly surprised if anyone living today, unless he has made a special study of Chaucer or of the English language as it was spoken 600 years ago, would be able correctly to understand what he wrote. The Aramaic that Lamsa learned as a boy represents a language that has vastly changed since the time of Christ.

In addition, it must be stated that all unprejudiced scholars agree that the Peshitta, which Lamsa claims to have translated, is itself a translation, regardless of what the so-called "Church of the East" may say to the contrary.

At certain points where Lamsa differs greatly from the King James Version I have myself examined the Peshitta and have found that it contains no warrant at all for his alleged translation. The only conclusion I have therefore been able to reach was that he simply altered the King James Version more or less arbitrarily without much reference to the Peshitta or to any other source.

The Holman Company has published the book in a very beautiful form, and it is indeed sad that it should have to be considered valueless. However, I believe that this is the case. I see no reason to consider its contents to be at all reliable, and many reasons for reaching the opposite conclusion.

LETTER 24
1976

**A BRIEF WORD ON
BIBLICAL INERRANCY**

I quite agree with you that Harold Lindsell's book, *The Battle for the Bible* raises many questions which it does not always resolve. It is also sad that its positive presentation of evidence concerning the problem of inerrancy is not nearly as strong as it might be. Some of his statements gave facts, as he saw them, about events that had puzzled me in the past, and I am naturally curious as to the relative degree of accuracy. My own experience, while rather extensive, has not to any great extent been concerned with the particular individuals and organizations that he discussed.

I was glad to read that you received so much value from your training at Fuller two decades ago, and that it is your impression that the institution stood solidly for the inerrancy of the Bible at that time. I wish that it held a similar position today, but things I have heard from various sources, along with the statements in Lindsell's book, lead me seriously to doubt it.

During my life I have seen many Christian organizations move far away from the position of their founders. Such institutions often continue to attract students from strongly evangelical backgrounds because of their previous reputation, and then lead these students into denial of the central doctrines of God's Word. While I hope that Fuller will not fall into this category I would be much interested in any evidence that might give an indication of the direction in which it is apt to move....

A few decades ago the great point of discussion was the virgin birth of Christ. It was then said that a person might give lip service to other great doctrines, but if he denied the virgin birth this gave a clear indication as to the direction in which he was moving. I wonder whether inerrancy is in the same category.

To my mind it is particularly important that we recognize that God's revelation is primary. We need all the intellectual power we can master to interpret His Word carefully. Many of its statements are so clear that a wayfaring man, though a fool, should not err therein. Other statements require a great amount of study to make sure what they mean. I do not believe that any human being is capable of determining which statements deal merely with material matters and which statements deal with spiritual matters. When I have personally investigated questions about historical statements in the Bible I have usually been able to find a reasonable answer to each problem.

LETTER 25
1983

BIBLICAL INERRANCY AND THE WHOLE BIBLE

We stand unequivocally for the absolute inerrancy of God's Word. We do not say that it is a text book for physics, medicine, or even for history. But we say that wherever it touches on any field whatever, its teaching is to be accepted as final. We see great danger of reading one's ideas in these fields into the Bible.

In taking up any question we do not believe in asking merely two questions: Does it teach this? or does it deny it? but also a third, Does this passage actually not say anything about the particular question? The Bible is the Word of God and any similarities to Greek mystery cults or Jewish theology are probably the result of their having been influenced by the Jews or by New Testament teachings rather than the reverse.

We believe that there is no contradiction in Scripture, though superficial examination may seem to find contradictions in it...

We believe that there are many ways in which God may choose to develop our devotional or spiritual life, but that what is most important is what He teaches us through His Word, and that anything that does not rest clearly upon teachings from the Word needs to be strongly questioned....

We feel that we should be utterly intolerant of denial of the complete inspiration and inerrancy of God's Word, or of such doctrines as the Trinity, the Deity of Christ, etc. We desire to know as much truth as possible and to stand firmly on it, but seek to be tolerant of those who agree with us in essentials but differ on secondary points of interpretation or on matters of practical activity, or of forms and ceremonies....

It is my personal feeling that the church of Christ has lost a great deal by concentrating almost exclusively on the New Testament Scriptures for its guidance. While I would prefer that a man should get a thorough knowledge of Greek and no Hebrew than only a smattering of both, and recognize that the great central truths of Christianity are developed much more fully in the New Testament than in the Old Testament, I believe nevertheless that much truth in the Old Testament that is important in every area of Christian life and thought has not yet been discovered by God's people.

LETTER 26
1966

THE BIBLE -- A PROPER SUBJECT OF SCHOLARLY STUDY

The Bible, if studied in a fair and objective manner, would inevitably lead the reader to believe that it is an infallible revelation

from God to man. It is wrong to base a study of it on the presupposition that it must be an error-filled human book, that it therefore has to be divided into alleged sources, for which there is no real evidence, and that its early portions were derived from pagan mythology, as is done in the course to which exception is taken.

We strongly favor an unbiased scholarly study of the Bible, but not the sort of biased misrepresentation that often is falsely designated as scholarship. Further illustration of our view is provided by the very name of the booklet by the late Dr Robert Dick Wilson, published originally by The Sunday School Times Company and entitled, *Is the Higher Criticism Scholarly?*

LETTER 27
1977

THE PRONUNCIATION OF BIBLICAL NAMES

The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible is a very scholarly work and contains a great deal of valuable information. Yet I personally prefer the Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary and the Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible, which were written by men who accept the Bible as God's infallible Word. Various statements in the Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible reflect the fact that so many of its writers were followers of the Higher Criticism.

There is no such thing as an exact equivalent in one language of a name in another language. Every language has its own particular way of expressing sounds. Most of us are so accustomed

to the sounds of our own language that we do not realize this fact. When we learn another language we are apt to pronounce its sounds like the sounds of our own language, and this often makes our words very difficult to understand. If a Frenchman or a German tries to speak English he finds it almost impossible to pronounce our sound of *th*. Some pronounce it like a *z*; others like a *d*. Few of us realize the fact that we write *th* to represent two entirely different sounds, as in the words "this" and "think". Few of us realize that the sound that ends the word "is" is entirely different from the sound that ends the word "us".

Many English words are pronounced in various ways in the different areas where English is spoken. The pronunciation of every language is constantly changing. I have heard it said that if we were to hear George Washington speak today we would probably have great difficulty in understanding him. Letters give only a very rough idea of pronunciation, unless it is possible to talk with the people who make the sounds.

Until long after the time of Christ, Hebrew manuscripts contained only consonants, and gave no indication of the vowels. There is no conclusive evidence as to how the Hebrews originally pronounced the sacred name of God. It was incorporated in some of their personal names, as at the end of "Adonijah" and at the beginning of "Jehoiakim." Towards the end of the Old Testament period the Jews decided that they should be very careful not to take the sacred name on unclean lips, so they actually stopped speaking the name and eventually forgot how it had been originally pronounced. In their manuscripts it was represented by consonants that correspond roughly to our English letters *y*, *h*, *w*, *h*. When they read the Old Testament they would not try to pronounce it, but instead would say "the name" or would substitute the words "the Lord." When the Greek translation called the Septuagint was made it always represented this personal name by the Greek words for "the Lord." A few years ago a number of scholars thought that the original pronunciation was something like *Yah-hu*. More recently they incline to the guess that it was something like *Yah-weh*. Actually no one knows how it was originally pronounced.

The name "Jesus" is the Greek form of the Hebrew name "Joshua," which means "the Lord saves." In Acts 7:45 and Hebrews 4:8 the King James Version reads "Jesus," though it is

plain that it is referring to the Old Testament Joshua. We have no way to know exactly how this name was pronounced in Joshua's time or in that of Jesus.

It is sometimes said that the New Testament writers used only the Septuagint but this is quite incorrect. The New Testament writers knew Hebrew and could read the Old Testament in the original. When they quoted an Old Testament passage they were apt to do just what I would do in quoting a Bible passage. If the truth that it contains is brought out clearly in the common translation in my language I simply quote that translation; if the verse expresses a truth that is not brought out in the common translation I make my own translation from the original. When a New Testament writer wished to call attention to an Old Testament teaching he would use the familiar Greek translation if this translation clearly brought out the idea he wished to convey. If it did not do so he would make his own translation from the Hebrew directly, as seems often to be the case with Matthew's gospel, which shows considerable independence of the Septuagint. A good example of this is Matthew 8:17 where Matthew made use of the Hebrew text which has "sicknesses" rather than the Septuagint which has "sins," as Matthew is dealing in this verse with Jesus' healing ministry, which Isaiah had predicted.

John's Gospel uses the Septuagint quite freely, as does Acts. In about half of his Old Testament quotations Paul makes little change from the Septuagint; and in the remainder his translation is altered so as to be nearer to the actual Hebrew.

Our English sound *j* is a recent linguistic development. No one today can pronounce our Lord's name as it was originally pronounced because no one knows exactly how the sounds were pronounced at that time. The important thing is not how we pronounce the name, but what the name signifies. He is the perfect Son of God who gave Himself that we might live. The Bible clearly teaches the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ and shows that God is one God in three persons, equal in power and glory.

LETTER 28
1975

THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

When a person becomes strongly convinced of an idea, it is apt to be very difficult to change him. Sometimes a strong prejudice or an unfortunate experience in the past leads one to become so convinced of an idea that he cannot even consider the possibility that he might be wrong. In such a case it may be necessary to find an oblique way to bring the evidence to his attention without first arousing his prejudice. I wonder if you might be able to lead him into a situation similar to the following imaginary occurrence:

As an atheist friend and I walked through a beautiful forest, he gave a glowing description of some of the wonders of modern scientific discovery. As we followed a winding trail, he spoke of the advances in the study of living cells, and described the great complexity in the cells of even the apparently simplest forms of life. He said, "There is no reason for believing in God. Science has shown that everything can be explained by natural causes." Further along the trail we came to a small clearing in the forest. In the middle of the clearing there stood a rustic log cabin. Smoke was rising from a small pipe that came through the roof and reached upward a short distance. As we looked I said, "I am more and more amazed at the wonders of nature. It would be most interesting to understand the forces that produced what we see here. How fascinating it would have been to stand here and watch the forces of nature that produced this cabin. There must have been a very strong wind to cause trees to fall in such a way that the loose branches would all be lopped off, while the trunks would land in such a way as to produce the four walls and roof of this little cabin. If one could look back through the centuries, it would be fascinating to know whether the whole area here was covered with fallen trees and some process of erosion removed all except those that are now part of the cabin, or whether the wind was so selective that only those trees fell that form its walls and roof. I wonder what wind or other force caused those trees to break up into pieces of exactly the right size to fit together to

form this cabin. Was there an earthquake or a very strong wind that caused the broken pieces to fasten together, in such a way as to make the walls and the roof of the cabin? We noticed the small windows, and I said, "How fascinating it would be to see the natural processes at work that produced these windows. I wonder what caused the logs to fall at exactly such an angle as to produce these rectangular holes, and what sort of chemical or volcanic process caused the various minerals to flow together, in such a way as to produce panes of glass exactly the right size to fit the apertures in the walls of the cabin.

Then I noticed the smoke rising from that pipe, and said in excitement, "There is evidently a fire in the cabin. We must run quickly and put it out before the cabin is destroyed." The friend replied, "There is no need to hurry. The fire is in a little stove, and the smoke is coming out through the stovepipe. It can't set the cabin on fire." I said, "What was the natural process that brought iron out of the earth and formed parts of it into flat sections that were joined together, in such a way as to mould it into the shape of a stove and made it possible for a lightning storm to produce a fire within the stove, and yet not injure the rest of the cabin? Was there perhaps a small volcanic upthrust that fused cylindrical pieces of iron together to make that pipe and fit it into a hole in the roof, so it extends out of the cabin, so the smoke goes into the outer air rather than filling the cabin?"

My friend looked at me with disgust. He said, "How ridiculous! It is perfectly obvious that someone made a plan for the cabin. Someone cut down the trees in the enclosure here, and cut the pieces of wood into the right size and fitted them together. Someone brought the little iron stove and the iron pipe for the chimney and cut a hole through the roof that would exactly fit the pipe and put them together. It was all done according to a plan."

I said, "Have you seen this man?" He said, "No." "Do you know his name?" "No." "Have you ever talked with him?" "No." "What proof do you have that he exists?" He looked at me with irritation. "It is perfectly obvious," he said, "that some man planned the cabin, bought the materials, fit them together, and produced it." I answered, "You cannot believe that natural forces, acting simply in relation to scientific laws, produced this little cabin; yet you suggest that the mighty universe, with all its intricate features working together so harmoniously, came into existence by purely natural causes.

"You look at this little cabin and you have no doubt that some intelligent person made a plan and put the materials together. The world in which we live is made according to a far more complicated plan. The complexities of the human body are far beyond anything we can possibly imagine. If it required an intelligent being to plan the little cabin and make it all fit together, how can you imagine that this entire universe -- or even a single human body, for that matter -- came together and began to function without a far greater intelligent Being having planned and directed it?"

LETTER 29
1972

THE MEANING OF *ECHAD*

The common Hebrew word for "one" is usually transliterated in Latin letters as *echad*. (This particular type of h is pronounced like the German *ch*.) It is used hundreds of times in the Bible to indicate the numeral "one". It also may be the equivalent of our English indefinite article, and is translated "a" or "an" in the King James Version 56 times. It is also translated as "another" 31 times, "a certain" 9 times, "a portion" 11 times, "each" seven times, "everyone" six times, "once" 10 times, "other" 30 times, "some" 5 times, and "any" 17 times. There are a few other ways in which it is translated on one or two occasions.

There are comparatively few instances in the King James Version of the Old Testament where any other Hebrew word is rendered by the English word "one." Most of these involve the Hebrew word "man" (70 times) or "woman" (6 times) in such expressions as "they said one (literally, 'a man') to another".

The word *echad* does not have in it any definite idea of unity. This idea, however, may sometimes be contained in the context, as in Genesis 1:9, where the waters were to "be gathered together unto one place;" Genesis 2:24 "they shall be one flesh," Genesis 11:6, "Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language." However, there are just as many cases where it indicates one as distinct from others, simply as the first of a series, or as an isolated unit.

1 Kings 3:17 reads "And the one woman said, O my Lord, I and this woman dwell in one house." Here the first use of the word "one" means one as distinct from the other; the second use of it shows the unity involved in the fact that the two lived together in one house.

Thus in the verse in Deuteronomy, "Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God is one LORD," the use of *echad* indicates a denial of polytheism but does not itself say anything about unity, though, of course, that idea is clearly taught elsewhere in the Scripture.

LETTER 30
1972

THE KEIL AND DELITZSCH COMMENTARY

Regarding the Keil and Delitzsch Commentary, these represent a great amount of solid work done by men who were thorough Christians. In reprinting them you have rendered a great service to the Christian world.

Some of these commentaries were originally written by Keil and some by Delitzsch. Both of these men were very orthodox in their early days. With the material then available, Professor

Delitzsch was unable, toward the end of his life, to answer some of the arguments that had begun to be advanced by the higher critics, and therefore adopted a portion of their views. These concessions began to appear in the later editions of his commentary. Many of the commentaries in this set went through several editions. In writing an introduction for the set it would be very helpful if I could know exactly which edition of each commentary was used in your reprint, when it was originally published, and which were stated to be by Keil and which by Delitzsch.

In 1888 Delitzsch published a New Commentary on Genesis, which I possess. Its preface refers to it as really a fifth edition of his commentary. I do not know whether it was a later edition of the book that originally appeared in the Keil and Delitzsch series, or whether the original commentary in that set was by Keil.

Delitzsch adopted only a portion of the views of the critics, and always retained his doubts even about that portion. He was a true servant of the Lord.

LETTER 31
1967

**THE CREATION -- SIX 24-HOUR DAYS
OR SIX "AGE-DAYS"?**

The question that you raise is one to which I have given much thought and study. In my opinion it is extremely important that we stand very firmly on whatever is definitely taught in the Scripture and that we do not add to it in any way. It grieves me that Christians should be divided over matters that the Lord has not made clear. If someone feels that his mind is best satisfied by interpreting Genesis 1 as referring to six periods, each of which was 24 hours in length, I would be sorry indeed to have any cause

for disharmony with him. At the same time I think that it is very foolish for anyone to insist that others must take these days as being of exactly that length, since the Scripture says nothing whatever about their length.

We ought to be very careful not to read our own preconceived ideas into the Bible. In interpreting any part of God's Word we need to determine how each word is used in Scripture.

Thus any one of us might think that he knew exactly what is meant by the word "son". Surely we would not call two men father and son if they lived many centuries apart. Yet we find that Matthew 1:1 calls Jesus Christ "the son of David, the son of Abraham." How could a man be the son of someone who lived a thousand years before, and how could that second man be the son of another who lived many centuries before he did? These and many other evidences make perfectly clear that in the Bible the word "son" means simply a male descendant who may be in the next generation, or several generations later.

Further on in this first chapter of Matthew we find, in verses 7 to 11, the names of the kings of Judah from Solomon to Jehoiachin (Jechonias). The history of the kings of Judah is given at length both in Kings and in Chronicles. When we compare, we find that Matthew omits the names of three of them. This omission is not accidental, since we are told in verse 17 that there are 14 in the list, not 17. Moreover, every Jewish child knew the names of the kings of Judah. It could not be an accident that here Matthew speaks of a king as begetting his great-great grandchild. Clearly, in the Bible the word "beget" means to become an ancestor," just as the word "son" denotes one who is a descendent.

Thus, in studying the Bible we must carefully investigate the use of each word to determine exactly what it means. I believe in standing positively and strongly against those who do not accept what the Bible says, but I am sorry indeed when divisions are produced by disagreement about matters of interpretation, on which good Christians may differ.

It is unfortunate that people should use the phrase "literal 24 hour days." Even in English the word "day" is rarely used in this sense. If I should meet someone at eleven at night and say to him, "Isn't this a lovely day?" he would probably laugh. He would say, "It is not day at all; it is night." He would think that I should have said, "Isn't this a lovely evening?" rather than "Isn't this a

lovely day?" I doubt very much if present-day people often use the word "day" to indicate a 24-hour period, except when they speak of train or airplane timetables, or when they calculate interest. In all other connections the word "day" is used in one of two senses, both of which are quite different from this.

The most common usage of "day" is to represent a period of light between two periods of darkness. This period varies greatly. In the northern part of continental United States it may be as long as 18 hours in mid-summer, and as short as 6 or 7 in midwinter. In northernmost Alaska it might be as long as 6 months.

The other sense in which the word is quite commonly used is the sense of a period of activity. Once I heard a mayor of New York speaking on the radio refer to "what Al Smith used to say in his day". I am sure that he did not refer to any 24-hour day. Similarly, I heard someone say that "they did not have automobiles in Lincoln's day". The New Testament states that Jesus said, "Abraham saw my day and was glad." Here certainly He was referring to the entire period of His earthly activity, not to any one period of light, and certainly not to any one 24-hour period.

The first usage of the word "day" in the Scripture is in Genesis 1:5 where it says, "God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night." This certainly does not refer to a 24-hour period. After the account of the six days, we read in Genesis 2:4, "These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heaven." In this instance the word "day" evidently includes the whole six days of the previous chapter. There are many other similar instances, as in the frequent references to "the day of the LORD." It seems quite clear that in Biblical usage the word "day" often means a period of activity, and rarely, if ever, means a period of precisely 24 hours.

After the account in Genesis 1 of the six days, Genesis 2 tells of a seventh day on which God rested. This certainly does not mean that God was tired and took 24 hours to relax Himself. Its meaning must be something quite different. To my mind there is no doubt that it means simply that God ceased from the creative work of the previous six periods of activity. It is not my impression that God has performed any creative work since the creation of man and woman. Consequently it would seem that the seventh day is still going on today and will probably continue until God

creates the new heaven and the new earth. It is here used as an example for us, since God made us with a constitution that needs to follow a similar progression. As the seventh day of Genesis is almost certainly a long period, this might suggest that the same is true regarding the first six as well. However, it would be only a suggestion, not a proof. God could have created the world in six periods of activity of 5 minutes each or of 6 hours each or of 24 hours each, or of three billion years each. We are not told how long the periods were. The Bible leaves us free to guess if we desire, but we should be charitable toward others who make a different guess.

Whether God created the world in a period that would be equivalent to six present 24-hour days, or whether a process involving millions of years is involved, has nothing to do with the question of evolution. The theory of evolution is that all things have developed from a very simple beginning into their present complex state by purely natural forces. Such a theory is definitely contrary to Christian teaching, and to many Biblical statements.

There are many details about the way that God created the world that He has not revealed to us, just as there is a great deal about its present condition that the Bible tells us nothing about. If a man is driving on a wide mountain road with a steep drop on one side and a big cliff on the other he does not increase his safety by hugging the inside of the road so tightly that he constantly brushes against the side of the cliff. It is important that he keep away from the edge of the steep drop, but to say that 6 feet away is more dangerous than 12 feet away is rather stupid. In fleeing from error, we gain nothing by going beyond the Scripture -- in fact we sometimes make it easier for our opponents when we do so.

The Biblical account of the creation of man implies that he was created full-grown. It is not impossible that God created the earth with fossils in it at different levels so constituted that they would look as if they had been formed from the decay of the bodies of animals or plants. Yet to many people it would seem more reasonable to think that such animals actually had lived during one or more of the creative days. If so, this does not prove evolution, nor is it a step in that direction. The Bible says nothing about fossils and gives us no definite statement as to how long ago the creation occurred or how rapidly it went. We know that it was not all instantaneous, since we are told that it was divided into six

definite periods.

I hope that what I have said will be of help to you in your thinking. If further questions occur to you on which I might perhaps have ideas please let me know.

Again let me say I greatly regret any division among Christians over this matter. We must stand solidly against evolution, which is contrary to Biblical teaching, but the question of whether the world has been in existence a few thousand years or many millions or even billions of years, is one upon which the Bible does not speak.

LETTER 32
1943

LAMECH IN GENESIS 4:23

The announcement of the book by A. H. Moose, *The Unauthorized or The True Text of the Bible* is interesting but hardly of value. Many men have felt that only they could tell the true text of the Bible and that all the great labors of Christian students and Christian interpreters through the ages have been utterly false.

The extreme dogmatism of the man and his insistence that all other interpreters are erroneous seem to me sufficient to prove his own ignorance. The discussion of Lamech which he gives is entirely without foundation. He reads into it all sorts of things for which there is no warrant whatever in Scripture while failing completely to see the true interpretation of Lamech's somewhat cryptic statement.

Then, in verse 23, he makes Lamech talk to "women" rather than "wives" and says that Lamech is courting these two women, utterly ignoring the fact that the previous three verses tell us of

the exploits of the children whom these women have born to Lamech. His suggestion, then, that "the rebellious women either preferred to remain unmarried -- rather than to marry and have children who would perish -- or to marry into the tribe of Seth" requires cutting out of the Bible the previous three verses. Moose dwells at length on this "strike against marriage", but it is pure nonsense. Moreover, it is absurd to suggest that his claim that he will be more greatly avenged than Cain, means that he considers himself more wicked than Cain. This again is substituting Moose's imagination for the clear teaching of the context. The previous verses tell us that the children of Adah and Zillah have discovered the improved use of bronze and iron. Lamech is gloating over this scientific progress. Arrogantly he states to his wives that he is now so strong, as a result of the inventions of their children, that he has killed two men for slightly injuring him. He asserts that if poor Cain, who had nothing but God upon whom to rely, would be avenged seven fold, surely he with these new weapons, would be avenged seventy and seven fold. Moose says "The common translation is ridiculous. It doesn't tell anything or mean anything, just empty words with no sense." Actually if one reads the context, the Bible itself makes good sense and Moose's theorizing simply confuses the whole matter.

LETTER 33
1975

**THE EXODUS
AND THE TEN PLAGUES**

Dear Dr MacRae,

I am a graduate student working toward my Ph.D. in Applied Mathematics at Cornell University. Recently I have become

interested in the Ten Plagues God inflicted upon Egypt. I am now in the process of collecting information to write a paper on this subject. I am trying to develop probabilistic models with regard to plagues and natural disasters to show that the Ten Plagues were a direct result of God's wrath on Egypt, and that they cannot be explained in any other way. In order to build a strong argument, there are several questions I need to answer.... I would appreciate it very much if you could help me obtain sources or suggest a bibliography to resolve my questions.

The following list contains topics about which I am seeking information:

- 1) When did the plagues occur, and what was the ruling Egyptian dynasty?
- 2) What was the time period from the first plague until the exodus?
- 3) What was the magnitude of the plagues contrasted with the normal, but lesser degree, occurrences similar to the plagues?
- 4) How much of Egypt was actually affected, and what was the land size of Egypt at that time?
- 5) Are any secular reasons given to explain this phenomena?
- 6) Where is a concise and accurate discussion of the historicity of the Bible?

I would like to obtain as much proof as possible from secular materials so that my arguments cannot be labeled as prejudiced by non-Christians; however, if no such materials exist, then I would like the most conclusive data from Christian sources available. If the latter is the case, then I will need to appeal to the historicity of the Bible to solidify my discussion....

Dear

The subject you have mentioned is an interesting one, but unfortunately it is one on which information outside the Bible is practically non-existent.

There is much argument about the date of the Exodus. Some Bible students vociferously declare that it occurred in the 15th century B.C. Others place it two centuries later. At present the

bulk of evidence seems to favor the later date, but it is far from conclusive.

Nearly all of the great amount of material that has been preserved regarding early Egyptian history comes from monuments that were put up by the Pharaohs to celebrate their great deeds, or, in a few cases, from inscriptions in the tombs of the nobles. Such records glorify successes and ignore failures. From the viewpoint of the Egyptian rulers the exodus represented a great failure, and is consequently not mentioned in any of their records. Anti-Christian scholars who have worked in the field of Egyptology admit that events as great or greater than the Exodus could occur in Egypt without leaving any trace in such monuments.

In Palestine, Babylonia, and elsewhere, remains of ancient cities can be excavated. Evidence of ordinary life at different periods often sheds light on aspects of their history. In Egypt nearly all of such remains would be in the Delta, where the water level is very high, instead of in Upper Egypt. Therefore most of this type of material has either been destroyed or has become inaccessible. There is so much interesting material from Egypt on monuments or on the walls of temples that Egyptologists are very busy interpreting it and usually have neither money nor time available to do this other type of work, even in the few places in Egypt where it would be possible.

Throughout its history Egypt has consisted of a wide region in the Delta and a very narrow area in Upper Egypt along the edges of the Nile. Most of its remaining territory was barren desert. The Biblical record gives the impression that all the land where the Egyptians lived was affected by the plagues.

Our knowledge of these events is limited to the Biblical statements. The Scripture does not give precise data as to the time period from the first plague until the exodus, but two years might be a good guess.

Except for the last one, all the Egyptian plagues are similar to natural phenomena that have occurred in Egypt at various times. The supernatural elements in the plagues are principally as follows: 1) Their very great intensification; 2) The occurrence within a comparatively short time of so many of these disasters; 3) Most important of all, the fact that each of them was specifically predicted before it occurred....

LETTER 34
1948

**DID GOD MAKE OR MERELY REVEAL
HIS WORK OF CREATION
IN SIX DAYS?**

I have looked over the abstract of the book by Wiseman and I am sorry to have to report that it has no foundation, as far as the Hebrew is concerned. The theory seems to be based upon the idea that where it says in Exodus that God made heaven and earth in six days it really means that he revealed the story of creation in six days. This does not at all fit the detailed account in Genesis 1 which describes what was done on each of the successive days. It rests entirely upon a mistaken interpretation of the Hebrew word which is translated "made" in Exodus. This word occurs hundreds of times in the Old Testament and always means do, make, perform, or something of this type. It always describes a definite accomplishment.

Wiseman probably built his theory upon the fact that there are 44 instances in the Hebrew Bible where the word is translated "shew". At first sight this would suggest that it might mean "reveal". However, in all of these instances it is used of God showing mercy or kindness to His people, which might just as well be translated "do" as "show". There is no thought in any of these passages of God simply telling His people something. It always pictures Him as actually performing a work of kindness on their behalf. The theory is one of those unfortunate suggestions which are made without any accurate knowledge of the meaning of the original. As I understand it, one of the primary purposes of the American Scientific Affiliation is to guard the Christian public against such misinterpretations. While they might help preserve the faith of some for a brief time, the eventual exposure of their lack of foundation would finally do much harm to the cause of Christ and lead people to think that all Christianity is founded upon superficial interpretation or ignorance.

I am sorry to have to speak in this way about Mr Wiseman's work. I gather that he is a real Christian who is anxious to serve the Lord. I only wish he had the knowledge to go with his zeal. While I was in England last year, I met his son who is studying Hebrew and Babylonian at Oxford University. The son is a splendid young man, and I believe the Lord is going to use his work in coming days. I do not believe, however, that the cause of Christ is ever advanced by superficial and baseless interpretations.

LETTER 35
1941

SABBATH OBSERVANCE, AND THE LAW AND THE GOSPEL

I shall comment on the Sabbath, and then the Law and the Gospel. I have not seen Philip Mauro's book, *The Law and the Gospel*, and hope I will be able to do so in the near future. I would be interested to see what he had to say. He is always stimulating whether one agrees with him or not.

I think first here it is important to mention that the Sabbath is one of the Ten Commandments. These commandments give an important section of the moral law. The Law, as you know, is divided into moral law, civil law, and ceremonial law. The moral law consists of principles of permanent duration. The civil law consists of application to particular circumstances of the principles of the moral law, or regulations which are necessary for the mutual well-being of people at one period or another. Thus the civil law is by its very nature subject to change from time to time. The ceremonial law has as its purpose the presentation in symbol

and in type of great truths of God's being and character and of actions which He has done or intends to do. The Sabbath, standing among the Ten Commandments, is primarily part of the moral law, although it has ceremonial aspects, and also may lead to civil enactments, which may vary from period to period.

Our Lord said that the Sabbath was made for man. This brings out very clearly the great principle that the Sabbath is not simply something that is arbitrary, but that it is given because man has been so made, and the universe so constituted, that man has a need which is met by the resting of one day in seven. Thus the Sabbath has the purpose of giving this rest which is needed, and also of representing in visible form the principle of turning over a definite part of one's time to the service of the Lord in a special way.

Certainly we are not under the civil enactments regarding the Sabbath which are found in the Old Testament. These apply to the conditions of life found there. Under grace it is our duty to seek out the ways of observing the Sabbath which keep the principle and apply it properly to our circumstances.

I don't suppose there is any point in taking time to point out that the Sabbath was not promulgated at Sinai, but people were told there to remember that it was based upon creation. It is not something new at the giving of the law; it is something of which they are there reminded.

Now as to the general question of the Law and the Gospel, there was law before Moses but Moses gave the first complete presentation of law. By complete, I mean extensive and broad in scope. Previously there were individual enactments but no such complete presentation. Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

There was truth before Jesus Christ and there was also grace before Jesus Christ. No one was ever saved at any time except by the grace of God. However, the giving of the Law represented a step forward in the training of God's people, and was itself followed by another step forward, the step which came with the dispensation of grace. Thus the Law is a blessing. It points the way of sanctification. For this purpose it is still valid. It is a step forward in testing. It reveals to the unsaved man his lost condition. It still does that today. The ceremonial law points forward to Jesus Christ. It is now replaced almost entirely by ceremonies which point back to Christ and forward to His return. These

ceremonies are far less extensive than the ceremonies of the Old Testament, since we know more about the reality which they signify, and do not need as extensive ceremonies. Salvation was never a result of keeping a ceremony, but a result of the attitude of faith toward God and entirely based upon the grace of God through Jesus Christ. As Paul says, "Christ is the end of the law to those who believe."

LETTER 36
1959

THE BLOOD COVENANT

Thank you for sending me the copy of H. Clay Trumbull's book, *The Blood Covenant*, and asking me to make a careful examination of it. I am always glad to do anything I can to help in the vital work that you are carrying on for our wonderful Saviour.

As I looked over the book I felt quite sorry that this should have been republished instead of one of the other fine books that your grandfather wrote. He was a great servant of the Lord and did much to advance the testimony to the Gospel. Some of his other books would probably have been of far greater relevance to present-day conditions than this one.

At least two-thirds of the book is made up of discussion of customs of primitive tribes. The value of this material for Bible study is highly questionable. The only way in which it can be shown to have much real importance for the Bible is on the assumption that the customs of which he gives so many illustrations from the experiences of recent travellers in Arabia, Africa, and China, were also known in the lands of the Bible at the time when the Old and New Testaments were written. Evidence for such a

conclusion is extremely scanty. The great number of observations of such practices in so wide an area during the nineteenth century might suggest that similar ideas were prevalent in Palestine in Bible times, but it would be very difficult to prove such a thing, either from statements in the Bible or from any other evidence.

The Biblical passages quoted would hardly prove such a custom. The few bits of ancient evidence adduced from Mesopotamia or from Egypt, are based upon rather questionable interpretations of obscure passages in archeological texts. Both of these sciences have moved forward tremendously in the seventy years since the book was published.

Of course your interest centers particularly in the one-third or less of the book which deals with the Bible. In writing this section Mr Trumbull doubtless intended to do service to the cause of Evangelical Christianity in two ways: (1) by laying stress on the central doctrine of the Scripture, the blood atonement, and (2) by stressing the vital fact that the atonement does not merely release us from penalty, but also provides living communion and fellowship with the Lord. In the making of these two emphases, real service is given.

At the same time there are present certain dangers. Thus the stress upon evidences from an alleged similarity to primitive life could unintentionally give someone the false idea that the Bible was simply the result of folklore rather than of a revelation from God, and that all that matters is communion with God, without deliverance from guilt through the death of a substitute. While I do not like to read motives into a person's mind, it is difficult to escape the possibility that this may have been to some extent in the mind of Dr Charles A. Briggs, the Union Theological Seminary professor who was later suspended from the Presbyterian ministry by the General Assembly for his theological views, when he wrote the commendatory words which are quoted on the back flyleaf.

Now that the whole evangelical world knows how Union Seminary threw off the control of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. in order to stand by this man whom that church considered heretical, it would impress me as quite unfortunate to issue an evangelical book with a recommendation by him occupying a prominent place on its jacket.

The quotation from William Henry Green that is immediately above the one by Briggs, is interesting, but says little. Instead of those words from the middle of Dr Green's review in the *Presbyterian Review* of 1886, I would almost wish that the jacket might instead have quoted the last sentence of the review, which reads as follows:

"We have been thus particular in stating our points of dissent on account of the real merit which the volume possesses, and the hearty commendation which with the above exceptions we are prepared to bestow upon it."

The book's emphasis on union with Christ is a good one and one which we need. Atonement is surely more than simply removal of guilt. Yet the author says so little about removal of guilt that a reader could easily get the impression that he did not believe in it at all. Such an impression might be partially offset by the words on page 286:

"He who was without sin had received the wages of sin; because, that, only through dying was it possible for him to supply that life which would redeem from the penalty of sin those who had earned death, as sin's wages."

Unfortunately, the frequent occurrence of such statements as, "blood always represented life, never death," may be so interpreted as to convey the impression that the author did not believe in the substitutionary atonement. Such an interpretation would surely be erroneous. Could not quotations easily be found from other writings by H. Clay Trumbull that would clearly prove his belief in this very central doctrine of the Christian faith?

How easy it is to allow our enthusiasm over a new idea or viewpoint that impresses us as helpful to carry us to the point where we seem to deny other emphases that are perhaps even more vital. I cannot bring myself to believe that H. Clay Trumbull wrote anything that was actually heretical or that he held views that were contrary to the central teachings of the Scripture. I fear, however, that such a conclusion might easily be secured from some of the statements in the latter part of the book. It is my own feeling that the emphasis is somewhat distorted, and that in trying to bring out one great truth he gives the impression of denying another.

I also feel that he puts far too much stress on the incidental matter of physical blood, instead of on what the blood signifies, namely, life given over to death as a substitute for the guilty sinner, and also life given to the redeemed sinner as a means of sanctification, communion with Christ, and glorification.

Personally, I am unable to condemn the book. Yet I feel that its material is mostly now outdated, and that the impression given by its Biblical discussions is somewhat unfortunate.

LETTER 37

1948

THE CURSE OF CANAAN

I am always glad to do anything I can to help people to understand the Word of God better.... As to the particular question which you ask: what the basis is for the popular notion that negroes are descended from Noah's son Ham -- it is my personal opinion that it has no basis whatever. It is, however, easy to see how such an idea might have originated. The Hamitic races as described in Genesis 10:6 and the following verses include people from northern Africa and western Asia. Thus Cush doubtless represents the Ethiopians who, by the way, are white and not negroid, Mizraim represents Egypt, and Canaan represents the Canaanites who were conquered by the Israelites at the time of Joshua. There is a large group of languages spoken by various peoples of northern Africa which scientists today designate as Hamitic languages. As far as I know no one of these groups of people is negroid, but all of them are white. However, as one goes further south into Africa one comes to various negro races all of which have languages entirely unrelated to the Hamitic languages. It is, therefore, altogether proper to speak of Egypt as the land of Ham but the Egyptians never were negroes. I see nothing whatever to connect up negroes with Ham. As a matter of fact it does not seem to me that the list of peoples in Genesis 10 gives us any idea as to which of the three sons of Noah would

be the progenitor of either the negro race or the yellow or red races. It seems to deal only with the people who would come in contact with the Israelites in the course of their history. The question of the relationship of the black and yellow races is one of the many questions which the Bible does not answer.

It is important also to note that in the account in Genesis 9:26 the curse is laid not upon Ham but upon his son Canaan. This curse was abundantly fulfilled at the time of the conquest of the Canaanites when those who were not killed remain to be hewers of wood and drawers of water. They continued to be subject to the various people who held Palestine at various times whether these people were Semitic or Japhetic. Thus there is nothing in the Scriptures to connect Ham with the negroes nor is there any curse upon Ham, nor any biblical suggestion that I have been able to find of any curse whatever upon the negroes.

You mentioned the fact that the Egyptians as we know them today are not negroes and that there does not appear to be proof that they were in biblical days. I think I could make this statement stronger. The fact of the matter is that in ancient Egyptian records we have accounts and pictures showing the first contact of the Egyptians with negroes, as the Egyptians traveled far south along the course of the Nile river....

LETTER 38
1976

JUDICIAL BLINDNESS

You asked about Isaiah 6:9-10 and the similar statements by Christ in Matthew 13:10-16.

There are two purposes in these passages. The most obvious is simply to describe the condition of lost humanity unwilling to turn to the Lord. People intentionally close their eyes to God's truth. They turn away and refuse to listen. There are many who

harden their hearts and this truth is part of the teaching of the passages that you mentioned.

It is also true that there is a further element in them that God causes a judicial blindness. Here we enter a problem that we cannot fully understand, though certain elements of it are abundantly clear in the Scripture. The Scripture makes plain that God has a great purpose in all things. We know that He does every thing well, and that everything is for the best interest of all His creatures. There are divine actions that we do not understand but must simply take on faith as being for the best. At the same time it is made abundantly clear in the Scripture that man has a definite power of choice. Even though we are greatly conditioned by our background, by our circumstances and by the influence of others, we choose over and over to turn away from God. We choose repeatedly what is not in accordance with His will. As a result all of us deserve condemnation.

God in His wonderful mercy reveals himself to people in most unexpected ways and at unexpected times. Sometimes a person will witness to someone repeatedly over a long period of years and seem to get no response, and then there will be a turning to Christ. On other occasions a mere word of witness produces an immediate response. There is much in life that we do not understand. It is our duty to be faithful and we can look to God to bring the increase.

The Scripture clearly teaches that when people go on continually in their own selfish ways God does not generally choose to provide an easy turning to salvation. There is such a thing as a judicial blindness after man has gone a certain distance in unbelief and sin. It is all part of God's good and holy plan, though we do not know the full details and cannot always clearly see His purpose. It would seem that the great mass of people are judicially blinded; since they have preferred darkness to light. He allows them to go further into darkness. Yet we must never count any living person as hopeless. For all we know it may be God's will to bring a particular individual to Himself, even perhaps in the very last moment of life.

LETTER 39
1960

SPIRITISM IN 1 SAMUEL 28:12-19?

I cannot agree with any who hold that "the participants were all overcome by delusion induced by their own psychological status at that time and moment." While such delusions undoubtedly occur to a limited extent, I feel that their occurrence is far from being sufficient to account for the events described. In addition, I do not believe the Holy Spirit would have caused the story to be included in the Scripture if it were nothing but a delusion. Such an interpretation impresses me as hardly consonant with belief that the Bible is the Word of the Living God, given for our instruction and admonition.

As you point out the Pentateuch contains very strict prohibition against seeking to establish contact with deceased relatives. We can safely say that in most cases where individuals believe that they have had such contact some sort of trickery is involved, either on the part of a professional medium, or of an evil spirit that is trying to deceive. After giving strict orders that Spiritists and wizards should not be allowed in his domain, Saul himself broke the command, thus giving an illustration of the weakness of human nature. No man is perfect. All have sinned and it is only through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ that any of us can be saved. Yet the account in 1 Samuel is hardly to be properly interpreted as meaning that the woman, or a demon, impersonated Samuel. This can be shown to be wrong, by two considerations: (1) the woman was greatly surprised when Samuel appeared. What happened was evidently contrary to anything that she had expected; (2) an evil spirit would hardly rebuke Saul for his sin and point to the judgment of God. To my mind it is quite clear that the woman pretended to make some sort of hoax, perhaps expecting that an evil spirit would fool the inquirer, but that God intervened in this case by actually sending Samuel himself. The message that was given was clearly from God and this was proven both by its character involving denunciation of sin and also by its literal fulfillment. Thus the story describes a very unusual situation where God intervened in a most unusual way.

Rightly understood the incident can be a real blessing in the spiritual life of all of us. Wrongly interpreted, it could result in harm and confusion.

LETTER 40
1982

**THE MEANING OF *SHAMAYIM*
IN 2 KINGS 2:11**

The question you raised about reconciling John 3:13 with 2 Kings 2:11 is most interesting. It brings vividly to mind the important fact that there is a great deal in God's universe about which we know very little.

Yet this is only what we might expect. It would have been impossible for someone living five centuries ago to describe the 20th century in a way that his contemporaries could understand.

The idea that someone in Philadelphia could actually see events that were then happening in Lebanon would have seemed ridiculous and impossible. If it were stated that a man would have breakfast in London, lunch in New York, and dinner in San Francisco, the writer could certainly have been thought to be out of his mind. Today these ideas are commonplace. Five centuries ago there would not even have been the vocabulary available to try to explain such matters. We have now learned a great deal about the forces that God has put in His universe, but what we know is a tiny fraction of what exists.

All that man has learned is slight in comparison with the infinite number of facts pertaining to God's universe. God has given us a wonderful revelation in the Bible, but the revelation has to be studied carefully in order to understand it. Although there is much that we can know with certainty, we must recognize the

limits of our knowledge. Despite its many excellences, human language is a poor instrument for trying to understand the things of God.

The first use of the Hebrew word *shamayim* in the Bible is in Genesis 1:1 where it says that God created heaven and earth. I understand this to mean that all that exists in the material universe was created by God, and that therefore in that verse the term 'heaven' includes everything that is not included in the word "earth".

The next use of this Hebrew word that English versions render as "heaven" is in Genesis 1: 8 where it says, "And God called the firmament heaven." The previous verse explains that the firmament was the division between the waters under the firmament and the waters above the firmament.

Thus in the first chapter of Genesis we have two seemingly very different meanings for the word "heaven." Probably the usage in verse 8 would correspond to what we today would call the sky. The one in verse 1 would include everything except the particular planet on which we live.

When we say that believers go to heaven at their death we mean that they go to a place or condition of absolute happiness in the presence of God.

In John 3:13 where it says that "no man has ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man who is in heaven", we have a statement given by Jesus Christ, who was here on earth when He said it. Since Jesus is the Second Person of the Trinity, He is omnipresent and there is no place where He is not, so the statement, "The Son of man who is in heaven" simply refers to the fact that He is actually in the very presence of God and continued to be so after He came to earth.

Of course Nicodemus was thoroughly familiar with the fact that Elijah had not died but had been taken up, even as Enoch was, but it would be quite obvious to him that was something quite different from what Jesus meant when He spoke of "the Son of man who is in heaven." Certainly this indicates a very definite close relationship with God such as no mere human being has ever had.

In 2 Kings 2:11 the term "heaven" could be understood in either of two ways and both of them would be true. Certainly

Elijah's body went up from this earth and penetrated what we would today call the sky. Certainly Elijah's spirit went into the very presence of God just as the spirit of any believer does.

LETTER 41
1963

**THE ISLAND OF THE INNOCENT
IN JOB 22:30**

The King James Version has translated Job 22:30 exactly as it stands in the Hebrew. It seems to have been the general practice of the King James translators to attempt to reproduce what the Hebrew contained, even where they might have thought that an other rendering would make better sense. At the opposite extreme, in this verse the RSV completely departs from the Hebrew, omitting the word "island", and changing the third person (he or it will be a deliverer) to a second person.

Most modern scholars assert that Eliphaz could not have said "the island of the innocent". While I do not know what he would have meant by this reference, I feel that many things in the speeches of Eliphaz and his associates may refer to matters known to them but not particularly clear to us. This particular Hebrew word is translated "isle" or "island" 36 times in the Old Testament, and never occurs there in the sense of "not", except possibly as an element in one proper name. An identical word, however, occurs frequently in post-Biblical Rabbinic Hebrew with the meaning "not". Most modern scholars assume that substitution of "not" for "island of" in Eliphaz's speech will make better sense. I myself am not sure that this is so. Eliphaz is pointing out the great blessings that he thinks will come to Job if he will only turn from his sin and ask God's forgiveness. Job insists

that Eliphaz is wrong and as a matter of fact in the end it is Eliphaz and his friends, rather than Job, who receive God's condemnation. If the interpretation of most of the modern English versions is followed, it would seem to teach that Eliphaz held that Job, if he would turn away from his own sins, would, through the resulting pureness of his hands, himself become the means of redeeming others who were not innocent. While I have no way of knowing what sort of theology may have been in the mind of Eliphaz I have no reason to think that he held such a view as this.

It is hardly consistent with New Testament theology, which teaches that only the Lord Jesus Christ can make atonement for sinners. The Roman Catholic Church holds that the saints by performing good works beyond what was due have built up a treasury of merits that can be used by the Church to help the guilty, but this view is without New Testament support.

The Revised Standard Version seems to make the best sense, by omitting "island of " or "not" altogether, and changing the third person to a second person, thus assuring Job that if he turns from his sin he will become innocent and can be delivered by the cleanness of his hands. Perhaps Eliphaz believed this teaching of salvation by works, but it is certainly not what the Hebrew contains. While I am not in a position to know what theology the later-condemned Eliphaz actually held, I do not see that we are much better off by adopting the conjectures of the RSV, or by assuming the presence of post-Biblical Hebrew like the other modern versions, than by simply keeping the KJV's literal rendering of the Hebrew as it stands.

Three of the versions that you quote have inserted the word "even", which corresponds to nothing in the original. If we are to insert words into the text in this way, I could point out a dozen or more cases in the prophets where I feel that the expression would be greatly improved and the understanding of the reader tremendously helped by the insertion of a word, and each word of my suggestions would deal with a place where the context makes it clear that the insertion would be strictly in line with what the verse really means. Unless we are going to do this in such cases, it seems to me to be hardly in line with our principles to do it in this obscure verse in the speech of Eliphaz.

To insert "once" would surely be paraphrase rather than translation. There is nothing in the Hebrew to suggest it.

The other suggested change, from "cleanness" to "pureness", seems to me to be quite unnecessary. "Pureness" is surely understandable even if "cleanness" may be more in line with 20th century usage.

If we are to prefer the prevalent interpretation of Eliphaz's theology, instead of the literal Hebrew as reproduced in the King James Version, my inclination would be to think that a marginal note rather than a text change would be indicated.

LETTER 42
1938

THE ORDER OF THE PSALMS AND THE PROPHETIC BOOKS

The question which Dr Ussher raises is a very interesting one. It is hard to be certain about such matters, because the interrelations between any two chapters of the Scripture are so many and so varied that one can easily bring any portions together. To form a fair judgment as to whether such a correspondence as he suggests continues in an unusual degree through the chapters of the Psalms on the one hand and the chapters of Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, etc., on the other hand would require very careful consideration and would take a great deal of time. I think the best I can do at present is to give certain reasons why a particular correspondence at this point appears to me rather unlikely.

As you know, the order of the Psalms is very early. The order is practically identical in the Septuagint and the chapter divisions are identical there with only a few exceptions. This means that the division of the Book of Psalms into individual Psalms would have been made before the time of Christ, and probably as early as 200 B.C. On the other hand, the division in the chapters of

Ezekiel, Daniel, and other prophetic books was not made until the 13th century A.D. It was made originally in the Latin Bible and probably by the Archbishop Stephen Langton. Some suggest that his frequent travels on horseback, in the course of which he is said to have done much of the work, may have seriously interfered with his judgment as to the proper place for chapter divisions. I once heard Campbell Morgan make the statement that three-fourths of the chapter divisions in the Bible are in the wrong place. While this statement appears to be a bit extreme, nevertheless I have frequently noticed that chapter divisions introduce an artificial stop in the thought at a point where it does not belong, while in other cases there is a clear change of subject in the middle of the chapter.

Another factor is also pertinent here. The order of books in our English Bible does not follow that of the Hebrew Bible. Various Hebrew manuscripts have varying orders. It is customary to place Daniel among the Hagiographa, which is the third division of the Hebrew Bible, with Psalms thus occupying a place between the other prophetic books and Daniel. In practically all Jewish lists Daniel immediately follows Esther, and in most of them Hosea immediately follows Ezekiel. Our order is derived not from the Hebrew but from the Septuagint, through the Vulgate. While the Septuagint order is much more similar to ours than is the Hebrew order, I have been unable to find any ancient manuscript of the Septuagint which has the books in the same order as in our English Bible. I find that in most of the ancient books Ezekiel and Daniel are not immediately connected with the so-called Minor Prophets. In the Codex Vaticanus, for instance, Ezekiel and Daniel come at the end, with the other Major Prophets coming between them and the Minor Prophets. In the Codex Alexandrinus the Major Prophets also come after the Minor Prophets. The order of the Minor Prophets is also different in these copies of the Septuagint than it is in the English Bible, which follows the Hebrew in this regard. Under these circumstances it would be difficult to find evidence that the one who arranged the Psalms had before him the books of Ezekiel, Daniel, and the Minor Prophets in the order in which we have them, even if the question of chapter divisions within them is put to one side.

This is only a hasty discussion of Dr Ussher's suggestion, but I hope you may find it of some help in dealing with the matter.

LETTER 43
1963

"SHADOW OF DEATH" OR "DARKNESS" IN PSALM 23:4

The translation of this Hebrew word is not nearly as clear as most present-day scholars think. However I do not feel that it is a problem of great importance since no doctrine or Biblical principle is affected by the question which of the two translations is correct.

The Hebrew word that is rendered in this way might be transliterated as *salmawet*. If this appeared as two words, there would be little question that *sal* was the normal Hebrew word for "shadow of," and that *mawet* is the normal Hebrew word for "death". However it is extremely rare in Hebrew to have a compound word made up by the combination of two simple words in such a way. The word occurs about twenty times, and almost half of these are in the Book of Job. It is sometimes used in contrast with "light" and sometimes in parallel with another word for "darkness." In many cases the idea of deadly peril or something connected with death is involved in the context.

In view of the extreme rarity of such compound words in Hebrew, and of the fact that the vowel points were not included in our Hebrew Bible until the 5th century A.D., a scholar made the suggestion a good many years ago that the word should be pronounced as *salmuwt*. On the basis of a parallel in Arabic, which language has many relationships with Hebrew, he suggested that such a form might reasonably mean a darkness of an unusually heavy type. This interpretation has been accepted by most modern scholars.

To my mind the strongest argument for maintaining the traditional rendering as "shadow of death" is the fact that it was so rendered by the Greek translation made 200 years before the time of Christ. However, I feel that there is considerable weight in the other suggestion and that in any event no doctrinal point is

involved. Certainly the valley referred to in Psalm 23 is to be thought of as a dark and gloomy place where death lurks in the shadow.

LETTER 44
1952

JESUS IN ISAIAH 7:14

The passage to which you refer is one which can easily prove difficult to a person who is just beginning a careful study of the prophetic books. In studying these books it is necessary to learn to understand the simpler passages first, for from them one can learn the principles with which to approach the more difficult problems.

The 14th verse of Isaiah 7 is a word of rebuke addressed to King Ahaz. In verse 13, Isaiah has strongly rebuked Ahaz for his lack of trust in God and for his determination to carry through his own selfish plan of seeking an Assyrian alliance instead of looking to God for help. In rebuking Ahaz, Isaiah informs him of God's plan to provide another head of the house of David who will be worthy of the position which Ahaz now holds. This will be God's own son, Immanuel. Verse 14 refers to Christ and to Christ alone. There is no other person to whom it can be any possible reference.

Since it does not say when Christ is going to be born, the next two verses go on to speak of the length of his life as a measuring stick. Suppose that it were to begin right away: in such a case, the prophet says, by the time that the Child would know how to make simple choices, the two kings that Ahaz fears so greatly would have disappeared from the scene of history. In the latter part of verse 15, the phrase, "that he may know to refuse the evil, and

choose the good" is a possible translation of the Hebrew but is by no means the best translation. It would be much better to take it as a description of the time when the first part of the verse occurs. "When he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good", (in other words, by the time that this Child has reached the age of making simple choices) the two kings will have been destroyed.

The phrase "butter and honey" might be obscure if it were not clarified by examination of verse 22 where we are told that, as a result of the depopulation of the land because of the Assyrian invasion, the few people left in the land will have access to all of the products of the cattle and sheep that they can possibly use. As verse 23 points out, most of the land will be covered with briars and thorns, because of the lack of people to till the ground.

I discussed chapter 7 rather fully in the issue of the *Bible Today* for January, 1944.

LETTER 45
1970

ALMAH (VIRGIN) IN ISAIAH 7:14

Dr MacRae wrote to *TIME* magazine on March 18, 1970:

In the article on The New English Bible on page 56 of your issue of March 23, you include a completely erroneous statement about the Bible which includes a direct attack upon the Christian faith. Speaking of Isaiah 7:14, which, as rendered in the King James Version, "a virgin shall conceive," clearly predicts the virgin birth of Christ, your article goes on to say of the Hebrew word *almah*: "elsewhere in the Bible it is used to describe young women who are clearly not virgins." This is not only a direct attack upon what the New Testament clearly asserts (Matthew 1:22-23),

but is also directly contrary to fact, since there is not even one place in the Bible where the Hebrew word *almah* is used to describe a young woman "who is clearly not a virgin."

When your writers discuss theological or philological matters it would be much better if they would get their facts straight.

TIME magazine replied on April 28, 1970:

Thank you for writing in connection with *TIME* March 23 report on the New English Bible. We are glad to have this opportunity to explain the reference to *almah*. The translation was, as we noted, the work of eminent scholars selected by the churches sponsoring the project. Sir Godfrey Driver, one of the directors of the project and a former professor of Semitic Philology at Oxford University, explains the NEB version of the passage in Isaiah as follows: "The Hebrew word for virgin is *bitulah* but the word used in Isaiah is *almah*, which means a marriageable adult. Moreover, the same word is used in Judges 19:1 for a concubine, and on Phoenician inscriptions it has even been used to describe a temple prostitute. The one thing the word definitely doesn't mean is virgin. The Greeks knew this too. The Greek word used in Matthew is *parthenos*, which means adult. *Parthenos* is used also by the Greeks in Genesis to describe Dinah after she had lain with Shechem and so certainly couldn't be a virgin." Referring to the 1961 New Testament translation, which uses the word "virgin", Sir Godfrey says: "The translators should have dropped it but ... I suppose the doctrinal consequences would have been too complicated."

Dr MacRae responded to Miss Josephine Reidy of *TIME* thus:

Your letter of April 28 surprised me greatly. In fact it is hard to believe that a man with the reputation of Sir Godfrey Driver would have written a letter containing so many misstatements as are included in the remarks that you quote as coming from him.

Thus you quote him as saying about the word *almah* that "the same word is used in Judges 19:1 for a concubine." It is true that Judges 19:1 speaks of a concubine, but there is no Hebrew word in this verse or anywhere in its vicinity that even remotely resembles the word *almah*.

The statement that a similar word has been used on Phoenician inscriptions to describe a temple prostitute is quite beside the point. Since no specific reference to a particular Phoenician inscription is given I am not able to check whether this is true or not, but it would have no relevancy to the meaning of the Hebrew word *almah* in any case since Phoenicia is a language that differs in many ways from Hebrew.

It is conceivable that a professor of Semitic Philology might be so carried away by his theological presuppositions as to go outside of his field and make statements about Greek without bothering to check the facts, but it is hard to believe that a man of Sir Godfrey Driver's reputation would do so. All Greek dictionaries list "virgin" as the meaning of *parthenos*. I have never seen a Greek dictionary that suggested "adult" as its meaning. Every student of ancient Greece knows that the Parthenon in Athens was so named in honor of the virgin goddess Athena. To say that it was so named because Athena was an adult would be utter nonsense!

LETTER 46
1976

THE TIME OF FULFILLMENT OF ISAIAH 23:15-18

The problem [of the prophecies of Isaiah and Daniel] is similar to that of Genesis 49, where Jacob described the future history of the various tribes. Many of his predictions dealt with events or situations during the long period between the time of Joshua and the Babylonian Captivity. If we had a full and complete history of each tribe during that period we could probably understand exactly what each of these statements meant. Their fulfillment

would have greatly increased men's confidence in God and in the dependability of His Word. Today we derive similar blessing from the predictions of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow (cf. 1 Peter 1:11- 12).

All of God's Word is true and all of it is important, but at various times certain parts of it become particularly important. Some sections that meant a great deal a few centuries ago may not have so much meaning for us today, and some sections that bring much blessing to us today may have been quite difficult to understand a few centuries ago.

Chapter 23 deals explicitly with Tyre and Sidon, great cities of ancient times that were situated where they could get ample supplies of papyrus from Egypt and thus were able to keep their records on convenient but perishable material. The little information about them that has been preserved on stone monuments or in records of other lands provides only a very sketchy idea of their history in ancient times. Tyre was conquered by Nebuchadnezzar at about the middle of the time when the people of Judah were enduring Babylonian captivity. Later on Tyre was rebuilt and became a very important center of commerce. It would seem likely that most of verses 1 to 17 is a description of events at this time. If we knew the full history they would doubtless be quite understandable to us. At present I am not sure whether verse 18 refers to something that occurred in antiquity or whether it looks forward to the millennium.

You refer to the phrase "in that day" in verse 15. It is some times said that this phrase is a technical term to refer to the end time, but examination of its usage does not support such an idea. It is often used of end times, but it is also often used of earlier periods. In this phrase in Hebrew the word "that" looks to what follows rather than to what precedes. In modern English the Biblical phrase "in that time" would in most cases mean "there will be a time when," or "in the time of which I am about to speak." This is contrary to the English usage to which I am accustomed, but it is quite in line with some modern as well as ancient languages. The same phrase occurs in Isaiah 2:20; 3:7, 18, and 4:1 and 2. In 4:1 it refers to the coming time when there will be loss of many soldiers, and thus fits with the events that precede. In 4:2 it looks forward to a later period. This phrase is quite clearly not a technical term for a particular point in the plan of God.

In 23:17 the word translated "then" in the New American Standard Bible is exactly the same word that is translated "and" at the beginning of verses 17 and 18. It is entirely possible that the last half of verse 17 looks forward to a time much later than the first half of the verse, but it is slightly more natural to take it as describing what will happen immediately after God allows the city to be rebuilt.

In Chapter 18 the "land of whirring wings" may refer to a part of Ethiopia itself or to a country farther south. This region is often mentioned on Egyptian monuments from an earlier time.

As you can see from the above, I like to withhold judgment where the evidence is not clear, and to speak positively only where the meaning of a verse is clear in its context, or where it can be inferred with considerable certainty from other passages.

Every time we go through the Bible we find new problems that were previously unknown to us. The next time we go through it we may find answers to many of these problems but we will also become aware of others that we had not realized before. God's Word is infinite and no man can expect to reach the end of its study. If we are too ready to jump to conclusions with insufficient evidence we may fail to see important truths that would otherwise become known to us as we continue to study God's Word.

LETTER 47

GOD'S COMMAND OR GOD'S PERMISSION IN HOSEA 1:2

The Bible is a book of infinite wisdom. We can accept everything it clearly teaches as being true and entirely free from error. This is one of the great central teachings of our Faith.

Along with this important fact we must always remember that the Bible is written in human language, and human language is a very weak instrument for accurately presenting ideas. Every human language has many ambiguities. Almost every syntactical form can be interpreted in various ways.

We can easily forget that the imperative form of the verb always expresses a command. Although this is its commonest use, it can also be used to express a permission. I think of two very clear examples in Scripture.

The first of these is found in Numbers 22. Balak has sent emissaries to ask Balaam to come to him and curse Israel (verses 2-7). Balaam asks the LORD what he should do (verses 8-10). God says: "Do not go with them. You must not put a curse on those people, because they are blessed" (verse 12). Balak sends a second expedition to urge him to come and promise rich rewards for cursing Israel (verses 15-17). Balaam tells the messengers that he cannot do anything great or small to go beyond the command of the LORD, but says he will ask the LORD again (verses 18-19). Now God says: "... go with them, but do only what I tell you" (verse 20). It is clear that God did not reverse Himself and give Balaam a command to go. He simply granted Balaam's request.

If someone were to question this interpretation and say that the word "go" in verse 20 was really a command, not simply a permission, he would find himself in difficulty in reading in verse 22 that "God was very angry when he went." God gave Balaam permission to go; He did not order him to go. God gave Balaam the permission he asked, and turned a catastrophe into a blessing for God's people, but Balaam himself gained nothing from what he did.

Another clear illustration of this use of the imperative is found in 2 Kings 2. Here verses 11-12 tell how "Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind.... And Elisha saw him no more." A little later Elisha met the company of the prophets from Jericho and they said to him: "We ... have fifty able men. Let them go and look for your master. Perhaps the Spirit of the LORD has picked him up and set him down on some mountain or in some valley." The end of verse 16 is very clear: "No," Elisha replied, "do not send them." Verse 17 says: "But they persisted until he was too ashamed to refuse. So he said, "Send them."

Were Elisha's words, "Send them," a command, or merely the granting of permission? Verse 18 makes the answer very clear: "When they returned to Elisha ... he said to them, "Didn't I tell you not to go?" These parallels make it easy to understand God's words to Hosea. There must have been a background that has not been fully described in his book. Human beings are often drawn in more than one direction. The Old Testament prophets were not mere secretaries. Their books represent the very mind of God, but they often include the living experience of the individuals whom God used to give us part of His living Word. Some of the prophets give us details about their calls or about their early experiences. In other cases the prophet seems to appear suddenly, but we can be sure that God prepared each of them for his particular task.

I believe that I have seen some interesting parallels to Hosea's early experiences. There have been two or three occasions when I have met a young man who loved the Lord and ardently desired to serve Him, but was engaged to a woman who showed no slightest trace of interest in Christian service and did not hesitate to display a lack of interest in the matters that were so dear to the man's heart. In such a case a man usually has to choose between the woman and the Lord's call, and if he tries to cling to both it can lead to disaster. The case of Hosea may have been similar.

It is easy to imagine Hosea's early experiences. He dearly loved the Lord and wished to follow Him wholeheartedly, but he was greatly attracted by Gomer. We do not know whether she was already involved in immorality, or whether the immorality in her family background clearly showed the likelihood that she herself would eventually fall into grievous sin. He prayed that the Lord would change her (or that he would protect her from the evil influences so clear in her family background). It seemed that Hosea must choose between Gomer and the Lord, but he sincerely loved them both. He refused to take "no" for the Lord's answer, but kept on praying. Finally the Lord gave His consent, saying something like this: "Go and take a wife of whoredom. You will have to suffer a great deal of misery, but if you stand true to Me I will enable you to give a witness that will bring blessing to My people."

LETTER 48
1946

**PREDICTION OR ANALOGY
IN HOSEA 11:1**

The problem which you have raised about Hosea 11:1 is one of the most difficult in the entire field of predictive prophecy. If we should take every historical statement we find as being predictive of something in the future our whole interpretation would dissolve into chaos. I have not yet found a satisfactory answer to this problem but feel that probably the solution is along the line of an analogy rather than an actual prediction. Israel is the child of God called to be His servant to fulfill His work. Just as this work cannot be fulfilled by Israel as servant because of Israel's sin, but must be fulfilled by the true Servant of the Lord, who represents Israel, similarly Israel is God's son only as a means by which His unique Son is to be brought into the world. In view of this it is altogether natural to expect to find many points of close analogy between the experience of Israel and the experience of Christ, especially in such an outstanding feature as the coming of Israel out of Egypt....

Incidentally, it perhaps should be mentioned that the book of Hosea after the first three chapters is one of the most difficult books of the Old Testament. I believe that it has probably a unified structure with a reasonable outline, but this is not at all obvious.

LETTER 49
1977

THE PROPHECY OF HOSEA

You have undertaken a rather difficult task in giving a series of sermons on Hosea. After the first few chapters it is a very difficult book. The outline of its latter chapters is extremely difficult. One suggestion has been that they contain extracts from sermons. It would be easier at your present stage of training to take the minor prophets one-by-one and select a few outstanding points that would bring intellectual and spiritual help to those present.

All the chapter divisions in the Bible were inserted many centuries after the various books were written. Sometimes they represent natural division points, and sometimes they do not. I once heard a very prominent Bible teacher say that in nine-tenths of cases the chapter divisions are in the wrong place. I think this is quite exaggerated but I feel that it is always good to learn to find the natural division points ourselves rather than to place too much dependence on chapter divisions.

Hosea 11:1 has puzzled many. Since Matthew does not say that a type was fulfilled but that what was spoken by the prophet was fulfilled by Christ's sojourn in Egypt, it is most likely that this verse is really prophetic rather than historical. It was in view of God's future plans for Christ, which involved bringing Him back from Egypt, that he loved Israel, delivering its people from Egyptian bondage and bringing them into the promised land.

Hosea 13:11 probably refers to Saul (1 Samuel 15:22-23; 16:1).

In view of the rather disconnected nature of much of the book of Hosea, it is difficult to be sure of the exact meaning of 14:8. Since it comes right after the promises of future blessing there is much to be said for the KJV interpretation, which promises that Ephraim will turn completely away from idols, and assures him that the only source of real blessing is to be found in the true God....

LETTER 50
1966

THE PAGAN MOTHER GODDESS

Reading your letter makes me realize afresh how unfortunate it is that in our day many who hate Christianity are established in positions of importance and leadership in the scholarly world. It is thus possible for them sometimes to make sweeping dogmatic assertions with practically no factual basis. Others may repeat one or more of these assertions, often in exaggerated form. As a result, ideas are sometimes widely circulated which are quite without any factual warrant.

This is certainly true as regards any assertion that some feature of Christianity is derived from the pagan Mother Goddess. There is no factual basis whatever for such a statement.

The New Testament presents the Virgin Mary as a very fine woman who was blessed by God in being permitted to become the mother of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is not the slightest suggestion in the New Testament that she was, or ever became, anything more than a very fine human being. The exaltation that is given to her in Roman Catholicism is not found in the New Testament, and came only after the lapse of a number of centuries. It is an addition to Christianity, not a part of it. Even so it would be difficult to prove that it is derived from any pagan teaching about a Mother Goddess.

The worship of the Mother Goddess originally seems to have been confined to Asia Minor. It spread eventually to Greece and Rome, and was combined with the Greek goddess, Rhea, who, although the mother of Zeus, had not previously enjoyed any great prominence in the religion of Greece. The outstanding features of the official Greek and Roman religions do not emphasize any such figure.

This Mother Goddess Rhea has no connection with Babylon. Any mention of Rhea in connection with "Semiramis of Babylon" is quite without foundation. At a fairly late period,

there seems to have been a princess in Assyria (not in Bablyon), who was called Semiramis. Very little is known about her, but a number of popular legends sprang up around her person. Some of these legends may perhaps have been brought from Asia Minor, and have been then combined with her name. But they do not play any part in the official religion of Babylon or of Assyria.

I myself studied the Babylonian language for two and a half years at the University of Berlin in Germany, and also attended many courses in this field under the leading Babylonian scholars of the United States. I took my Ph.D. in the study of Babylonian antiquities at the University of Pennsylvania, and my thesis, part of which dealt with Babylonian religion, was published by the University of Chicago. I have heard hundreds of lectures by experts in the field of Babylonian language and antiquities. Never in any one of them, either in Europe or in America, did I ever hear a reference to worship of a Mother Goddess or of Semiramis.

The second question in your letter reads: "What scholarship can I present, what authentic material, to prove that the Hebrew "Mary" was not merely a refinement of Mother Goddess Rhea (Semiramis) of Babylon?" Your question is so specific that it seems to me that it must rest back upon some very definite source. Since there is no conceivable similarity between the biblical picture of Mary and any pagan Mother Goddess, and since Rhea has no connection at all with Semiramis, and since neither one of them was connected with Babylon, I wish I could know the exact source from which the question came. If you could send me a page reference in a specific book, I would be very glad to look it up and see just how trustworthy it is in other regards. If such a book is having a definite effect among your friends, or was used in your own course in college, it might be a real service for me to check into it and to get the true facts as to its reliability or unreliability.

In what I have already written, I have made references to Babylonian religion and similar matters, and I need to make a number more before I am through. Since this is the case, it is important that I explain a rather vital matter about the accepted terminology. It is not usual for experts in the field of Near Eastern studies to use the term "Babylonian" in this way, since Babylon did not become a great city until the culture of Mesopotamia

had already had a long history. The modern study of the language and literature of Mesopotamia really began over a century ago, through discoveries in the area known as Assyria, quite a distance north of Babylon. Consequently, during the last century and the early part of this one, the language was called "Assyrian" and the study was called Assyriology. Then it came to be realized that actually the Assyrians spoke a particular dialect, as did also the Babylonians. In some of our universities there are now special courses in "Old Babylonian" in "Middle Babylonian" or in "Neo-Babylonian" and also in "Old Assyrian" "Middle Assyrian" or "Neo-Assyrian" in which the various linguistic features of each of these periods are studied. Since we have material in the general language from a time long before either Assyria or Babylon was important, it is now customary to name the language after an earlier city known as "Agade" (sometimes represented as "Akkad"). The language is, therefore, now usually called "Akkadian" and the whole study is spoken of as the study of Akkadian. In my opinion it is a rather unfortunate development, because if you speak of "Akkadian" to a person outside the field, he has no idea what you are talking about. If you say "Babylonian" he understands in general what you mean. But if one were to use the term Babylonian thus in speaking to those who are experts in this field, they would be apt to think him an ignoramus, since it is customary among scholars today to restrict that term to the small section of the study that is related to the city of Babylon.

In the Babylonian religion there is a very important goddess named Ishtar. She is not particularly thought of as a mother, but rather as a ferocious and licentious young-woman type. The Gilgamesh epic describes one of its heroes as accusing Ishtar of all sorts of wickedness and meanness. She was a figure of whom the people were more apt to be afraid of than ever to think of her in such a capacity as a Mother Goddess. She was by far the leading female deity of Babylon. In fact I do not think of any other female deity that played a great part in the Babylonian religion. There were numerous male deities that played such a part.

You mention the alleged fact that "the Japanese were worshipping a madonna and child long before being contacted by the Roman Catholic missionaries." I do not know enough about the Japanese religion to be able to say whether there is any truth to

this or not. If the question is vital, I do not think it would take me long to find an expert on the subject whom I might ask, or myself to consult books by real scholars in that field. I do not think, however, that this question is particularly important, if we realize the fact that, many centuries before Roman Catholic missionaries visited Japan, Nestorian missionaries had carried Christianity clear across Asia. There were at one time hundreds of Christian churches all through China, before severe persecution wiped them out. This fact has been largely forgotten, but in recent years scholars have patiently gathered many scattered bits of undeniable evidence in relation to it. A friend of mine is at present occupied in writing a book on that very subject.

Since Christianity was widespread throughout Asia long before the Roman Catholic missionaries went to Japan in the 16th century, it would not be at all strange if such elements as the madonna and child should have been taken over from it. I doubt, however, that such a worship has played any outstanding part in the leading religions of Japan or of any other country of eastern Asia.

Your first question reads: 1) "How do we *know* the Hebrew Scriptures were not derived from Babylonia? Can we prove it?"

I have spent hundreds of hours reading Babylonian literature in the original Cuneiform script. Anyone who has done so is in a position to say at once that the points of similarity between the Hebrew Scriptures and the Babylonian literature are comparatively rare. The differences are so great that no real scholar would make such a blanket statement as to say that the Hebrew Scriptures were derived from the Babylonian literature. Most non-Christian scholars today would say that certain things in the Hebrew Scriptures were derived from Babylonia, but the particular things that they would point out would be a comparatively small part of the whole.

The Bible tells us that Abraham came from Ur of the Chaldees, and went from there to Haran, another great center of Akkadian culture, where he stayed for many years. Thus his whole background was one of "Babylonian" culture. There were frequent contacts between Israel and Mesopotamia all through the later history. It is natural to expect to find many interrelationships between Hebrew and Babylonian culture and much use of Babylonian names and Babylonian expressions. Mesopotamian

law would naturally be influential. Yet despite these various contacts and similarities, the religions of the two areas differ radically from one another. There is little similarity in religious practices, and Biblical monotheism is utterly different from anything that we find in Mesopotamia.

The whole matter of derivation is a rather slippery subject. It is easy to get into a frame of mind where one assumes that if any features in two different cultures or religions are similar, one must have been borrowed from the other. Actually, mere similarity is far from sufficient to establish such a claim. It would be necessary also to show that there is a real relationship through which such a borrowing might have come. Furthermore, it is important to notice the differences as well as the similarities.

Thus it is stated in many books that the biblical story of creation is borrowed from the Babylonian creation story. Probably I discussed this in my article in the book, *Modern Science and the Christian Faith*. The differences between these two stories are far greater than the similarities. Actually the similarities are only such as would be sure to be found in any two creation stories. It is quite different in the case of the flood, where there are many similarities in incidental details, even though there are also differences. I am quite convinced that the true story of the flood was passed on for centuries in Mesopotamia and that a certain number of changes took place in the course of transmission, even though many features were kept correct. Thus there has been preserved in the Gilgamesh epic a story that is remarkably similar to our biblical story. I believe that both stories go back to the recollection of the same events. The difference, of course, is that Moses was inspired of God, when he wrote the story of the flood, so as to keep his words free from error, and therefore we can be sure that all of the details in the biblical story are accurate and true.

When one compares the biblical story of the flood with the Babylonian story, he finds great differences in the whole attitude and atmosphere. The moral and religious aspects of the stories are utterly different, even though many of their detailed events are similar.

One can readily imagine someone three or four hundred years from now, picking up a book and reading that the President of the United States who was elected in 1960 was assassinated in the South, and was succeeded in office by the Vice-President, a man

named Johnson who had formerly been a senator from a southern state beginning with the letters Te (Texas). It is easy to see that at that future time some expert in derivation might say: "This story is obviously false, since it is so evidently derived from an earlier story which states that the President of the United States who was elected in 1860 was assassinated by a southern sympathizer and was succeeded by the Vice-President, a man named Johnson, who had formerly been a senator from a southern state beginning with Te (Tennessee)." Thus we have many similarities between these two events, and yet we know today that they are absolutely distinct and that neither story was in any way borrowed from the other. Most of the alleged cases of derivation of biblical stories or religious beliefs from pagan sources do not have nearly as much similarity as there is between these two events in American history.

In my opinion, the best procedure for scholarly refutation of such un scholarly statements as those to which you have referred, which, unfortunately, are being widely spread by people who are not trained in this field, is to try to get them to give some scholarly basis for their allegations. Then it would be easy to show that the alleged scholarly evidence does not warrant the conclusions that are being drawn from it. This latter part of the task could hardly be performed by a non-specialist in the field. However, it would not take me long to investigate any such particular alleged scholarly evidence that might be presented to me, in view of my background of training, and of my many years of study.

Quite a different strand of anti-Christian activity is involved in the so-called Higher Criticism. This theory was worked out by a great number of scholars over a long period of time. The results are not solidly established. In fact I believe that they can be quite completely demolished by careful examination. Yet they represent a great deal of study and of dealing with factual material, and are thus in quite a different category.

During the past two years these theories of the Higher Criticism, which were formerly largely confined to theological seminaries and technical books, have begun to be widely disseminated in the Sunday School literature of several of our larger denominations. Therefore they are assuming a greater importance to the layman than was previously the case....

LETTER 51 1966 IS MARY THE MOTHER OF GOD?

Dr MacRae was asked to comment on a tract published by Osterhus Publishing House (Protestant) entitled, "Blessed Mary".

It stated: Blessed Mary was not the "Mother of God." In the first place, God has no mother or father. The Godhead was eternally existent. Jesus came to earth as God's Son. God through the virgin Mary furnished Jesus with a physical body. She became the vehicle that God, the Father, used to bring the physical body into being, to "clothe the Spirit," which was God's Son. The Bible says in Hebrews 10:5, "A body Thou hast prepared for Me."

The Lord Jesus Christ never called Mary His mother: He called her "woman." Christ was begotten of the Holy Ghost in the womb of the virgin Mary. She became the mother of the physical or earthly body only.

It wasn't God the Father who took on flesh to dwell among us: it was Jesus Christ, the Son.

Mary, therefore, is not the "Mother of God," but the bearer and caretaker of the physical body of God's Son while He was on earth only.

Truly the virgin Mary was favored and blessed to be chosen to bring forth the earthly body of our wonderful Saviour Jesus Christ.

In Matthew 12:50, Jesus Christ said, "For whosoever shall do the will of (God)my Father which is in Heaven, the same is My brother and sister and mother."

Dr MacRae writes:

I am glad that you sent me the little tract. It is a fine illustration of the importance for Christian work of having a real theological

education. All too often those who are not theologically trained, in reacting against a serious error, go to the opposite extreme and fall into another error which may be even worse than the one that they are combating.

It is sad to observe that the back of the tract presents an error that is far worse than even the erroneous attitude that Roman Catholics take towards the Virgin Mary. The Bible does not teach that the Second Person of the Trinity merely took a human body. It teaches that "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." Christians believe that Jesus is truly God, the Second Person of the Trinity. They are equally sure that Jesus is a real man, not merely having a human body, but possessing all the qualities of a real human being. Mary was not simply the mother of the physical or earthly body. She was the mother of "the man Christ Jesus." (1 Timothy 2:5).

Chapter VIII, 2 of The Westminster Confession of Faith declares:

The Son of God, the Second Person in the Trinity, being very and eternal God, of one substance, and equal with the Father, did, when the fullness of time was come, take upon him man's nature, with all the essential properties and common infirmities thereof; yet without sin: being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the Virgin Mary, of her substance. So that two whole, perfect, and distinct natures, the Godhead and the manhood, were inseparably joined together in one person, without conversion, composition, or confusion. Which person is very God and very man, yet one Christ, the only mediator between God and man.

The tract says: "The Lord Jesus Christ never called Mary His mother. He called her 'woman'. It is impossible to make a negative statement like this. The Bible frequently refers to her as His mother, as, for instance, in Acts 1:14 and John 2:12. We read in Luke 2:51, "And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but His mother kept all these sayings in her heart." It is ridiculous to think that during these next ten years he always called her "woman." He must have frequently called her "Mother". John 19:26 is one of the two places where Jesus addresses His

mother as "woman," yet twice in this very same verse she is called his mother.

To us it seems rather curt and brusque to address someone as "woman." My guess is that in the Old English the word woman had an entirely different sense, as it certainly does in the Greek. I am sure that Jesus never addressed His mother in any but respectful terms.

It is quite false to say that the virgin Mary merely brought forth the earthly body of our wonderful Saviour Jesus Christ. She was indeed the mother of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I am glad that you have brought this error to my attention. If it were carried through logically it would destroy our whole basis of our salvation. We are saved through Jesus Christ, because He as God could make an infinite sacrifice, but also because He as man could truly represent us on the cross. If He were not a real man, but only had a human body, His crucifixion would be of little avail as far as our salvation is concerned.

LETTER 52
1953

WINE IN THE BIBLE

Some of the members of our faculty made a study of the use of wine in the Bible when the Seminary was started sixteen years ago. We came very strongly to the conclusion that the Bible never represents Jesus Christ as having turned water into fermented wine, or as having partaken of intoxicating liquor. The word "wine" in the New Testament corresponds in quotations from the Old Testament to two distinct Hebrew words. One of these means "fermented wine", while the other simply means "grape juice".

Both of these Hebrew words are translated in the New Testament by the same Greek word. There is no evidence that our Lord ever put His approval on the use of fermented liquor.

LETTER 53
1956

**THE HOLY SPIRIT, LAW AND GRACE,
AND THE SECOND COMING**

You are quite right in saying that God the Father was pre-eminent in the Old Testament, that Christ was pre-eminent in the New Testament, and that the Holy Spirit has pre-eminence now. This is true as far as the emphasis on their work is concerned. Yet Christ is the supreme subject of the whole Bible including both Testaments. The Holy Spirit does not testify of Himself, but of Christ. The Old Testament points forward to Christ who is our Redeemer to win us back and to reconcile us to God. There are different spheres of activity, but the persons of the God-head are truly united as one God, and there is no period in which all three cannot really be said to be active.

As regards the particular statements about the Holy Spirit, it seems to me that your friends must surely have misunderstood what Mr... really meant.

The things of God are difficult to express in human language. The Scriptural words are entirely true and free from error, but the understanding of these words may require much consecrated effort.

A great deal of strife between true Christians is based on needless argument over words. Paul warned Timothy against "strifes of words" (1 Timothy 6:4). It is important that we study the

precise meaning of words in order to learn what is the real truth that God wants us to know, but it is very easy for us to get wrapped up in arguments over matters that can't be made clear to our finite minds.

We all recognise that God is omnipresent. He is everywhere. He cannot be excluded from any bit of space. He indwells all the universe. Nevertheless the Scripture does speak of His coming into a person to live there. This must surely mean that He takes control in a special way, because, as far as the place is concerned, He is always everywhere. If it were not for the Holy Spirit's activity in keeping unsaved people from carrying out to the full the wickedness that is within them, they would be totally sinful, and this world would completely disintegrate. His general influence in the world keeps it together, and makes it possible that there shall be sufficient peace for Christians to be able to spread the Word of God.

It is certainly true that He indwells a person in a very special sense as soon as that person becomes a Christian. He takes control of our lives to a far greater extent, in a different way altogether from any relationship that He has with the unbeliever.

There is no harm in describing this as indwelling. It is a Scriptural term. But by it we don't mean anything like a man stepping into a room, or like pouring water into a pitcher.

Thus it seems to me that the truth that you are stressing is a very real one, and very important, and that the difference between you and those who are quoting Mr... is really simply a matter of terminology.

The matter of Law and Grace is often misunderstood. The true Christian has never been under Law, nor was the Jewish believer ever under Law in the sense that his salvation depended upon his keeping the Law. No one ever has been saved or ever will be saved in any other way than through the grace of Christ. The Old Testament believer had the Law to show him how God wanted him to live, and to make it easy for him to see how far short he fell, and how greatly he needed a Savior. The sacrifices were there to point forward to the coming of the One who would bear the sins of all who believe on Him whether they live before or after the time of His First Coming.

The Pharisees fell into the error of thinking that their salvation

was dependent on keeping the Law, and of making every tiny detail of the observance of the Law a matter of vital importance for salvation. Paul swept all this away, and showed us clearly that it is only through faith in Christ that we can be saved. For us, as for the Old Testament believer, the Law shows us how far short we come and how much we need a Savior. The moral Law gives all of us an understanding of the kind of life that God wants us to live. Neither they nor we were ever under Law in the sense of being saved by it.

Certainly no one can put himself into the Christian ministry, nor can any group of men put another man into the ministry. It is God alone who can call men to His service, and can give them gifts. All that men can do is to recognize the calling of God. I have not had much contact with Mr ... for the last year or two. Before that, however, I had a good many talks with him, and it is my opinion that God has given him real gifts for his service. I hope that he is not moving in the direction of putting too much emphasis on minor points on which there may be proper differences of opinion among Christians. He did not impress me that way before.

On the matter of the Second Coming, I feel that it is very vital that we recognize the clear Scriptural teaching that Jesus is coming back to set up His kingdom of righteousness and peace upon this earth....

You refer to 2 Thessalonians 2:7. That verse states that the Antichrist cannot be revealed until the one that hinders is taken out of the way. I think that the one that hinders is the Holy Spirit acting through the Church. The Holy Spirit will still be exerting a certain influence on wicked men after the Church is taken out of the world, keeping the world free from utter disintegration, but the great thing that keeps wickedness from working itself out fully today is the presence of true believers here, as the Holy Spirit works in and through their lives. Their removal will allow wickedness to take tremendous steps forward. To my mind this is the correct interpretation of 2 Thessalonians 2:7, and I know of no other suggested interpretation of the verse that seems to me to make much sense.

In Luke 12:40 I read: "Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of Man cometh at an hour when ye think not." In many other verses I find the same exhortation. I believe that these many

passages make it absolutely clear that we are to be ready at any time since we do not know when He may come.

LETTER 54
1941

THE DATE OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

My own field of study is the Old Testament, and I do not claim to speak as a first-hand witness to matters of New Testament criticism. At the same time, I have come across one or two interesting sidelights recently which might be of interest to you. They indicate a revolt on the part of certain liberal or radical scholars against commonly accepted liberal views which have been regarded in many quarters as completely proven.

As you of course know, liberal scholars for many years have considered that the first three Gospels, the so-called Synoptics, were written a comparatively few years after the time of Christ, but that the Gospel of John was written long after and represented merely the opinion of a later day, giving us no first-hand evidence of the facts of the life of Christ or historical matters of the time.

This view has been so widely accepted and firmly established that to question it has seemed in the eyes of liberal scholars to mark one down as of no scholarly standing whatever. Recently it has been strongly questioned, however, from two men of unquestioned scholarship who are themselves disbelievers in the supernatural elements of Christianity.

The earlier of these two of whom I speak is Professor Charles C. Torrey, Professor of Semitic Languages at Yale University, who has recently retired. By no means a conservative in theological

views, he is a man whose scholarship in the Aramaic and Greek fields has long been highly regarded.

Beginning about 1930, he issued a series of articles and books in which he very strongly declared his acceptance of the theory that the four Gospels were originally written in Aramaic, and then translated into Greek, and that all the original Aramaic had perished, but that evidence of it can be found from the nature of the Greek sentences used. The liberals in the University of Chicago Divinity School attacked Professor Torrey very strongly for this theory. They alleged that it was harmful to the faith of the Church to question views which have now been long accepted as to the date of the origin of the Gospels. What they particularly disliked was the fact that he made the date of the writing of all four Gospels quite early, far earlier than they would put any of them. Professor Torrey expressed his view on this matter in a book which he entitled, *Our Translated Gospels*, which was published by Harpers in 1936. In the preface, he said as follows: "The Gospels as completed and published, in their present extent and form, are all of considerably earlier date than has commonly been supposed. The latest of them can be only a little later than the middle of the century. At the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis in New York City, in December 1934, I challenged my New Testament colleagues to designate even one passage, from any of the Four Gospels, giving clear evidence of a date later than 50 A.D., or of origin outside Palestine. The challenge was not met, nor will it be, for there is no such passage."

Professor Torrey's theory of the Aramaic origin of the Gospels has not won wide acceptance. He has many radical views which do not commend themselves to Bible-believing Christians. Liberal and radical scholars attacked his interpretation from many viewpoints. I would be very wary of committing myself on the basis of his theories unless I had opportunity to give a great deal of time to their study. However, it seems to me extremely interesting that this particular liberal scholar, whose scholarship is universally recognized, should declare that there is no evidence whatever for the view of the late origin of the Gospels which is accepted so widely by liberal scholars.

The other matter in which you might be interested is a declaration by Professor A. T. Olmstead, Professor of Oriental History

at the University of Chicago. Dr Olmstead's views are also far removed from those of Bible-believing Christians. He is very destructive in his attitude toward many parts of the Old Testament, and has recently worked out new theories regarding the life of Christ which are very strange and very destructive at many points. Liberal scholars consider him a historian of great standing. At a meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis at Union Theological Seminary in Manhattan, between this last Christmas and New Year's day, he gave a paper which attacked the views which are held by most liberal scholars. The issue of Time magazine of January 13, 1941, on page 34, summarizes his paper as follows: "Historian Olmstead's findings made most of his Biblical Literature colleagues sputter. They think the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, & Luke) give the truest picture of Christ's life, assigning a much later date to St. John's Gospel. Dr Olmstead said roundly that it was the earliest, written only a few years after the Crucifixion, and by far the most reliable of the four. It is the only one with a coherent chronology, he declared, and the only one which reveals a sound legal understanding of the various trials of Christ."

If you should desire, possibly you could find a copy of the *New York Times* for the right date, and get further details on his paper. Or perhaps if you were to quote any magazine, you would rather quote that than *TIME*.

To me it is very interesting that theories which liberal scholars formerly considered absolutely proven should be so flatly denied by other liberal scholars of the standing of Professor Torrey and Professor Olmstead.

LETTER 55

WATER AND SPIRIT IN JOHN 3:5

In exegesis of passages of Scripture I always endeavor first to study the grammar thoroughly, and then to examine the historical background, before undertaking to explain the meaning of a passage in connection with other passages of the Scripture.

From the grammatical viewpoint, I find here something that impresses me as probably of considerable importance. That is the fact that in John 3:5 the word for "water" and also the word for "spirit" are without articles in the Greek. The correct translation is the literal one, "water and spirit". It seems to me unfortunate that our English versions insert the article with "spirit", while, of course, not doing so with "water".

Now from the historical point of view it is important to note when this message was given. It was evidently near the beginning of Jesus' ministry. He was speaking to Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, who would be familiar with the Old Testament and with Jewish beliefs, and would doubtless have heard of John's baptism, but would certainly have no familiarity with Christian baptism, or with the fully developed doctrine of the Trinity. Under these circumstances, if specific reference to baptism were intended as most of the commentators seem to think, it would impress me that it would have been necessary to explain it a little more fully, or else no such idea could possibly have come to the mind of Nicodemus.

In the light of these factors to which I have called attention, it impresses me that the correct meaning of the passage is that Jesus answered Nicodemus' question as to the mode of the "new birth" or "birth from above" by saying that it must involve two features, one of which can be represented by water, and the other of which involves spirit. Nicodemus would, of course, be thoroughly familiar with the use of water, both in Jewish ritual and in daily life, as an agent of cleansing. I do not see how he could help deriving from this statement the idea that the "new birth" involves a complete cleansing of the "old man". He is not speaking

here of going back and starting life over again, as Nicodemus suggests by his reference to a new physical birth (verse 4), but rather of the necessity of a complete cleansing from sin. In later times it would be easy for people to see that this statement finds a typical representation in the baptism of Christians with its indication of divine cleansing. Thus, the verse contains a suggestion in advance of Christian baptism, but hardly refers directly to it.

This interpretation of water, it seems to me, is abundantly borne out when we look at the next statement "of spirit". Nicodemus would immediately recall the original creation, in which God took the man, made of the dust of the earth, and breathed into him the breath of life. He would appreciate that the natural man, no matter how thoroughly cleansed, could not be spoken of as reborn, unless there was also a revivifying action of divine spirit. It would involve spirit as well as cleansing to make a new creature. Having once recognized, as pointed out in this verse, the necessity of spirit for the new creation, it would be a natural step forward, in the next verse, to recognize that only the divine Spirit could perform this spiritual act. Consequently, in the next verse, we find the word "spirit" both without the article, as here, and also with the article, as indicating explicitly the divine Spirit. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit." The significance of this use of "spirit" without the article in verse 5 is brought out by examination of other passages in which the word is similarly used in a generic rather than in a specific sense, such as John 4:23 and 24 "worship him in spirit, and in truth", John 4:23 "God is a spirit", John 6:63 "the words ... are spirit, and are life". With these we contrast John 1:32 "the Spirit descending", John 7:39 "this spake he of the Spirit", etc.

Thus it impresses me that both "water" and "spirit" are used in verse 5 in a general sense, without direct reference to the water of baptism or to the Holy Spirit. The next verses show that only the Holy Spirit could fill this need, and thus lead inevitably to recognition of His person and activity. Moreover, later Christians could realize the appropriateness of baptism as a symbol of the cleansing from sin which only the Spirit could accomplish. These matters are implicit but not explicit in the verse. However to find here a direct reference to baptism seems to me to go contrary to the generic use of both words in the verse, to presuppose a knowledge of baptism on Nicodemus' part at this time which is

extremely unlikely, and to come very close to requiring belief in baptismal regeneration, which is certainly contrary to the doctrine of the Scripture.

Another suggestion as to the meaning of the word "water" here, which takes it as standing for the Bible, appears to me unwarranted. While it is true that study of the Bible is the great instrument of the Holy Spirit in cleansing the life of the Christian and in leading him into closer communion with God, supposition of such a figurative element at this point is quite unnecessary. The natural use of the word, as a symbol of cleansing, would be far more likely and would also convey an immediate sense to Nicodemus.

LETTER 56

1978

WIND OR SPIRIT IN JOHN 3:8?

I notice that here the NIV follows the same interpretation as the KJV, by rendering *pneuma* as "wind" though it is translated "spirit" several times in the immediately preceding and following context. It is true that this interpretation is followed by most modern interpreters (though not by Bengel). To me it seems rather senseless. I do not know how the wind can "please" to blow in one direction or another. Perhaps there were some ignorant people in ancient times who thought that no one could tell from what direction the wind came, but I am sure that most intelligent people knew whether it was blowing off the ocean or off the desert. St. Augustine wrote: "Then, brethren, which of us does not see, for example, the south wind going from south to north, or another wind coming from east to west? How, then, know we not whence it cometh and whither it goeth?" (Augustine

on the Gospel of St. John, *Tractate XII*, Section 7). In Section 5 of the same *Tractate* he says: "None sees the Spirit, and how do we hear the Spirit's voice? There sounds a psalm, it is the Spirit's voice; the gospel sounds, it is the Spirit's voice; the divine word sounds, it is the Spirit's voice."

In the article on "Spirit" in the Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary, p.808, Dr Buswell wrote:

The same Hebrew and Greek words translated "spirit" can also mean "wind" or "breath." In at least one passage (John 3:8) the interpretation is doubtful, but this verse would much better be translated, "The Spirit breathes where he chooses. You hear his voice, but you do not know where he comes from nor whether he goes. So everyone is born who is born from the Spirit." This brings out the sovereign grace of God in regeneration. In the context the word *pneuma* clearly designates the Holy Spirit, who is a non-material person.

LETTER 57
1984

GOD'S WILL IN JOHN 6:65

Your question involves the doctrine of God's Eternal Decree, which is excellently summarized in the first paragraph of chapter 3 of the Westminster Confession of Faith. It reads: "God from all eternity did, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass: yet so as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established."

As the first part of this statement says, from all eternity God has freely and unchangeably ordained whatsoever comes to pass.

Not a sparrow falls to the ground without His knowledge. No one of us is born except as God has predetermined that this will happen. No one of us can die except at the time that He determined before the foundation of the world. Nothing happens except as He completely controls it. We are not saved through any goodness of our own. We are not saved because we had sense enough to see the truth of Scripture and accept it. We are not saved because we have had wisdom and strength to seize on to salvation and partake of it. Salvation is part of what God has ordained from all eternity just as are our times of birth and death and every action that we perform and every experience that enters our lives.

This great truth of God's sovereignty is a source of constant blessing to the believer. In denying parts of this truth Arminianism does despite to the honor of God and injures the progress of His work. In all our disappointments, perplexities or sorrows realization of the truth of God's absolute control helps us to rise above the circumstances and praise God for whatever occurs. Calvinists rejoice in this great blessing.

Yet Calvinists believe not only the first half of this section of the Westminster Confession but also the second half. God is not the author of sin. When we sin it is not God's fault. We are responsible. When we fail to turn to God and receive salvation through Christ we cannot say that it is because God has turned His back on us or mistreated us. We alone are responsible for our sin. "Nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures." What is "the will of the creature"? We are rebuked for not exerting our wills as we should. The author of Hebrews says to each of us: "Ye have not resisted unto blood, striving against sin" (Hebrews 12: 4). James says: "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God.... every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust" (James 1: 13, 14). We are responsible for our sins; we cannot blame our failures on God. We are commanded to turn away from sin and to turn to God with our whole heart.

After we are saved we are commanded to put God first and to move forward in seeking ever to know Him better. None of us has a right to say, "I can't do it because God has not willed it."

God promises to give us the necessary strength if we seek Him with our whole heart.

Man is not autonomous. Everything he does is part of God's plan. Yet man is not merely an inert substance that God moves about, but a creature with the power to make decisions and to attempt to act upon them. God holds us responsible for the decisions we make. Both elements are taught in Scripture. Both are vital to the Christian Life.

In our human wisdom we cannot see how these two aspects fit together. To our finite minds they seem to clash. The Arminian says, "Let us get around this by cutting down God's power, by saying that it is not God's decision but our goodness and wisdom that has led to our salvation." The hyper-Calvinist says, "We cannot do anything; we are merely inert pieces of flotsam that God moves in whatever direction He chooses". If the hyper-Calvinist were right God would be wicked to punish us for our sin, simply because He had made us sinners or had chosen not to give us the grace of salvation. Such views are explicitly ruled out by the statements of the Westminster Confession.

Both aspects are important and God knows exactly how they fit together. Despite our human inability to understand how this can be, we have a responsibility to accept both truths and to act accordingly. If we err on either side we do despite to the Word of God and injure the progress of His kingdom. When we find people erring in one of these regards there is a natural tendency to go to the opposite extreme. Instead we should insist on the truth of both aspects and give each its proper place.

After reading your letter I re-examined the NIV of John 6. It seems to me that this chapter clearly shows God's initiative in salvation. Verse 44 reads: "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him." Verse 63 says: "The Spirit gives life" and verse 65 declares that no one can come to Christ unless the Father has enabled him by means of this life that the Spirit gives. Thus regeneration precedes conversion. Faith is the first act of a redeemed soul.

Many aspects of the English language have changed greatly during the past three centuries. In the KJV, part of John 6:65 reads: "No man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father." This makes no sense in today's English. If I

should say to someone, "You cannot come to the Commencement Service unless it is given to you" something would obviously be lacking. Would it mean "unless a ticket is given you," "unless permission is given you" or "unless you are given money to enable you to travel to Philadelphia"? "Given" would require an object. The same is true here. In the context it obviously means that no one can come to Him unless he is first given the ability to do so. Thus translation of the phrase "it is given" by the word "enables" gives the exact idea of the original. One must have the divine gift of life before he can come to Christ. There is no Arminian prejudice involved here. In fact the NIV translation rules out all Arminian ideas....

LETTER 58
1975

APOSTASIA (APOSTASY)
IN 2 THESSALONIANS 2:3

As an Old Testament scholar, my work on the New International Version Bible has been restricted to portions of the Old Testament. Many scholars have been asked to assist in the preparation of various parts of this translation. Those in charge desire that all participants be individuals who thoroughly believe in the Bible as God's Word, but there is considerable variety of opinion on particular doctrines. It is my hope that it will be a very excellent translation and will be greatly used of the Lord, but it is impossible at this point to know how much of it will be in accordance with my ideas, and how much it will contain with which I might differ.

It is my personal belief that *apostasia* in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 refers to the departure of the Church, which I expect will take

place before the revelation of the "man of sin." I find the passage very difficult to interpret from any other viewpoint, but I have good friends who differ with me as to this interpretation. They point out that in the only other place where *apostasia* occurs in the New Testament, it refers to departure from the teaching of Moses (Acts 21:21).

It was on account of the way that it seems to me to fit with the entire teaching of the passage in 2 Thessalonians that I was so pleased to hear Dr E. Schuyler English suggest that "departure" might be the meaning of the word in this place. Although my own primary field of study is Old Testament and Hebrew, I immediately did considerable research into the Greek evidence involved.

I found that Dr English based his suggestion on the fact that the large authoritative classical Greek dictionary by Liddell and Scott, in its more recent editions, gives "departure" as a second meaning of the noun *apostasia*. The editions of Liddell and Scott published before 1900 do not give this meaning. In Greek literature the word occurs rather frequently, and usually with one of two meanings. The first of these is a removal of loyalty; thus it occurs in Greek historical records when they relate that an area transferred its allegiance to a city different from the one that formerly controlled it. The other meaning, equally common, designates a space or interval, as when a record speaks of guards being placed with a certain "interval" between them.

The fact that later editions of Liddell and Scott insert the meaning "departure" between these two definitions is based upon the publication in 1900 of a sixth century commentary on Aristotle's *Meteora* in which the author says that the stiffening of a material is caused by the *apostasia* of water from it. This would seem to be a clear case of the use of a word to mean removal from one place to another, and thus warrants the meaning "departure." Unfortunately I have been unable to find any additional reference in Greek literature where the meaning is clearly one of departure from one place to another. It seems to me that additional warrant for accepting this as a possible meaning can be properly based on the meaning of the verb from which the noun *apostasia* is derived. This verb occurs a number of times in the New Testament, and in most of them refers to a departure from one place to another. Usually the King James Version renders it by the word "departure" or by a synonym. In Acts 5:38 the KJV translates it "refrain from," but in this case the meaning is quite

similar to that of "depart." There is, however, one occurrence, in Luke 8:13, where it is translated "fall away," though here also "depart" might not be out of place.

Thus I cannot say that *apostasia* means necessarily "departure," but I feel that there is definite evidence that it can mean this. I do not feel that the evidence would enable me to rule out the meaning "rebellion" as wrong, but I consider the translation "departure" to be a possible one, and am quite convinced that it fits the context better than "rebellion" does, particularly since I consider it to parallel the phrase in verse 7.

LETTER 59
1956

**THE CHURCH OF GOD
AND 1 JOHN 5:7**

It is my impression that there are several groups of people who call themselves the Church of God. I have not come across a group with teachings that you describe here, denying the Trinity, saying that they are Israelites, that they will have another chance for salvation during the millennium and that they must worship on the Sabbath day. These views impress me more as characteristic of the group that we know here as Jehovah's Witnesses or Russellites than as the groups which in this area go by the name of the Church of God.

The statement that 1 John is not found in the best manuscripts of the New Testament is entirely false. All the early manuscripts contain this book. I imagine that this statement came to be made because of the fact 1 John 5:7 does not occur in some of the early manuscripts. For this reason many scholars question whether this particular verse belongs in 1 John. Yet removal of this verse from

the Bible would certainly not take away its teaching of the Trinity. The Trinity is very clearly taught in many other passages. Thus our Lord Jesus Christ said that "I and the Father are one; He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," and gave many other statements which showed His unity with the Father. It is easy to prove the Trinity from the New Testament without the necessity of relying upon this one verse even though this verse does have about as clear a statement of it as can be found anywhere.

The new finds of parchments by the Dead Sea do not deal with the New Testament except very indirectly. They contain a good many copies of various sections of the Old Testament and also writings by an unusual Jewish sect.

LETTER 60
1970

THE OLD TESTAMENT APOCRYPHA

In the early days of the Christian church certain books in Greek that had been written by Jews were widely read. The early Christians enjoyed these books, because they upheld a fairly high standard of ethics and recognized the existence of the one true God, thus being on a much higher level than the rest of the available literature, most of which was pagan and immoral. They recognized, however, that these books, though rather good, were not inspired. Before the first copies of the Greek Bible were made, most of the books in both Testaments were written separately on small scrolls. When putting them together into a large book it was easy to get some of these other books mixed in with them, particularly since some of the Christians liked these books very much. However, in the early centuries various leaders in the Christian church clearly described the books that they considered to be inspired and therefore canonical, and did not include these

extra books. They considered them as books useful for reading, but not free from error, and not to be used to establish any doctrine. Eventually the term "apocryphal" came to be applied to them, as meaning books which were not actually part of the Bible. These books dealing with the period of the Old Testament are in quite a different category from the so-called New Testament apocrypha. The latter are mostly very superficial books presenting imaginary ideas about Christ that are often harmful and some times even silly. The so-called Old Testament apocrypha are actually good books, but not authoritative. There were seven of these books, along with certain additions to the books of Daniel and Esther.

During the Middle Ages it was very easy to lose the clear line of distinction between the authoritative books of the Bible and these additional books that some wished to include in the Old Testament. At the very eve of the Reformation, just about the time that Luther was writing his theses in Germany, Cardinal Ximenes, the head of the Roman Catholic Church in Spain, published a book in which he expressed his definite conviction that these other books are not part of the actual Word of God. He dedicated this book to the contemporary pope and the latter received the dedication with an expression of thanks.

After the Reformation began, when arguments between Protestants and Romanists became frequent, some of the Roman doctrines were found to be without support in the Bible. This is particularly true of the doctrine of purgatory. In one of these other books there was a statement which was claimed to prove the existence of purgatory, though a careful examination of the statement shows that it proves nothing of the kind. Instead of dealing at length with the interpretation of the passage, the Protestants quite naturally tried to brush aside the argument by pointing out that actually the book from which it was taken was not part of the Old Testament at all. This brought the question of these extra books into strong relief, and at the beginning of the Roman Catholic Council of Trent there was much discussion. Some of those present wanted to throw these books out altogether; others wished to put them on a somewhat lower plane than the books of the Scripture; but the view that prevailed was to insist that they are actually part of the Old Testament. Consequently these

additional books are included in all Roman Catholic Bibles today. In German Protestant Bibles they are printed separately under the following heading: "books good for reading but not to be used to establish any doctrine." Some English Bibles also contain them with a similar heading.

LETTER 61
1957

THE RELATION OF THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS TO CHRISTIANITY

Although there have been many interesting developments in Biblical Archaeology in the last few years, no other is quite as outstanding as the discovery and study of the so-called Dead Sea Scrolls. In my column on archaeology some months ago I outlined the history of the discovery and told something of the bearing of the scrolls.

Since that time evidence as to the genuineness of the scrolls has constantly been increasing until today most scholars are ready to admit that they came from the time of Christ and from the two centuries immediately preceding. The evidence for this is so extensive that it has become almost impossible to believe anything else. Although many scholars originally greeted their discovery with great scepticism, only one outstanding professor is still standing by his original position. This man, Professor Zeitlin, of the Dropsie College, gives frequent lectures in Philadelphia and New York attacking the genuineness of the discoveries. At the Twenty-Fourth International Convention of the Orientalists, held in Munich this summer, he spent over an hour presenting his

claims that they are from the Middle Ages and are worthless as far as giving evidence of the time of Christ is concerned. However, hardly another outstanding scholar agrees with him. The scholarly world has largely passed him by.

As we noted in the previous article, the Dead Sea Scrolls are of great interest for the striking evidence that they give of the remarkable accuracy with which the text of the Old Testament has been preserved during the many centuries in which it was copied and recopied. This is bound to increase the confidence in the Hebrew Bible of many who formerly were inclined to scepticism regarding the accuracy of its transmission.

Yet, most unfortunately, more people have heard of the Dead Sea Scrolls because of false inferences that have been drawn from them, than because of their true significance. An American journalist, Edmund Wilson, has written a romantic story of the finding of the scrolls, and has proceeded to draw from the non-Biblical scrolls all sorts of utterly unwarranted conclusions, detrimental to Christianity, and these have been widely publicized.

Wilson's book has been translated into many languages. Wilson says: "The monastery of the Essenes, more than Bethlehem or Nazareth, is the cradle of Christianity." An English scholar, J. M. Allegro, has declared over the radio that Christian ideas about Christ were derived from the Qumran sect's ideas of their own teacher, who, he says, they thought of as "persecuted and crucified, and expected to rise again as the priestly Messiah". A French scholar, Professor Dupont-Sommer, says that "the Galilean Teacher, as he is presented to us in the New Testament writings, appears in many respects as an astonishing re-incarnation of the Teacher of Righteousness." A Swedish journalist has concluded as follows: "Christianity has come into existence in a completely natural way, as a Jewish sect. It is not necessary to believe in the miracle that God has interfered by a special act of mercy in order to save humanity." Such sweeping statements make one wonder what has been discovered, that has so destroyed the foundations of Christianity.

The answer is, nothing. The statements quoted represent the imaginations of their authors. Perhaps they are the result of wishful thinking. Ninety per cent of the serious scholars who have studied the Dead Sea Scrolls will readily agree that no evidence has been found that warrants such statements.

Let us examine the basis upon which these revolutionary statements are made. The Qumran sect held in high esteem an individual whom they called the "Teacher of Righteousness". It is reasonable to think that he must have been a man of ability and energy, whose ideas found expression in the organisation and continuance of the Qumran sect. But nowhere do we find an orderly account of His life and achievements. His name is never given, nor is there any clear indication of the time at which he lived. Many attempts have been made to identify him with some person known from other sources, but none of these can be proven. These attempts select individuals scattered over a period of more than two hundred years. A few hints of the opposition that he faced are given, but these are rather vaguely stated. Almost every movement that has continued for any length of time has had a leader and founder, and Qumran was no exception. Christianity also has a leader, whose memory it reveres, and whose teaching it seeks to follow. Is there enough similarity to say that one was derived from the other? Those already noted could be found in almost every movement that ever existed.

Those who claim that the Qumran material destroys the basis of Christianity, insist that the outstanding ideas of Christianity, instead of representing actual facts, are simply taken over from the ideas of the Qumran sect. But one looks in vain in the Qumran material for the basic features of Christianity. Only an overactive imagination can find them there.

Christians believe that Jesus was God Himself, incarnate in human form. He was miraculously born. He was tempted of Satan. He went about through Judea and Galilee preaching. He was no ascetic, but took part in the happy occasions of life. He Himself said, "The Son of Man came eating and drinking" (Matt. 11:19). The New Testament declares that He performed great miracles of healing, even raising people from the dead. He claimed to be the Messiah, and declared that He would return on the clouds of heaven (Mark 14:62). He said that He would give His life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45). He was seized, accused of blasphemy for declaring Himself to be God, crucified, and buried. On the third day He was raised from the dead. His disciples went all through the world declaring these facts, and asserting that all who would accept His atoning death as the propitiation for their sins could be saved, and that He would come to dwell in their hearts.

These are the outstanding things that were claimed by Jesus and taught about Him by His followers. This is the "Galilean teacher, as he is presented to us in the New Testament writings." Is he "as an astonishing re-incarnation of the Teacher of Righteousness"? Just how many of these features do we find in the Qumran picture of that individual? We find only this, that he was a teacher, who gathered disciples and established a sect, and that he was persecuted by those who disapproved of Him. This much could also be found in the history of almost every man who ever founded a sect.

In all the Qumran material that has yet been discovered and published, there is nowhere any statement that the Teacher of Righteousness was God, or that he claimed to be God, or that anyone else ever thought him to be God. There is no statement that he was born in any different way than other mortals. There is no reference to his having been tempted by the devil. It is true that he, like many another, was interested in spreading his views, but whether he went about preaching, as Jesus did, is not known.

He made his followers take very strict ascetic vows, quite contrary to all that we find in the life of Jesus or in the attitude of the early church. There is no statement in the Qumran literature that he ever performed miracles of healing, and certainly no suggestion that he ever raised anyone from the dead. There is no evidence that he ever thought himself to be the Messiah. The Qumran sect seems to have expected that ultimately two Messiahs would come, a priestly Messiah and a kingly Messiah, but there is no proof that it expected either of them would be the same person as the Teacher of Righteousness. There is no evidence that the Teacher of Righteousness ever said that he would return to earth on the clouds of heaven. There is no evidence that the Teacher ever said, or that anybody else ever thought, that there would be any special significance to his death. There is no real evidence that the Teacher of Righteousness was crucified. In fact it is not even stated that he was put to death. There is no evidence that the Teacher of Righteousness was raised from the dead though there is reason to think that he may have been dead many years when the last of the scrolls was written. There is no evidence that the Qumran people ever thought that the Teacher of Righteousness could do something that could save an individual.

Their only hope lay in following his teaching. Their faith was in what he had said, not, as in the case of Christianity, in him

personally or in anything he had done or could do. The followers of the Teacher of Righteousness formed a closed group, which no one could join without years of probation and the taking of very strict vows. This is entirely different from the procedure followed in the establishment of Christianity, as even a superficial glance at the Book of Acts will clearly show.

Mr Allegro claims that the texts prove that the Teacher of Righteousness was crucified. However, this is purely an inference, and, in the opinion of most scholars, an unjustified inference. Nowhere do the texts say that he was put to death, merely that he was "gathered in", a phrase which could just as well refer to death from natural causes. Even if Mr Allegro's claim that the Teacher was crucified should eventually prove to be true, there is still no slightest evidence that he or anyone else attached any atoning significance to his death.

What a great number of differences between Christ and the Teacher of Righteousness! None of the distinctive points of Christianity are found in him at all.

It is true, of course, that some of the teachings of Jesus can be paralleled by statements in the scrolls. For that matter, many of them can be paralleled in the teaching of the Rabbis, known to us as the Talmud. Along with similarities are also found very considerable differences. Such parallels may in some cases enable us to understand His meaning better, but they do not in any way detract from His claims about Himself. He was the Son of God, come down to die for our sins. Through faith in him we can be saved. The beginning of Christianity was a miraculous interposition of God into human life, opening the way for lost humanity to find eternal life.

The Dead Sea Scrolls give wonderful evidence of the dependability of our Old Testament texts. They tell us some previously unknown facts about life in Palestine in the first century A.D. and before. But they neither add to nor detract from the unique achievements of the Son of God, who died that we might live.

LETTER 62
1952

A CRITIQUE OF HIGHER CRITICISM

The idea of applying standard statistical methods to the theories of the critics is an interesting one. All too often people have been led into great sweeping conclusions without any attempt to carry them out fully and see whether they apply in every case. If only such a method as you describe could have been applied to the criticism in its early stages, it might have been a very beneficial effect.

Unfortunately, however, I fear that the higher criticism of the Old Testament, and particularly of the Pentateuch, has gone past the point where this type of study would be of much help. The divisions have been moved back and forth until they have come to correspond to an actual distinction of a different type, and I am not at all sure that the study of style would prove a great deal now.

Originally the critics divided the Pentateuch into two main documents, one of which used the divine name *Jehovah* and the other *Elohim*. It would have been quite easy to examine these two long documents thoroughly in order to see whether there was actually a stylistic difference between them. However the two document view has been out of date now for over one hundred years and the present position of the critics is very different. As at present held by the critics, the major documents of the Pentateuch correspond quite generally to divisions of types of subject matter. Thus the so-called D document consists of exhortation. It includes the greater part of Deuteronomy, with Moses' exhortation to the people in the wilderness, and includes similar passages in other parts of the Pentateuch. Naturally the manner of expression in exhortation is quite different from that of other types of literature, even if the same man writes both, and this could apply even to some extent to the selection of different words.

The critics start in the beginning of Genesis with two main documents: the J document and the P document. Genesis 1 is

supposed to give the story of creation as told by the P document, while chapters 2, 3 and 4 take up similar material from the J document. It would not be difficult to compare these two portions and see just what are the differences and the similarities; yet the section thus far is really too short to prove much. As we go on we find an increasing specialization in the type of material. The P document, taken throughout the Pentateuch is restricted very largely to precise rules for the priests in the administration of the sacrifices, details as to the work of the temple, lists of genealogies, measurements, etc. It is easy to see that lists of this type will be very different from narratives, even if the same man be the writer of both. He will quite naturally use a different vocabulary and a different approach.

Even in the first chapter of Genesis, something of this different approach can be seen. Genesis 1 divides the creation of the universe into seven different stages and describes each almost in the fashion of a statistical table. It might truly be said that Genesis 1 is a table of the stages of creation, introductory to the narrative which describes God's dealings with the men whom He created.

It is not at all strange that there should be certain differences in manner of expression between chapters one and two, even if the same man wrote them.

The critics make certain very definite claims that there are differences in the use of words between chapter one and the next three chapters. Thus it is alleged that the phrase "male and female" is distinctive of the P document, while "the man and his wife" is distinctive of J. However, when we go further in Genesis we find that sometimes one of these documents uses the term which is considered characteristic of the other, and in these cases it is said that there has been a later alteration by a redactor.

Up to Genesis 20 the material is pretty largely divided between J and P. There might be some value in a careful stylistic study up to that point, although I fear it is too short to show much in the way of conclusive results. From Genesis 20 on practically all the material that formerly was given to the P document has since 1853 been placed in an entirely new document called the E document. This E document uses the same term for God as the P document, but it is freely admitted that, as far as style is concerned, it is very hard to distinguish it from the J document. Most critics agree pretty closely as to exactly what material is contained in the P document in contradistinction to the J document,

but there is much variation of opinion as to which material belongs to J and which to E. This is natural enough because J and E are both composed of narrative material. If the critics agreed as to what belongs in J and what belongs in E it would be very profitable to take the J and E documents and compare them by the statistical method you have suggested. The critics have tried to make a division between the two which will put all that is typical of one into one document and all that is typical of the other into the other document. They do not succeed in this, but there is nothing like the unanimity of opinion among the critics regarding the division between J and E that there is regarding the division between P and JE.

Thus the value of comparing a large section of J with a large section of E is questionable because there is so much difference among the critics as to where the distinction between the two lies. Yet to take a section of J or of JE and compare it with a large section of P is probably also of little value because P is actually a different type of material, dealing, on the whole, with a different type of subject matter.

I would incline to feel that this might be of more real utility in connection with the study of Isaiah than with that of the Pentateuch, since in the book of Isaiah there is less difference in type of material than in the Pentateuch. Yet, again in Isaiah the process has gone much further than a few years ago. At first Isaiah was divided by the critics into two parts, the First and Second Isaiah. However, almost immediately a good many chapters of the First Isaiah were said either to be interpolations or actually to belong with the Second Isaiah. Leaving out these portions, one would still have a good many chapters between Isaiah 1 and 39 which could be considered as First Isaiah, and the great bulk of the material from chapter 40 to 66 could be considered a Second Isaiah. These two sections could have been compared statistically and I am sure that the results would have been extremely enlightening. The critics have said much about great differences of style here, but actually the similarities are far greater than the differences, and such differences as there are can easily be explained by a difference in the time of Isaiah's life when it was written, or in the general subject with which he is dealing.

However, few critics of standing hold any longer to a Two Isaiah theory. Practically all hold to a Third Isaiah which begins at about Isaiah 56. And very few actually hold to any large

sections of First, Second, and Third Isaiah. Each of the three has many chapters, paragraphs, or even individual verses, which are separated out from it and are said to be interpolations or insertions from another time. This being the case it would be very difficult to apply a statistical method today.

Offhand it would impress me that it might be of great value simply to study the First and Second Isaiahs as generally accepted by critics fifty years ago. Again it might be of value if those sections which most critics today consider to belong to First Isaiah, those which most consider to belong to Second Isaiah, and those which most consider to belong to Third Isaiah were to be compared as to vocabulary and types of expression. Such an effect as this might well be very illuminating. It impresses me that one might be more hopeful of valuable results here than in the study of the Pentateuch with the method you have suggested; yet I confess that I am not too hopeful in either case because of the way the criticism has moved.

It is true that the criticism got its first big start from the widely circulated idea that there were two large main sections, whether in the Pentateuch or in Isaiah, and that these could be proven to be distinct in style. Right at that point a good statistical analysis might have nipped the criticism in the bud. Now the criticism has gone much further and I doubt if a study from that viewpoint would have much effect.

LETTER 63

FACTS ABOUT THE J.E.D.P. THEORY

During the past 2000 years many a theory that was not founded on fact has gained wide acceptance, but has later been shown to be without foundation and has completely disappeared. One

instance of a theory that is being widely publicized today, even though it lacks any factual support, is the claim that the first five books of the Bible, instead of being originally written as units in substantially the form in which we have them today, came into existence through a process of interweaving and combining sources that had previously circulated separately.

According to this theory the so-called J document was written many centuries after the events that it describes. A century or so later another document, more or less parallel to the J document, was written. After each had circulated separately for a time, someone combined them, inserting various portions of the newer E document into the J document at the appropriate places. More centuries passed and then the D document, purporting to contain Moses' farewell addresses, was composed. Eventually this was inserted into the latter part of the combined JE document. About the time of the exile a group of priests composed still another document, the so-called P document, paralleling much of the ground already covered by the J and E documents. Eventually this was cut into large and small sections, between which similar sections of the other documents were inserted. As a result, it is said that the Pentateuch as we know it today is composed of intertwined parts of all these documents, so that we often read a section of one document, followed by a section of another, then perhaps a verse or two of the first, then two or three of the second, then perhaps half a verse of the first again, then a portion of the third, then more of the second, and so on in a complicated patchwork arrangement. According to many critics the literary mosaic thus produced included not only the books we know today as Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, but also the book of Joshua.

Such is the theory that is held and propagated today in practically the same form as when it was first presented, a century ago. In the intervening time no new facts have been discovered in its favor, and many of the theoretical grounds on which it was originally advanced have been now almost completely abandoned. Yet the theory continues to be presented as established history, and is even taught in high schools of some of our states.

Since this is the case, it is important for every churchgoer and every Bible student to know just what the facts are about this theory, which has been variously called "the Source theory," "the Multidocumentary Theory," or "the Graf-Wellhausen Theory". In

order to see how slim a foundation the theory rests upon, let us note certain vital facts.

We have hundreds of manuscript copies of the first five books of the Bible, all of which present them in the form in which we have them today. Not even one ancient copy of J, E, D, or P as a separate and continuous unit has ever been found.

No record that has come down to us from ancient times contains any mention of these documents. There is no ancient reference to the writing of any such document or to such process of combining them as the theory assumes. There is no evidence that any such process actually occurred.

The theory is almost the lone survivor of a method of 19th century literary study that has otherwise been almost completely discarded, except in the field of Biblical criticism. A century ago it was a common practice to develop theories of this type regarding almost any ancient or medieval document. Most such theories have today been abandoned and are viewed merely as literary curiosities. It is only in the field of Biblical study that this 19th century attitude has been retained.

During the 19th century various German scholars presented widely differing theories regarding the origins of the first five books of the Bible. Not one of these theories gained complete ascendancy until 1878, when a particular theory, strikingly different from most of the views previously held, was advanced by Julius Wellhausen. This new theory was publicized throughout the English-speaking world by S. R. Driver and other followers of Wellhausen. Even though a century has passed, in the course of which no new evidence for the theory has been discovered, it is today being widely taught in almost the identical form in which it was then presented.

A great part of the reason for the acceptance of the multidocument theory advanced by Professor Wellhausen in 1878 was the fact that he based it upon his skillful presentation of a particular idea of the development of Israelite religion. This idea, however, has now been almost universally discarded. Few scholars today hold to a theory of Hebrew religious development that is even approximately similar to that which Wellhausen based his idea of the sources of the Pentateuch; and yet Wellhausen's method of dividing these alleged sources, and his view of the order of their composition (although based upon a theory of

development no longer held), are still being presented as established fact.

An essential feature of the theory as taught by Professor Wellhausen, was his claim that the various documents -- all of them written, according to the theory, long after the time of the patriarchs -- present only the thought patterns and ideas of the various periods in which they are alleged to have been written, and tell us nothing about the actual time of the patriarchs. In the light of archaeological discoveries it is now recognized that this attitude is no longer tenable. Therefore most of the recent presentations of the theory assert that a great part of the material in each of the documents was transmitted orally for many centuries before being incorporated into written form, and that even the latest of the documents contain much material that is really early. Thus an important basis of the Wellhausen idea has really been abandoned by its present promoters.

Its protagonists assert that the theory can be demonstrated by pointing out differences of style between the documents. Yet these alleged differences in style mostly settle down to the fact that certain parts of the Pentateuch are statistical or enumerative, while other parts have more of a running narrative style, and the greater part of the book of Deuteronomy consists of exhortation. There is no reason why the same writer should not use any one of these three styles, depending on the nature of the particular subject matter. Thus we have an enumerative style in Genesis 1 where the formation of the material universe is set forth in definite stages. For the subject matter of Genesis 2, which describes in more detail the creation of man and the formation of a proper habitat for his life, the narrative style is more fitting. In addresses of warning and admonition, the style of exhortation is natural. Similar instances of the use of styles at least as different as these could be found in the works of almost any extensive writer of recent days.

It is frequently said that the names given to two of these documents are based upon the allegation that the so-called J document uses the name JHWH ("LORD" in the King James Version) for the Deity, while the so-called E document is said to use the name Elohim ("God" in the KJV). Yet actually each of these alleged sources uses both divine names in the Pentateuch, and in all of the alleged sources the name JHWH is far more common than the name Elohim. In explanation the supporters of the theory assert

that, according to the E and P documents, the name JHWH was not revealed until the early chapters of Exodus. The theory is thus not that each document preferred a certain name, but that each document had a different theory as to when the name was first introduced, and deliberately avoided it before that point in the account. Since all the documents are alleged to have been written many centuries after the time of the Exodus, a procedure such as the theory assumes would be artificial and rather unlikely to have occurred. Furthermore, its foundation in Biblical statements is extremely weak. Moreover, the use of varying names in different connections is not at all unusual, and can be easily explained on other grounds than that of a patchwork origin.

The claim that there is constant duplication of material in the various alleged sources is grossly exaggerated. Some of these so called duplicates are really different events that are somewhat similar, but actually no more so than is often the case in ordinary life, as can be demonstrated fairly easily. In other cases an alleged repetition is merely a summary given at the beginning or end of an account, a helpful recapitulation, or a literary device to make an account more vivid. Most of the alleged repetitions or duplications, if examined without prejudice, can be shown to have a natural purpose in the narrative.

Most of the alleged contradictions between the so-called sources disappear on careful examination. Thus it is alleged that the J and P documents exhibit Rebecca as influenced by different motives in suggesting Jacob's departure from Canaan: the motive being in one case to enable him to escape his brother's anger; and in the other case to induce him to procure a wife agreeable to his parents' wishes. Actually there is no contradiction whatever in supposing that Rebecca was influenced by both motives and that, in dealing with the two men whom she wished to influence, she used in each case the argument that she knew would appeal to him, rather than the one that would be apt to antagonize him.

These facts indicate the existence of logical reasons for the phenomena in the Pentateuch, all of them consistent with the idea of a unified authorship, and not requiring the adoption of an ungrounded theory that is a survival from the 19th century, and that is quite inconsistent with present methods of literary study.

The overwhelming majority of people who accept the Multidocumentary Theory, including most of those who teach it,

do so because of confidence in the men by whom it is advanced, rather than on the basis of any thorough investigation. The interests of Truth demand that the facts be examined objectively and without prejudice. When this is done it becomes apparent that the theory lacks both factual evidence and sound logical basis.

LETTER 64
1966

HIGHER CRITICISM – THE J.E.D.P. THEORY

You quote Anderson as calling the JEDP theory a "hypothesis based on 200 years of intensive study." Such a statement is a gross oversimplification, and is actually quite remote from the true situation. Until nearly the end of the last century most critical scholars held views utterly at variance with the present view. One view after another was presented and discarded during a period of 75 years. Then a modification of one of these theories was so combined with the theory of evolution as to result in the formation of the present hypothesis, which was soon adopted by most of the younger liberal scholars, and has continued to be held by most critical scholars since that time.

It is interesting that you quote Anderson as admitting that "skillful editing was done." Actually here is one of the great contradictions in the critical theory. As a rule they insist that there are such contradictions between the alleged documents as to make one wonder how an editor with any sense could possibly have put them together. Yet when their theory runs into difficulties they assert that in certain passages the alleged sources have been so carefully woven together that it is really impossible to disentangle them. If the theory were valid, it should take one consistent position and carry it through.

You quoted from Anderson a number of what he called the "irregularities, inconsistencies, and repetitions" in the Pentateuch. In any fairly long book it would be easy to find many similar phenomena, if one would treat it as the critics treat the Bible. Take, for instance, the example you cite of sometimes calling the mountain Horeb (Exodus 3:1) and sometimes Sinai (Exodus 19:1). Having done a little mountain climbing myself, I am very familiar with the practice of sometimes referring to the name of a particular peak, sometimes to a name that is given to a group of peaks which form one mountain, sometimes to a particular range, or sometimes even to the general mountain system involved. A person who is familiar with the facts finds no contradiction or difficulty. Any sports article is apt to use various titles or names, simply for variety. The same principle applies in the case of the two different names used for Moses' father-in-law (Exodus 2:18 and 18:1). If I mention my wife to her brother I am apt to call her 'Grace'. If I speak of her to my son, I call her 'mother'. If I speak of her to one of the students, I call her 'Mrs MacRae'. It is common practice everywhere to use different terms in different circumstances. When there is no particular reason in the circumstances why a particular term should be used, we are apt to simply continue the practice that we have been most recently using, or perhaps simply to change it for the sake of variety. No specific rule can be made about such matters, but the method that the critics use could find any number of alleged inconsistencies in almost any book that ever was written.

When it comes to the alleged difference between the two versions of the Ten Commandments, it is helpful to note that some of the actual commandments are really shorter than the full presentation in either place. Thus, in Exodus 20:8 the Fourth Commandment gives the following: "Remember the sabbath day," thus reminding the Israelites that this was not a new enactment but one which goes back to what God had established at creation.

In Deuteronomy 5:12 Moses is reminding the people of the Ten Commandments, which they had doubtless heard many times in the interval, and simply begins the Fourth Commandment with the words, "Keep the sabbath," since there is now no need of again alluding to the fact that this was an old commandment, not a new one. Where there are slight differences in the wording, it is purely a matter of the manner of presentation of the commandment or of stressing a particular aspect. The commandments themselves are identical in both presentations.

The idea of trying to find a difference as to the relative importance of Moses and Aaron impresses me as a counsel of desperation. Any book that tells about two prominent men is bound to have passages in which one is stressed and passages in which the other is stressed. In almost any book it would be easy to find far better instances of this than could possibly be found as regards Moses and Aaron.

As far as J and PE are concerned, I believe I mentioned in my letter something of the development of the criticism. What is now called E and what is now called P were for a long time considered as one document as over against J, and the claim was made that the two had not only different names for God but also different styles. But the proponents of the Graf-Wellhausen theory now admit that the styles of J and E are so similar that there is very little possibility of distinction except by a different use of the divine name. However, there are places in each where the other name is used, so that the critics say that a change has been made by a redactor. They could not simply put together the passages that have one name or the other. Sometimes both names are used several times within a few verses; then again, there are often sections of several verses in which neither name occurs. Besides, if this theory were true, there should be a more or less complete story in each of the alleged documents. To so divide as to make it seem as if each document were really complete in itself, requires a great deal of twisting.

As to the first use of the distinctive name of God, there is no inconsistency between Genesis 4:26 and Exodus 6:2-3, unless one insists on importing such an inconsistency. Any historical book or any lengthy biography is bound to have statements that seem at first sight to contradict one another. In order to make sense out of anything that is written, we have to try to determine what the words mean, and this determination has to be done in relation to the context. If we take a book as a unified whole, we then proceed to try to explain one part by another part. If this proves to be impossible, we may then have evidence that it is not really a unified book.

Most of the alleged contradictions in the Bible can be explained fairly easily. It is not at all necessary to consider Genesis 4:26 as an account of the origin of the most used personal name of God (represented in the KJV as "the LORD", in the American Standard Version as "Jehovah," and by the critics as *JHVH*,

YHWH, *Jahwe*, or *Yahweh*). All that the verse actually says is: "... then began men to call upon the name of the LORD." The earlier part of the chapter, which the critics assign to the same document, uses this particular name for God a number of times. Therefore, according to their own interpretation, verse 26 can hardly mean that the name did not originate or become known until verse 26, but simply that at that time it began to assume a large place in men's devotional life.

When it comes to Exodus 6:3, the situation is somewhat similar. As it reads in the English of the King James Version, it seems, if superficially interpreted, to say that this name was previously unknown: "And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them." The critics claim that this means that according to the P document this name was first introduced at this time and completely unknown to the patriarchs. If that, however, is the only proper way to interpret it, then we can only conclude that the unknown redactor who combined the JE and P documents must have been an utter fool, rather than a skillful editor. After putting together portions of documents in such a way as to show this name being frequently used in Genesis and the early parts of Exodus, he then includes a statement that it was unknown until the time of Exodus 6:3. Very evidently the redactor (if there ever was such a person) must have interpreted the verse in some other way. There are several ways of interpreting it which avoid any inconsistency.

It is probably the most likely interpretation of Exodus 6:3, that the word "know" is used here, as is frequently the case elsewhere in the Old Testament, not in the sense of simply becoming aware of something, but in the sense of really understanding or experiencing it. Thus we read in Hosea 6:3 that we should "follow on to know the LORD." Does that mean that Hosea thought his readers had never heard the name before, and that if they would follow on to know the LORD, they would eventually find out that this was God's name? It is perfectly obvious that he means that they should seek to know the LORD in a far deeper sense. Most conservative scholars feel that Exodus 6:3 means that God had revealed Himself to the patriarchs principally in the character that is represented by His name of *El-Shaddai* (which is, not very accurately, translated "God Almighty" in the King James Version), but that now He was going particularly to reveal Himself

in the character that is stressed in this other name which emphasizes His character as the Redeemer and Deliverer of His people. The other name, used sometimes in connection with the patriarchs, stresses more His character as the One Who cares for and nourishes His friends and followers. There is no inconsistency, but simply a different emphasis.

I know of one scholar who says that Exodus 6:3 should be taken as a question which could be paraphrased: "Was I not known to your fathers by this name as well as by the other?" This is grammatically possible, since there is no question mark in Hebrew, and our English custom of reversing the order of two words to indicate a question is also not a characteristic of Hebrew. The first explanation seems to me better, but I am not ready to rule out the other as impossible.

Whatever interpretation of Exodus 6:3 we adopt, it is quite unnecessary to interpret it in a way that contradicts great portions of the book of Genesis.

You asked, "what is the basis for the pronunciations Yahweh and Jehovah?"

Ancient Hebrew writing, like Egyptian hieroglyphics, did not indicate vowels, but only consonants. It was not until at least the fifth century A.D. that marks to indicate vowels were introduced. By this time the original vowels of this name had been forgotten, since it had long been customary not actually to pronounce it. We know that this custom was not in effect in Old Testament times, since many people were given names that included it as part of a compound. Thus Jehoiada means "Jehovah knows," and Jehoiachin means "Jehovah establishes." Similarly Zechariah means "Jehovah has remembered," and Hezekiah means "Jehovah has strengthened." Such names, and guesses about a possible etymology, give us our only clues as to how it was originally pronounced. Yahweh would be a reasonable way to represent a Hebrew verb form that would mean either "he causes to be," or "he causes to happen." The use of a related form of the same verb in Exodus 3:14 lends support to this suggestion. About 1930 many scholars felt that the names beginning with Jeho should be taken as proving that the original pronunciation was something like Yahu, and this form of the name appeared in a number of books. However, this suggestion soon disappeared from the literature. Nowadays, critics writing in English generally represent it as Yahweh.

When the scribes ceased to pronounce the sacred name, they adopted the custom, when they came to the four consonants in the Bible, of simply saying "the name," and this custom lasted for a time. Eventually, however, it was replaced by the custom of saying *adonai*, the Hebrew word for "my Lord." The Jews who made the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament into Greek followed this custom, using the Greek word for "Lord".

When, eventually, vowel marks were introduced into Hebrew manuscripts, the vowels of *adonai* were placed on the consonants *YHWH*, since the readers always said *adonai* instead of attempting to pronounce the sacred name. It is thought that an early Christian translator, unfamiliar with this practice, may have read the Hebrew word as he found it in the manuscript, and thus have formed the word Jehovah by combining the vowels of *adonai* with the consonants of the original name. Because of this very reasonable suggestion of its origin, most scholars are quite convinced that the form "Jehovah" is not a correct representation of the original name.

Whether this is true or not, it remains a fact that we do not know how the original name was pronounced. This does not impress me as particularly important, since we really do not know exactly how any ancient name was pronounced. Our modern form is always only a representation, not an exact reproduction. Pronunciation is constantly changing, and there is no way of knowing exactly how people talked, before the invention of phonographs and tape recorders. I have heard it said that if we were to hear George Washington speak today, we would understand hardly anything that he said, since pronunciation is always gradually changing. I do not know whether it changes quite so fast as that or not.

Today no one can say with absolute certainty that the name was not pronounced "Jehovah," although it seems unlikely. There is a good possibility that the pronunciation of it was somewhat like "Yahweh," but no one can be at all sure. After all, this latter form rests largely upon a theory of etymology that may or may not be correct.

Since, prior to the emergence of the cult known as Jehovah's Witnesses, the form Jehovah was nearly always used in what I would consider as a rather devotional environment, while the form Yahweh is used so constantly by critics who do not accept

the Bible as the Word of God, but instead seek to find in it all sorts of inconsistencies and incongruities, I personally feel much more comfortable about saying "Jehovah" than about saying "Yahweh." In most cases I tend to follow the usage of the King James Version and say "the LORD."

You probably realize that in the King James Version the common Hebrew word *adonai* is represented by "the lord" (in small letters), while the sacred name for God is represented by "the LORD" (entirely in capitals). If a person realizes this, then it is easy for him to understand that when we read "God," it indicates a type of being, whereas when we read "the LORD," it represents an actual name. One who does not know this would be apt to think that the two were exactly the opposite of what they really are.

LETTER 65
1975

TRANSMISSION OF NUMBERS

Dear Dr MacRae,

Having graduated from Faith Seminary in 1939 and having a continued admiration for your scholarship especially in Old Testament studies, I should like to request your reaction to an article which I came across recently. Considering the author and the publication in which this article appeared, my inclination is to trust it. However, I would appreciate your comments.

The problem of Old Testament numbers I have generally set aside as something to which I would not likely find any very good answers. It seems to me that if this explanation is sound, it would be a great help to us.

Dear ...

The article on the Old Testament numbers that you enclosed seems very reasonable to me. As the author points out, the transmission of numbers is always difficult. In early records many numbers may have been written in abbreviated form, and when they came to be spelled out it may sometimes have been difficult to know exactly what they were. The suggestion that there may have been confusion at times between '*eleph*' and '*alluph*' sounds quite reasonable, though the suggestion that '*alluph*' is a specific term for the professional fully-armed soldier is new to me.

It used to be said that the author of Chronicles deliberately magnified the figures in order to make the history sound more imposing than the way it was told in Kings. Yet this theory is easily shown to be completely wrong, since sometimes the numbers in Chronicles are smaller rather than larger.

I was greatly interested a few years ago in the book by Thiele called *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, and particularly in the introduction by a liberal scholar at the University of Chicago who stated that the chronological numbers in the history of Judah and Israel had always seemed to him the most difficult matter in Old Testament study and utterly impossible to reconcile, but that Thiele had satisfactorily solved the problem. While I am not sure that every one of Thiele's interpretations is necessarily correct, it is impressive to see that in almost every case he has given a reasonable explanation for fitting the numbers together exactly as they stand.

The Lord has allowed minor errors to occur in the transmission of both the Old and New Testaments, but none of them affect any matter of Christian doctrine or Christian life. I believe that He did this purposely so that we would not be tempted to try to squeeze too much out of a few words, but would compare Scripture with Scripture and learn the definite ideas that He desires us to know.

LETTER 66
1976

ANCIENT CHRONOLOGY

So far as we know, no nation carried on a system of numbering years consecutively for long periods of time before 312 B.C. and only Syria did so during the succeeding centuries, up to the 5th century A.D.

In ancient Assyria a man was designated each year as the "limu" for that year, and events were dated by his name. In Rome the year was designated by the names of those who were consuls. Thus in Assyria a year might be the year of Nabu-zer-iddin. In Rome a year might be the year of the consulate of Antony and Lepidus. In some other countries, such as Egypt, the years were numbered according to the ruler. Thus we might read that an event happened in the 20th year of a certain pharaoh. In Israel and Judah years were numbered this way according to the king.

It has been very hard to figure out how many years before Christ various events occurred, because sometimes a king would make his son ruler along with himself during part of his reign. Thus a certain year might be the 40th year of the reign of Hezekiah and also the fifth year of the reign of Jotham, and either number could be used in referring to it. Another cause of difficulty has been the fact that in some kingdoms and some periods when a king died in the course of the year the rest of the year would be called the first year of his successor, while in other kingdoms or periods a successor's first year would not be considered as beginning until a new year began. Thus the unraveling of ancient chronology previous to the time when numbers were given to the years over long periods of time was a difficult problem. In the book to which you refer, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, Thiele made a very fine effort to calculate precise dates for the kings of Israel and Judah -- a task that had previously seemed to all critical scholars to be utterly impossible. We have no certainty that Thiele's theories are correct in every point, but he made a very great advance in this study.

Perhaps it was because Seleucus lived longer than any other successor of Alexander that the people of Syria became accustomed to dating events after the year he returned to Babylon (312 B.C.), and this custom was continued to some extent, even into the late Middle Ages.

LETTER 67

1958

IVAN PANIN'S NUMERICS

While I never met Dr Panin personally, it is my impression that he spent a great deal of time and effort on a type of investigation which was not based on sound methods of investigation, and consequently that little value is to be placed upon his conclusions.

I am sorry to have this impression, because it was Dr Panin's claim, by this method, to defend belief in verbal inspiration of the Scriptures and this is a belief which I myself hold very strongly.

This does not mean that I believe that God dictated the Bible. There may be parts that He dictated, but most of it He gave in a different way, through human writers. The Spirit selected these writers, led them in their experiences of life, and oversaw their selection of words from their own vocabularies, so as to express their observations correctly, and infallibly to describe the revelations that God had given them. Thus the words of the Bible express the personality and viewpoint of the human writers, and are, nevertheless, just as true as if God had dictated them.

Actually, the important thing is not the words but the meaning; yet the meaning is presented by the words and it is only from the words that we can make sure what the meaning is. We cannot say that these are necessarily the only words that would express this meaning, but we can be sure that these words, rightly interpreted,

will give us the true meaning, and consequently that we can depend upon them.

Now it is my impression that Panin, and others of his viewpoint, have attempted, by the counting of letters and by assigning numerical values to letters and adding them up, to find proof of an inner structure of the words in the Bible which would be unique and different from other books. It is not my impression that they have succeeded in presenting any real evidence that such a structure exists.

It is not at all inconceivable, of course, that God might have chosen to provide this type of evidence. If He had I would expect that He might have given us some intimation of it in the Bible itself, and I find no such intimation there. Moreover, such evidence, to be of much value, ought to be so definite and clear that it could be demonstrated in such a way that any honest person would have to admit that it existed. I find, on the contrary, that many earnest Christians who have examined the matter have come to the conclusion that there is nothing at all to this method of investigation.

It is my impression that the type of method is somewhat as follows. One counts the number of words in a particular verse. He may find seven words in it. He says, "Look, here is a proof of inspiration. The verse has seven words." Yet it may be that no one of the next five or six verses has exactly seven words, therefore he uses different approaches. In one verse he may find that the number of letters in the nouns is divisible by seven. In the next he may abandon the nouns and find the letters in the verbs, or, perhaps, the alleged numerical value of these letters, to be a number divisible by seven. Thus a different method may be used in almost every verse, in the attempt to find a seven somewhere or other.

It would be strange indeed if such a method would not find numerous sevens, not only in the Bible, but in everything also that ever was written....

I am sorry not to be able to give you further information on this matter. My present impression, however, is that it is not a line of investigation that is apt to be fruitful of any real results.

Personally, I wish that those who spend days and hours counting letters in the Bible in order to find alleged proof of its verbal

inspiration would instead spend their time presenting the Gospel to the lost in order that they might come to the knowledge of the Savior. They should study the actual teachings of the Word in order to see what they should mean for our life and in order to demonstrate what I believe to be a fact, that the actual teachings of the Word are in no way contrary to what has been definitely proven by any sort of scientific investigation.

LETTER 68
1942

KARL G. SABIERS'S NUMERICS

Dear Dr MacRae,

I wonder if you are familiar with the book *Astounding New Discoveries* by Karl G. Sabiers. It deals with Bible numerics somewhat after the order of the work of Ivan Panin. We have received several inquiries about the book, and some say they have been helped by it. I have a letter here from a woman who claims to have been helped out of her doubts about the Bible by reading the book. Mr Howard, Jr. would like very much if you could give a brief review of the book for *The Sunday School Times*.

Dear ...

When one finds that someone else is supporting something that is true and right, but doing it by means of absurd and erroneous reasonings, one's impulse is to say nothing by way of criticism, in the hope that the erroneous reasonings may lead some to the truth. A little reflection, however, will show that this is a wrong attitude. Allowing false arguments to be disseminated in support of the truth will lead intelligent people to think that the truth itself

is wrong. If some come to accept it as a result of much argument, it will be easy for them to be convinced, later, that the arguments are false, and this may naturally alienate them completely from the view to which wrong arguments led them. Thus the result of leaving false arguments unanswered, because they are used by good men or in support of a good cause, actually may be to injure the cause which they profess to support. God's Word does not need the support of nonsensical arguments. It is better off without them. He is a God of truth who dwells in the light.

Arguments which claim to be based upon the original Hebrew and Greek of the Scriptures, appear very mysterious to the man who is untrained in these languages. He may tend to accept unquestioningly whatever they are said to prove. It is thus easy to hide false ideas behind the printing of foreign letters. Study of the original languages of the Bible is an important feature of Christian study, but in the hands of men untrained in these languages it becomes merely a cloak for ignorance.

In taking up the book named above, one finds that it contains many Greek and Hebrew letters. If one, however, has had as much as a fortnight of scientific study of the Hebrew language, he soon becomes convinced that the author's knowledge of it hardly goes beyond the learning of the letters. Thus he finds twice on p.22 the statement that a particular Hebrew word *eth* is "an indefinite article". Even one who knows no Hebrew should be made skeptical of this statement by the fact that in both instances it is immediately followed by the word "the". Now whoever heard of any language in which the definite article "the" would be preceded by an indefinite article? Turning to p.25 we find the same word in the same verse described as "The Hebrew participle *eth*". So the word which the author twice calls an indefinite article on p.22, he calls a participle on p.25. As a matter of fact anyone who has had even a few days of scientific study of Hebrew knows that the word (pronounced *eth*) is actually the sign of the accusative in Hebrew.

The sad thing about the book, however, is not so much the author's lamentable ignorance of the Hebrew language as the futility of the type of reasoning which he uses. His claim is that the letters of the Hebrew and Greek alphabets have numerical values, and that the sentences of the Bible are so constructed, in the original, that a remarkable system of 7's pervades their structure. Let us look at these points separately.

As to the alleged numeric value of Hebrew letters, no trace of such an idea is to be found anywhere in the Old Testament. Wherever its text contains a number, it is spelled out. A misunderstanding on the point might easily arise from the use of a modern copy of the Hebrew Bible, because it numbers chapters and verses by means of Hebrew letters. However, even the division into chapters and into verses is a late addition to the text, and is not original. Originally the Bible read continuously, like any book written today. Division into chapters and verses is useful for reference, but is often misleading, and is well known to be not a part of the original Scripture. Our earliest evidence of the use of Hebrew letters to express number is not until two centuries after the writing of the last book of the Old Testament. Then someone would seem to have hit on the idea of using the first letter of the alphabet to express the figure one, the second for two, and so on. In the following centuries Hebrew letters were thus used frequently to express figures. The Arabs developed the idea into a series of separate signs for numerals and thus our Arabic numerals arose. To say that the fact that the Jews long after the close of the Old Testament began to use Hebrew letters as substitutes for numerals justifies us in supposing that every letter of a continuous Biblical text written centuries earlier has a numerical value in addition to its value as a letter, is surely a strange assumption. So the very foundation of these alleged "Astounding New Discoveries", that the words of the Old Testament have also a numerical meaning, is without warrant.

The book contains some very queer reasoning. For instance it is stated on pp.51-56 that there is only one chance in many quintillion that a given passage would contain as many as twenty-four different numerical features. This is based upon the assumption that the chance of finding one number divisible by 7 is one in seven, that of finding two one in forty-nine, that of finding three one in seven times seven, etc. A little reflection will show that this is entirely wrong. If you take any number in the telephone book, the chances that it will be divisible by seven are about one in seven.

The chance that two numbers can be found in the telephone book which are divisible by seven is not only one in forty-nine, for one can be quite certain that for more than two -- in fact about one seventh of the entire book -- will be found to be divisible by seven. So far from having difficulty in finding twenty four numbers in the telephone book divisible by seven, one can be quite sure that thousands of numbers will be divisible by seven. Now

if one assumes that the letters of the Bible have numeric value, and adds these together to get a value for the words, it is not strange that one finds many words or combinations of words which give numbers divisible by seven. It would be rather be miraculous if such were not the case. Exactly similar results would be found if any other book whatever were taken as a basis. To use such a method in the attempt to find a new proof of inspiration is sad and childish indeed. It would be comical, if it were not tragic. Alas that men knowing the Gospel, and given a divine command to spread it, should waste their time in such nonsense! Just to look at a few examples of the foolishness of the method, let us pick a few instances at random. On page 50 the following statements are made:

"It is interesting to note that even the Bible as a whole divides perfectly into exactly seven great divisions. 1. The Law. 2. The Prophets. 3. The Writings (Hagiographa). 4. The Gospels. 5. The Acts. 6. The Epistles. 7. Revelation. The two larger divisions, the Prophets and the Epistles, are each composed of a number of books which divides perfectly by seven. The number of books in each of these divisions is exactly 21, or 3 7's. There are dozens of other amazing numeric features strangely hidden beneath the surface of these seven Bible divisions."

The author considers it remarkable that there are 21 books in each of two of the divisions into which he divides the Bible. If the number of books proves anything, how about the fact that the whole Bible contains 66 books, a number not divisible by seven. The New Testament contains 27 books, a number also not divisible by 7. The Old Testament contains 39 books, also a number not divisible by 7. If we are to divide the Old Testament in the way that it is divided in Hebrew manuscripts, i.e. into Law, Prophets, and Hagiographa, then surely we should group the books together as is done in these manuscripts, making a total of 24 books, another number not divisible by 7. In the Hebrew arrangement, many of the books are grouped together, which we separate, as, for instance, First and Second Kings. Thus the Hebrew arrangement does not have 21 books in the Prophets, but only 8, a number not divisible by 7. In the Hagiographa there are 11 books, another number not divisible by 7. The Law contains 5 books, a number not divisible by 7. The New Testament has 5 Gospels, one book of Acts, and one book of Revelation. Thus, of the seven divisions into which this author would divide the Bible, only one contains a number of books

divisible by seven. That is the proportion we would naturally expect, and we find it in this proportion in the Bible, and probably also in almost every other book that was ever written.

On p.26 the author, speaking of the first verse of the Bible says, "It is indeed strange to note that the number of Hebrew words in this verse is not 6, not 8, but exactly 7." How remarkable indeed, that a verse should contain seven words! But how much more remarkable it would be, if out of the thousands of verses in the Bible, there were not hundreds which contained exactly seven words! On p.22 the author gives numeric values to each of the words in the first verse of Genesis, according to his system. The numbers are 913, 203, 86, 491, 395, 407, 296. On the following page he says, "It is strange to note that the numeric value of the verb in the first verse of Genesis is also a number which divides perfectly by 7 -- a number which is an exact multiple of 7. The numeric value of the Hebrew verb "created" is exactly 203 or 29 7's". He thinks it amazing that one of these seven numbers is exactly divisible by seven. It is hard to avoid wondering whether he happened to notice that no other of the seven numbers which he gives for these seven words is divisible by seven. The proportion of one is seven, again, is just what we would expect, and what we will generally find, in the Bible, or in any other Book.

On p.24 the statement is made: "Strange to say, the numeric value of the first, middle, and last Hebrew letters in this first verse is also a number which divides evenly by 7. The numeric value of these three letters is exactly 133 or 19 7's". Later on he points out that there are 28 letters in the verse. He does not tell us which of the 28 he considers to be the middle one, not that the Bible gives us any reason to think that there is any special importance attached to the middle letter of a verse. However, we note that if we use the author's system and take the first, fifteenth and twenty-eighth, the total is 93, a number not divisible by seven, while if we take the first, fourteenth and twenty-eighth, the total is 132, again a number not divisible by seven. Since there are of course hundreds of sevens in the Bible according to this system, as we have seen, it is too bad to lay much stress on this instance of a wrong addition. There is no great point in checking all the additions and countings in the book. The plain fact is that the whole method is wrong. It would as easily prove the inspiration

of the telephone book as of the Bible. If one-seventh of numbers are apt to be divisible by seven, there will similarly be probably one-sixth divisible by six, and one-fifth divisible by five. So if one is to waste time on such a system, he will secure better results if he takes five or even four, than if he looks for sevens.

The book is clearly printed and attractively put out. What a shame that so much ingenuity and effort should be wasted on such an erroneous method! The enemy of souls is always seeking to lead Christians aside into paths of uselessness or even of positive harm. It is well that people should be warned against being deceived by specious types of alleged reasoning, which can only result in harm to the testimony of Christ.

LETTER 69
1976

EVANGELICALS AND FUNDAMENTALISTS

I was glad to read that you had been well impressed with our school We stand squarely on the Westminster Confession of Faith, but we do not feel that every doctrine mentioned in it is on exactly the same level with every other. Our great emphasis is on training students to study the Bible for themselves. We desire them to be able to find the definite evidence for those matters that are clearly taught, and to be able to make up their own minds on matters on which well trained and equally consecrated Christians may readily differ.

Personally I cannot agree with your definition of the difference between an Evangelical and a Fundamentalist. I know men who would take each of these names who would fit your stereotype exactly, but I do not believe that it applies to the great mass of them.

I quite agree that there is a tendency among many of those who glory in the name "Fundamentalist" to put great emphasis on very minor points. I have also found such an emphasis among many individuals who would not take the name of Fundamentalist.

I feel that all who truly love the Lord and believe in the great fundamental doctrines should stand together and help one another. This includes many who call themselves "Fundamentalists" and also many who call themselves "Evangelicals". Personally I would like to claim both names for myself.

Among the adherents of almost any science it is rather common to hear of those who are expert on the fundamentals of that science, in contrast to those "who are weak on the fundamentals." Properly understood the term should not designate one who puts great emphasis on minor issues... but rather one who puts his emphasis on the great foundational truths of God's Word

...

During my life I have had the experience of seeing a complete reversal of attitude in the leadership of a number of great denominations that at one time were solidly devoted to the Word of God. I have seen the control of a number of them taken over by men who did not even believe in a personal God. Usually the change begins with doubts about the dependability of Scripture, then goes on to deny the miracles of Christ or the historical statements of the Old Testament, and eventually has reached a point where most of the seminaries approved by the denomination were training men in unbelief. Over a period of years graduates of such institutions have gained greater and greater control of the particular denomination and have made it difficult for men who believe in the Lord to be admitted to its ministry. Under such circumstances the people in the pew are apt to become confused. They feel that they should put confidence in their minister, and yet they wish to believe in the Word of God. They see their children drifting away from the church and losing interest, since they are not receiving any spiritual food. When a denomination reaches such a point many think it their duty to separate from it and to try to establish a new organization that will be true to the great foundational teachings of God's Word. In some cases this effort succeeds. In others the leaders of the new organization become so interested in getting absolute uniformity on minor points that they accomplish very little in the end.

LETTER 70
1985

HEART DISEASE IN CHRIST'S BODY

I was greatly pleased by Jack Van Impe's chapter on the unity of Christ's body (pp.95-105) and by the one on the importance of showing Christian love (pp.67-75). If these and other similar portions were available by themselves I would ardently wish that they might be distributed as widely as possible.

How it must grieve the heart of Jesus to see believers criticizing other Christians for differences over secondary points of doctrine, and over matters of dress or length of hair!

Yet it is equally important not to overlook the other side of the picture.

During my life I have had the sad experience a number of times of seeing a school that at one time had been completely devoted to the Lord's service but had later turned away from the desires of its founders and became a powerful force for destroying the faith of young Christians. Usually this radical change began with the coming of a new faculty member who seemed so gracious and kindly that everyone felt that his Christian spirit set an example for all. Little by little he would begin to ridicule Christian ideas and to present "higher critical" attitudes in his classes. As his devoted followers graduated, many of them would take advanced work at universities where their anti-Christian ideas would be amplified and strengthened, and some of these would return to join him in teaching. Within a few years the whole institution would be completely changed. A similar catastrophe has occurred in dozens of colleges and theological seminaries.

If anyone speaks against such an individual he is sure to be accused of showing an unchristian spirit.

One of our recent entering classes at Biblical Theological Seminary included a man in his middle thirties who said that as a young man he had entered a well known theological seminary

that fifty years ago was regarded as a great bastion of the Christian faith. To his surprise he soon heard his teachers pointing to alleged errors in Scripture and ridiculing Bible doctrines. He saw his friends beginning to surrender to the unbelief that was being advanced. Eventually he left the school in disgust and spent the next ten years in secular work. Then he happened to hear about Biblical Seminary's out-and-out stand for the Word of God and its high scholarly standards for defending and expounding God's truth and therefore applied for admission to our student body.

For every student thus saved for God's service, a dozen others are lost to unbelief.

The overwhelming majority of the educated people in America have turned away from historic Christianity, and this is largely the result of the anti-Christian teaching that has taken possession of most of the schools of higher learning.

In view of the experiences and observations that I have had I tend to be as tolerant as possible of the human foibles, weaknesses, jealousies and idiosyncrasies of individuals who really believe the Word. Many years ago I resolved never to say anything that might decrease the influence of someone who stood foursquare for God's Word or anything that would increase the influence of one who denied it.

To my mind the terms evangelical and fundamentalist do not represent sharply divided entities but greatly overlap. I think of an evangelical as one who believes in the great doctrines of salvation and tries to make them real in his life and to spread them to others. I think of the term fundamentalist as meaning one who stands firmly on the great central fundamentals and earnestly contends for the faith once for all delivered to the saints. This properly should involve a definite effort to abstain from placing much emphasis on any secondary matter. Thus a true evangelical should be a fundamentalist, and a true fundamentalist should be an evangelical.

To subdivide still further, by prefixing neo- or pseudo- to either term simply confuses.

A considerable portion of Dr Van Impe's book consists of evidences to show that the leaders of Bob Jones University constantly seek information from their graduates about the attitudes of various Christian leaders to determine whether these leaders

stand completely in line with the views of the BJU people or whether they cooperate with individuals of whom this group does not approve. While I myself would prefer an attitude that gave more recognition to the unity of the body of Christ, I feel that a particular group has a right to restrict its fellowship if it chooses. It is unfortunate, however, that lines of fellowship should be based on such comparatively minor factors as the quoted letters suggest. In this connection the book mentions some rather striking inconsistencies, but I fear that all people are more inconsistent than they ought to be. If the leaders of a group desire to restrict its fellowship so tightly, they would be much kinder to make this fact clearly known to all outsiders in advance. I was glad to see the favorable statement about some BJU graduates on pp.215-216.

During my student days, I was privileged to observe Billy Sunday's great city-wide campaign in Los Angeles. Tremendous crowds would line up, waiting for the auditorium to be opened. Interest in the meetings was very great. Yet even then the pastor of the church that my family attended remarked on his great trepidation as he looked forward to the years ahead. He said that the increase in availability of entertainment was causing people to lose interest in religious meetings and Christian organizations. Since then we have seen the rise of radio and television and the spread of greatly improved facilities for easy transportation. Evangelists used to say that it took a week or two to get a church revived to the point where its members would do their part and that a meeting that lasted less than five or six weeks would accomplish little. Now it is rare for any large evangelistic meeting to continue more than a few nights at the most. It is no wonder that contemporary evangelists who have conducted large meetings in the past tend to feel very frustrated.

Thank you again for sending me a copy of the book. I shall pray that God will bless its purpose by producing closer unity and greater love among Christian brethren, and that He will prevent its criticisms from decreasing the effectiveness of any who truly love the Lord.

LETTER 71
1968

BAPTISM - A BRIEF STATEMENT OF BELIEF

It was a real joy to hear from you.... To my mind the most important matter in Christian life is personal acceptance of Christ as Savior. There is nothing more important than this. We must constantly emphasize the necessity that each individual person ally receive Christ into his heart and be born again into His kingdom.

Along with this many Christian leaders have been convinced through the ages that there is another great and important truth taught in Scripture, namely, that God blesses families. Paul told the Philippian jailor that God would not only save him but would also save his family if he came to Christ. God gives us the privilege of not having to bring children into the world and then wait in terrible fear and uncertainty to know whether they will receive Christ as Savior; instead He gives us the privilege of taking hold on His promise that if we do our part, teach them, pray with them, and pray for them, He will show His marvelous grace toward us by bringing them in His own time to personal acceptance of Christ as Savior. This blessed truth has brought happiness and comfort to many a Christian home.

Both great truths are represented, both by circumcision before the coming of Christ, and by baptism since.

Galatians 6:15 is indeed true. No one is saved by circumcision or by non-circumcision. Nor is anyone saved by baptism. Both are merely symbols of our faith in the Savior who sets us apart and cleanses us from the defilement of this world, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Given to a child, either of them is a sign of the faith of Christian parents in the promises of God that He will bless the little one and will bring the little one to saving faith in His own time. We read in Romans 4: 11 that God gave Abraham circumcision as a sign and seal of the faith that he had

while yet being uncircumcised. Then God commanded him to circumcise his children. The majority of Christian denominations through the ages have believed that the parallel should be carried out in relation to baptism.

Personally, I hate to see any division over these matters. I believe that the Presbyterian teaching on this point is what the Bible teaches, but the important thing is certainly not the sign, but the great truths for which the sign stands. How wonderful it is to know Christ personally, and to place one's little ones under the blood of the Savior, knowing that if we look to Him, and do our part in simple faith, Jesus Christ will lead them to personal faith in Himself.

I have never written a book or pamphlet on this particular subject. I have tried here to give a very brief statement of my belief regarding it. Baptists and certain others feel very strongly in a different direction. Yet Spurgeon, who was a Baptist, held very clear views as to God's blessing upon the children of Christian parents.

LETTER 72
1960

BAPTISM THE PRESBYTERIAN HERITAGE

In regard to the matter of baptism I personally hold very definitely to the position that is expressed in the Westminster Confession and believe that it is what the Bible teaches. I do not believe that there is any scriptural warrant for holding that baptism should be only by means of immersion. The Greek word translated baptize (*baptidzo*), as used by the early Greeks, originally

meant "to put into water." It was used, for instance, of sailors who fell overboard and were drowned. They were said to be "baptized." The word was never used of putting something into water and taking it out again. A different word, *bapto*, "to dip," was used to express this meaning. Later on, before the time that the New Testament was written, the word *baptidzo* came to mean "to cleanse by means of water," no matter how it was done. Thus Mark 7:4 speaks of "the washing of cups, and pots, brasen vessels, and of tables." The word translated "washing" is the noun form of *baptidzo*. Obviously the way that the tables were washed was not to dip them in water. It is interesting to note that the Greek word that is here translated "table" is only translated that way once in the New Testament. In the other nine cases it is translated "bed" (as in Mark 4:21 and 7:30). Whether it means bed or table, it obviously was not washed by dipping it in water. Baptism, as far as Christians are concerned, originally meant applying water in such a way as to symbolize washing, and it did not specify in what manner the water would be applied.

The discussion of the reason why I believe infants ought to be baptized would take a considerable amount of space. In common with great numbers of godly Christians, I believe that this is what the Bible teaches and therefore am glad to perform it in the churches with which I am connected. However, I have felt for a long time that the encroachments of modernism are so great in these days, and the efforts of Satan to lead people to abandon the essentials of Christian belief are so strong, that it is unfortunate to have any unnecessary division among true Christians over secondary matters. When I meet a man who feels that "baptize" means only "immerse," or who deprives little children of the baptism to which children of Christian parents are entitled, I feel that this matter is comparatively minor in relation to the great things of the faith. Many men have departed altogether from the faith and are not doing anything to lead souls into the kingdom. I rejoice in fellowship with any true Christian who stands squarely on the Fundamentals, even if he should be wrong on these points of baptism. I am always very sorry when I find divisions made among true Christians over this ceremony. While I regret that some individuals are in error on this matter, I would like to give them my help and support if they are standing true on the great points of the Gospel, and not in any way to make things difficult for them.

While I believe that our Presbyterian heritage is a very wonderful thing, and that it is in line with the Scripture, I rejoice in Christian fellowship with those of Baptist views, even though I feel that they are wrong on these secondary matters.

LETTER 73
1962

THE MODE OF BAPTISM

My own opinion is that the mode of baptism is not particularly important. If God had wished that a particular mode of baptism should be used by all Christians He could easily have made this clear by one plain verse of Scripture. The fact that he did not choose to do so and that honest and sincere Christians differ over the teachings of the Bible about this matter seems to me to be proof that it is not a vital question.

What is vital is the matter of personal acceptance of Christ and of being united with Him by the action of the Holy Spirit. To my mind, sprinkling or pouring illustrates this truth much better than immersing. In ancient times it was customary to bury a man by lifting his body up on a shelf in a tomb rather than by putting it down into a hole in the ground. The usual symbol for burial in ancient times seems to have been sprinkling a little sand or water on something. Since the spiritual significance of baptism is so clear, I personally greatly regret any differences among Christians over a matter that God has not chosen to make clear. Since many people now deny the very heart of the Gospel, I would like to work in harmonious cooperation with all who truly believe in the divine message, and not to have my fellowship with them hindered by differences regarding a matter that is really secondary. It is, of course, my own opinion that sprinkling represents the

Scriptural idea somewhat better, but I am glad to accord full freedom to others to think as they may desire regarding this point.

Your suggestions about the practice of the early church are interesting. Unfortunately, it is extremely difficult to prove the facts regarding the matter since the evidence is so scanty. It seems to me that the statements in Acts are very difficult to interpret on the basis of immersion.

Your first question about the Septuagint is not difficult to answer. The verse is closely paralleled by the statement in I Peter 1 where Peter calls believers from many nations those who have been chosen for "sprinkling with the blood of Jesus Christ." Surely this is a reference to the last verse of Isaiah 52, which properly belongs with Isaiah 53, and must have been read by the Ethiopian eunuch. Chapter divisions were not introduced into the Scripture until the 13th century A.D.

It would seem to me that the Septuagint translators could not figure out what it would mean for the Servant of the Lord to "sprinkle many nations," and therefore made an unwarranted guess. Actually the Hebrew word that is used here is identical in form with the word that is used about a score of times in Leviticus and elsewhere to indicate the sprinkling of objects in the tabernacle, or of the garments of the priest, whether with blood, with water, or with oil. It is translated "sprinkle" about twenty times and never is translated "startle" in any other place in the Bible. The rendering "startle" has no philological justification.

Those scholars who claim that the word cannot mean "sprinkle" here base their argument on the fact that "sprinkle" usually has a direct object to indicate the blood, water, or oil that is sprinkled, instead of a direct object to indicate the thing on which the material is sprinkled. If the word occurred two hundred times and this was true in all of them, it would be a strong argument.

If the English word "sprinkle" only occurred twenty times and always was followed by a direct object to indicate the material that was sprinkled, it would not prove at all that the very next usage might not be to "sprinkle the lawn" which would be an exact parallel to the usage in Isaiah 52. Such an argument when based on a comparatively few cases impresses me as being more of an excuse than a reason.

LETTER 74
1976

**WHEN DID THE CHURCH BEGIN?
THE DISPENSATIONAL INTERPRETATION
OF SCRIPTURE**

You ask when the church began. Here there may be a problem of semantics. It is very commonly said that the church began at Pentecost, but there is no Scriptural statement to this effect. Surely Peter and the other apostles were just as truly members of Christ's church while they listened to His teaching and enjoyed fellowship with Him both before and after His resurrection, as they were after the time when the Holy Spirit began to use them in a particular way as His instruments for reaching out to the world as a whole. There is no valid Scriptural evidence as to the exact time when the Christian church could properly be said to have begun.

The writer of Hebrews declares that it was God's will that the Old Testament saints described in Hebrews 11 "should not with out us be made perfect" (Hebrews 11:40). We are surrounded by this great cloud of witnesses (Hebrews 12:1). They, with us, are to be made perfect. No one ever was saved or ever will be saved except through the merits of what Christ did on the cross and through the faith that God provides. Thus there is a great unity to the people of God in all periods

Most Christians would agree that there was a change of dispensation at Christ's first advent. The Old Testament law looked forward to Christ. The customs prescribed for His disciples look back to His first coming and forward to His return. Thus we remember the Lord's death until He come. We no longer circumcise; we baptize. We no longer keep the Passover; we observe the Lord's Supper. Without recognition of this change of dispensation the Bible would be meaningless.

In his *Systematic Theology*, Charles Hodge describes four dispensations. In my opinion he is in error in failing to mention a

dispensation that is still future, that of the millennial reign of Christ. Evidence as to the exact number of dispensations is not clear in Scripture. Some hold to seven, some to a large number. There is a very active group of people who accept the teachings of Bullinger and consider nearly all the Scripture except the prison epistles of Paul as being meant for other dispensations and not applying to us today. I strongly reject such an approach. I am convinced that the entire Bible is meant for all of God's people at all times. Some of it may have more immediate relevance to one time than another, but all of it is important -- and all of it has meaning for believers in every age. Thus the question about "the dispensational interpretation of Scripture" is one which all Christians might be able to answer in the affirmative, and yet it is one which some Christians would understand in a way that I would consider definitely harmful.

LETTER 75
1982

DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY

The best and most comprehensive statement I have ever seen about divine sovereignty is in Section 1 of Chapter III of the Westminster Confession, which so clearly sets forth three important facts: 1) that "God from all eternity did ... freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass;" 2) "thereby neither is God the author of sin;" 3) "nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established." Perhaps when we are in heaven we will fully understand how these statements fit together. As long as we are on earth we must simply trust God and know that all three are true. If we neglect or downplay any of them our attitudes become distorted.

Belief in the sovereignty of God is a great source of comfort and encouragement. It will keep us from becoming over-elated when we are successful or downcast when we fail. The other parts of the statement are also of very great importance if we are to serve the Lord as we should.

I believe that God leaves us here after we are saved for two purposes: 1. that we may serve Him and be His instruments in leading others to know Christ and in helping them to grow in grace; and 2. that we may ourselves develop those characteristics which He desires us to have.

Surely His purposes for us should be central in our activity. Our understanding of His sovereignty is vital in giving us energy and courage and in comforting us when things seem to go wrong.

During all the years of my teaching I have constantly stressed the importance of giving God's words in the Scripture priority over those of mere human beings. While I am interested in what men say, I am far more interested in what the Word of God says....

LETTER 76
1983

DANIEL'S SEVENTY WEEKS

I do not like categorizing interpreters into classes. There is usually so much variation among individual students that such classifications overlap a great deal. I prefer to take each Scripture teaching as it stands, studying each point to see what the Bible actually teaches. Neither the question of the millennium nor the question of dispensations seems to me to have any actual relevance to the interpretation of Daniel except as individuals may

try to twist passages to fit their desires. I prefer to study Daniel without such designations. In my opinion one of the best presentations of dispensations (even though, I believe, naming one too few) is the discussion in Hodge's Theology. I have known vociferous supporters of each of the two alleged viewpoints who were really almost identical in their ideas.

You were quite correct in showing that the 70 years of Jeremiah is not a precise number; yet I feel that there can be no doubt that what Jeremiah actually predicted (namely, the remaining years under which the nations would be subject to Babylonian control) was to begin at the time indicated at the beginning of chapter 25, and consequently was only a very few years short of seventy, so that a period of seven decades is really quite a close approximation. Attempts to relate the seventy years to some other beginning or ending seem to me to involve an absurd twisting of Jeremiah's words.

You are certainly correct in saying that if the passage refer to a decree to rebuild the city, the decree of Cyrus would be the only one that is worthy of consideration. The other suggestions are merely unjustified attempts to fit the numbers together.

The translation of *dabar* as "decree" is very far from precise, particularly since the same word is used three or four times earlier in the same chapter to indicate a divine message. If command were meant, *dabar* might be used, but surely *miswan* would be more likely.

Your discussion of the various mentions of "ending sacrifice" in Daniel as raising doubt about interpreting "put an end to sacrifice" as a reference to the atonement is very excellent. I do not know whether Hengstenberg was the originator of this idea. It impresses me as being about as absurd as his statement that the millennium began with the conversion of the Germans about a thousand years before his time and that already in his day he could see signs of such commotions as might well be the beginning of the uprising predicted for the end of the millennium.

Since Hengstenberg wrote some excellent material and rendered valiant service in defense of the Scripture it is sad that he should have resorted to such wild fantasies at these two points....

LETTER 77
1977

**MORE COMMENTS ON
DANIEL'S SEVENTY WEEKS**

Dear Dr MacRae,

It was a real pleasure to hear you at the Evangelical Theological Society and enjoy the vigor of your methodology and understanding....

I have shared your paper on Daniel 9 with several of my Old Testament colleagues. Let me again urge you to print up your results and submit them to Journal of Evangelical Theological Society for publication. Those to whom I spoke after your presentation were "almost persuaded" by your Cyrus dating (instead of the 445 date) and expressed deep appreciation for your work....

The most interesting development, from my own analysis of the paper, is that the much discussed "parenthesis" of the "Church Age" could turn out to be at least two gaps with the "Church Age gap" beginning even earlier than previously assumed. That may be a healthy corrective in steering us away from theologizing on what was not the point of the author anyway.

Another answer I found was a solution to the 1 Peter 1:10-12 passage which definitely says that the prophets did not know the time (*eis tina e poion kairon*) of Messiah's coming. If Daniel is treated as traditional futurists have handled it, then certainly some of the prophets should have known the *kairon*. Your exegesis is clearer on this point. It is also a healthier clearing of the air on what tends to be an excessive emphasis on discontinuity in the plan of God as regards the 70 weeks, but which discontinuity hardly fits in well with the teaching on the "new covenant" which is also addressed to the same persons, viz. the House of Israel and Jacob, yet includes the ministers of Paul's day and those who participated in the Lord's Supper. The only alternative to the latter dilemma is to have two new covenants and even Charles Ryrie and teachers of theology at Moody Bible Institute have

retracted their positions on that point. So, as you can see, I believe your statement can have some major implications....

I trust my length and enthusiasm have not confused you, but rather have encouraged you. Again thank you for your exemplary life of scholarship and devotion to Christ. You continue to give to all of us great leadership in courageous Bible exposition. May his hand of blessing be upon you for good for many years to come.

Dear ...

Your comments on the matter of the 70 weeks were both helpful and stimulating. I have often quoted 1 Peter 1:10-12 to show that the writings of the prophets contain material that they themselves did not necessarily understand. Your suggestion that it also indicates that they definitely did not know the time when the predicted events would occur is a very interesting one, and one into which I desire to look further....

One friend has suggested that "Hengstenberg, *Christology*, III, 143, and Montgomery *ICC*, 391, seems to make a pretty good case for uninterrupted weeks." I am very sceptical about this but intend to pursue it further. Since three sections are definitely stated I see no reason why the three have to follow one another without any interruption. A man might say, "I spent 19 years in Pennsylvania. I entered the University of Pennsylvania in 1936 and studied there four years; ten years I was an executive in a Philadelphia company and five years I was city manager of Pittsburgh." Such a statement would not exclude the possibility that he spent four years in the Philippines between the first and second periods and five years in government service in Washington between the second and third.

The matter of the "new covenant" is quite a difficult problem with many ramifications. I would be greatly interested in any further light that you can throw upon it....

I have prepared a manuscript on the prophecies of Daniel, and have already covered every part except chapter 12. Although I wish to do more revision on the entire work I am fairly well satisfied with my treatment of all the chapters except the one dealing with the 70 weeks. While I believe that I have found the

correct approach to the interpretation of this prophecy, I am not sure that I have presented it in the best order. I used a different order in speaking to the ETS, but in a book of this type it is hard to know what approach to use. One order of presentation might be most effective with some people, and a different one with others....

LETTER 78
1982

PRE-TRIBULATION RAPTURE

Dear Dr MacRae,

The main reason for writing you is this: During the past year there has been some discussion of the pre-trib versus post-trib debate. In the Faith Seminary library there is a copy of Alexander Reese's *The Approaching Advent of Christ*. In the front page someone had pencilled in a note that that book was reviewed by Dr MacRae in *The Sunday School Times* of May 7, 1938. I found and read the review. It seemed well-balanced to me, and to be written in your style; but there was no name attached to the review. What I would like to know is, was this review, in fact, written by you?...

Dear ...

It was not Dr Trumbull's policy to give the names of the contributors, as he preferred to have "the whole influence of *The Sunday School Times*" stand behind whatever he decided to publish.

It is not my impression that any change was made from the exact words that I wrote, and I do not see anything in the article

with which I would now disagree.

Personally I have been quite disgusted at the amount of heat that has been displayed by some who have attacked the so-called "pre-tribulation rapture." After all, it is only a question of knowing what God is going to do in relation to certain future events and we can be sure that He will do what He chooses, whatever we may think about it.

I wish that some other term could have been used, particularly since the words "pre-tribulation rapture" give some the impression that there is to be no tribulation until after the rapture. Jesus said, "In this world ye shall have tribulation." (John 16:33) There have been terrible tribulations in the history of the world and there may be more before the Lord comes. It is hard to imagine how a tribulation could be much worse than what Christians suffered in China with this present century and what many are now suffering in Russia. In Ethiopia and Uganda thousands of Christians have been tortured and killed. The real point is that we are not to know when the rapture will come and that nothing that could be properly recognized as "the great tribulation" will occur before the rapture.

To me the strongest consideration in this regard is the fact that in about a dozen cases the New Testament urges us to be ready for the Lord's return and assures us that it will come at a time that no one can predict. This seems to me to rule out any event that could properly be recognized as something that the Scripture predicts must occur before Jesus comes again. This thought of being constantly ready for His coming -- so much emphasized in the New Testament -- would be quite meaningless if we could know that the rapture would not occur until certain recognizable events would take place. When asked if I think the Lord will come next year I always reply that there is one thing of which I am absolutely certain that His coming is a year nearer than it was a year ago.

Involved arguments, many of them based on the Book of Revelation, have been advanced as to particular events that would precede the rapture and as to the length of the time that would follow. Such arguments have never greatly interested me. I feel that the evidence is very strong that there is to be a great outpouring of God's wrath upon the earth between the rapture and the coming of Christ with His saints to establish His kingdom, but

those times and seasons are entirely in the Lord's hands and I doubt that we can make much progress in determining them.

Recently I have been making a rather careful study of the Isaiah Apocalypse (Chapters 24-27). In doing so I have become more convinced than ever of the correctness of the suggestion I made in my article in *The Bible Today* in 1951, that Isaiah 26:12ff gives a picture of the spread of Christianity among those of pagan backgrounds leading up to the resurrection of the just as God's answer to our frustration and failure, and followed in the next two verses (26:21-27:1) by a description of the outpouring of God's wrath upon the earth immediately after the rapture.

Books have been written in recent years violently attacking the idea of an interval between the resurrection of the saved and the coming of Christ to establish His kingdom. Some have asserted that this idea originated in the prayer of a somewhat demented woman in Scotland a century ago. In my opinion this evidence is quite tenuous, but even if it were so, it would not really affect the question at all as to whether this is the correct interpretation of Scripture....

LETTER 79
1983

PREMILLENNIALISM AND TYCONIUS'S SEVENTH RULE

Dear Dr MacRae,

I enclose some material on Tyconius, who ... was influential in turning Augustine from premillennialism to postmillennialism or amillennialism (I'm not sure which) because of Tyconius's "seven rules for the interpretation of Scripture."

What I would like to find out is whether there is anything suspect in any of the seven rules of interpretation that would give us the key to the whole hermeneutics on eschatology as passed on to Augustine

Dear ...

The Old Testament looks forward to two great hopes: to the coming of Christ to bear the sins of the world, and also to the coming of a long period of universal peace and happiness covering the entire earth. The New Testament lays great stress on another hope, which was very prominent in the minds of the apostles -- the hope of the personal return of Christ as something that could happen in our lifetimes and will bring us the great joy of seeing our Lord and Redeemer. The Book of Revelation shows how these two hopes fit together, with the return of Christ introducing His millennial reign. Thus premillennialism has two major points: 1. that there is to be a long period of universal peace and happiness upon this earth; 2. that the return of Christ is not something that cannot occur until the very end of such a period, but something that may occur very soon, and is therefore a very real and present hope for the Christian. If one holds these two basic points he is a premillennialist; if one does not he is not a premillennialist. Amillennialism holds one of them and denies the other; postmillennialism holds the other and denies the one. Thus premillennialism has two great foci, while each of the other views has only one. Although the other two are really opposite, they are often so presented that one would get the impression that they were really similar.

Anyone who holds to both of these great points and thus looks forward both to the personal coming of Christ and to His reign of joy and peace upon the earth is a premillennialist. People may take various views about other questions, such as the time of the rapture, but most of these views could actually fit as well with either a-millennialism or post-millennialism, as with premillennialism. They are not a part of the essential question. The same is true of the question whether God still has a place for Israel in His plan. While I have strong views on some of these other matters I do not consider them to be part of the discussion of premillennialism.

We can be sure that the future includes many details that would be quite meaningless to us since there will be factors involved of which we know nothing. Suppose that a hundred years ago someone had heard that the time would come when a man could have breakfast in London, lunch in New York, and dinner in San Francisco. He would immediately have declared that any one who expressed such a foolish idea was surely insane! It would have been impossible to imagine any way in which such a prediction could possibly have been fulfilled. Yet today it is commonplace.

We can be sure that God will do what He chooses in the future. He has revealed a few important facts to us but most of the details are beyond our understanding, since there will doubtless be many factors that we cannot even imagine with our present experience.

The ascertainment of extensive details about God's plan for the future does not therefore impress me as being of great importance. What does impress me as important is the fact that these two great hopes are both clearly taught in Scripture and that anyone who explains away either of them introduces principles of hermeneutics that could just as easily explain away the bodily resurrection of Christ or any other great doctrine. It is for this reason that I consider premillennialism to be of great importance. I find it difficult to think that anyone who can explain away the two central facts of premillennialism, both so clearly taught in the Bible, can be dependable in his interpretation of other biblical doctrines.

Surely every Christian believes in dispensations. Charles Hodge has a section on the four dispensations. I believe he was wrong in not including the millennium as a fifth one. Some think there are seven. Actually the number is somewhat uncertain but there would seem to be little doubt that the four mentioned by Hodge are clearly taught in Scripture, as is also the millennium....

Augustine was a great philosophic thinker and a great Christian. In many ways he had a very good influence on the Christian church. He was hardly a great exegete, but was in some ways a child of his time....

Tyconius's seventh rule seems to be that when the Bible is not speaking about Christ it must be speaking about the devil and his followers. It illustrates the error, into which so many fall, of

trying to put all of the Bible into a few major categories. I believe we should go to the Scripture to see what it says, rather than to try to fasten our particular categories upon it....

LETTER 80
1977

**ISAIAH 66:12-24
AND THE MILLENNIUM**

In Isaiah 66:12-24 the Prophet looked forward into the distant future and saw many things of which he might not have clearly understood the details, and particularly the precise times involved. Peter tells us that the prophets often saw glimpses of future facts that they did not fully understand (1 Peter 1:11-12) and particularly stresses the fact that the time of these events was often a mystery to them.

The Bible teaches that Christ will establish his kingdom of universal peace. After it has lasted a thousand years there will be an uprising which will be put down by God's great power, and then will follow the judgment of the wicked dead (Revelation 20:7-15). There is little clear information as to the details of what will come next. Perhaps conditions will continue much as they were during the millennium; perhaps there will be a complete change, utilizing principles that we now have no way of knowing or understanding; perhaps we will be transferred to another planet or even to another galaxy. As far as I know any of these conditions may occur. As we study the Bible further light may come to us on particular statements that at one time were not clear.

Some Bible students feel that Revelation 21 describes events that follow Revelation 20. This may very well be the case. On the

other hand some equally consecrated and gifted scholars feel that Chapter 21 reverts to giving more details about the millennium. Personally I incline toward this view, but would certainly not be dogmatic about it. As for the Bible teaching the establishment after the millennium of a permanent unchanging situation, this seems to me to be an unlikely guess. I believe that God has purposes for us through all eternity.

It is very important that we stand squarely upon whatever we find clearly taught in the Scripture, and that we label as guesses our ideas on matters that are not clearly revealed. As we study various passages new questions may arise in our minds. Reading other passages, we may find the answers to these questions answers that we might have passed right over without seeing their significance if we had not already had the questions in mind.

Thus every time we go through the Scripture we may learn new truths, but we may also become aware of new questions to which God may or may not give us the answers later on.

Isaiah spoke to his own contemporaries, and the Holy Spirit uses his words to speak to believers at later times. The material after Isaiah 66:12 gives us assurance that God's people will receive great blessings that will never end. It also promises that the physical descendants of Israel will receive particular blessings from the Lord. It is likely that this material summarizes various emphases in the book rather than necessarily looking forward to a still later time.

LETTER 81
1980

**PREMILLENNIALISM
AND ORDINATION
TO THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY**

Christ established His church for two purposes, so that it might be His instrument to reach individuals with the message of salvation through Christ, and so that its members might help one another to grow in grace and become more and more conformed to the image of the Saviour. It makes me very sad when divisions occur over matters on which equally sincere Christians may differ. Particular views about the details of God's plan for the future are not in themselves as important as the effect that these views may have upon the present activities of those who hold them.

1. My observation has been that premillennialists show more zeal in winning souls for Christ than most of those who hold other views. Most of the great evangelists and missionary leaders of the past hundred years have been premillennialists. There is something about this doctrine, which I believe to be taught in Scripture, that seems to stimulate earnest desire to serve God effectively. I do not wish to make unnecessary lines between myself and other Christians, but I do desire that the zeal and ardor for Christian service that so generally characterizes premillennialists be found within our churches.
2. What study I have made of writings on eschatology has led me to the opinion that attempts to get rid of the clear statements about the millennium at many places in the Old Testament, and to explain away its clear presentation at one place in the New Testament, generally result in carrying the idea of figurative language to such a point that the same methods could get rid of almost any biblical doctrine. If a person who opposes premillennialism professes to have spent time studying the passages involved, I would like to see his methods of dealing with other subjects thoroughly examined to determine whether

he has adopted principles of interpretation that are harmful, or whether, perhaps, he has merely accepted the conclusions of individuals in whom he has confidence.

3. It has been my sad experience to see many individuals express bitter hatred against premillennialism. I see no rational ground for this hatred. One man may believe that the world will continue much as it is until the end. A second may believe that it will gradually grow better and better until all humanity has become Christian. A third may believe that Jesus Christ will bring in the golden age by His return. Why should those who hold to one of the first two views hate those who believe that the Scripture teaches the third? I incline to think that this irrational hatred of premillennialism is a device of Satan to hold back the work of Christ. It would seem to me to be particularly important before ordaining a man who does not believe in premillennialism to endeavor to make sure that he has not been misled into such an attitude of unreasoning hatred.

I feel that these three areas should be carefully investigated. If a man is satisfactory on other points of doctrine, and if no serious objection is found in any of the three areas I have mentioned, then I would not be against ordaining him.

LETTER 82
1992

THE PREDICTION ABOUT TYRE

One of the strongest evidences of the divine authorship of the Bible is the fulfillment of prophecy. Many human beings have tried to predict the future. Sometimes such a prediction has been expressed in such a way that one could claim that it had been fulfilled, no matter what actually happened.

No great religion not based on the Bible has dared to rest its claim to be true on its ability to predict the distant future, but the Bible contains many predictions. Some have been fulfilled in remarkable ways that no mere human could have anticipated. Even a few clear instances should be convincing proof of divine inspiration. Two of the most remarkable are the prediction about Tyre in Phoenicia and the one about Memphis in Egypt. Each of these predicts a situation that did not exist until a century or more after the prediction was made. Each of them is paralleled by a different prediction about a related city. In each case the prediction was not fulfilled until one or more centuries had passed, and was fulfilled in such a way that no human being could possibly have guessed what would happen.

The prediction about Tyre is very interesting. Tyre and Sidon were great commercial cities at the dawn of history and continued to be of great importance for many centuries. Both were located on the Mediterranean coast a few miles north of the land of Israel.

There is a remarkable statement about Tyre in Ezekiel 26:12ff. It reads: "and they shall lay thy stones and thy timber and thy dust in the midst of the water ... And I will make thee like the top of a rock; thou shalt be a place to spread nets upon, thou shalt be built no more." What a strange prediction! Most ancient cities were captured and sacked at some time in the course of the centuries. A great many were later rebuilt. But how would it ever happen that people

would throw the stones and the timber and even the dust into a body of water? The Bible contains no such prediction about Sidon or any other city. Yet that is exactly what happened.

Not long after Ezekiel wrote, the great monarch Nebuchadnezzar attacked Tyre. The great siege, which lasted twelve years, is vividly described in Ezekiel 26.

Instead of rebuilding their city on its original site, the Tyrians decided to move to a safer location. There was an island near the city, about a half mile from shore. Perhaps there had been a small settlement of a group of warehouses on the island before the siege. Remembering the horrors of the siege, the people decided to rebuild their city out on the island, where it would be easier to resist an attack. There the new city flourished. Greek geographers referred to its former place on the mainland as "old Tyre." The ruins stood in disarray at the old site. Who would ever bother to take the stones and the timber and even the dust and cast them into the water? Two hundred years passed. The Babylonian empire had become part of the great Persian Empire, which had vainly tried to conquer distant Greece. Then the great Macedonian conqueror, Alexander the Great, attacked the Persian Empire, and seized one section after another. The great independent merchant city of Tyre sided with the Persians and its ships threatened the ships that supplied Alexander's armies. He could hardly go forward and leave this strong hostile force in his rear. So he decided to conquer the powerful island city. The Encyclopedia Britannica tells how "Alexander demolished old Tyre and with the debris built a mole 200 ft in breadth across the straits." They cast the stone and the timber and even the dust into the sea and eventually made it possible for Alexander's army to make their way out to the city and capture it. Only by the direct inspiration of the One who knows all history before it happens could Ezekiel have predicted this unique event two hundred years before it occurred.

This remarkable prophecy, along with the equally remarkable ones about the great cities of Egypt, demonstrated that the Bible contains truths that no human being could possibly have guessed if the Creator of the universe had not revealed them to him.

Dear Dr MacRae,

Thank you for your letter. I showed it to a professor of ancient history who is very hostile to Christianity. He said he would look into the matter. A few days later he told me that the best scholars believe that Alexander's people were mistaken when they thought they were throwing into the water the remains of an ancient city. He said there never was a city that could be called "Old Tyre." He said that Tyre had always been an island city, and that this is proved by the fact that at many places in the annals of the ancient Assyrian kings the name of Tyre is followed by the words: "in the midst of the waters".

Dear ...

Thank you for your letter. The reference to the annals of the Assyrian kings reminded me of my student days in Germany when I read many of these annals of Assyrian kings in the original cuneiform writing. I went to the library of the University of Pennsylvania and consulted an index of these annals. It gave references to a number of places where the Assyrian kings had mentioned Tyre, and I found that the name was frequently accompanied by the words: "in the midst of the waters."

Then I looked up the references to Sidon, the other great ancient maritime city. I found that when the Assyrian kings referred to Sidon they added the same words: "in the midst of the waters." Sidon is on the mainland, not an island. The fact that it is also many times accompanied by this phrase proves that the phrase does not indicate that it is situated on an island, but that it is a great maritime center, with its ships going to and fro through the waters, carrying goods from and to cities in all directions.

Whenever I hear of an alleged error in the Word of God, I say: "Wait a minute. Let's get all the relevant facts. When all the facts are looked at, the Bible always proves to be right."

Of course there are many occasions when we cannot get access to all the facts. In such a case it is wise to give the Bible the benefit of the doubt. I was glad that I was able to find the relevant facts in this case.

LETTER 83
1992

THE PREDICTION ABOUT MEMPHIS

Dear Dr MacRae,

Thank you for your letter, I was pleased to learn how God gave such clear evidence of His power and wisdom through enabling His prophet to tell what would happen to Tyre, two hundred years ahead of time. It was also very interesting to see how God caused evidence to be preserved in distant Assyria that would refute the efforts of sinful men to deny this evidence.

You referred to "the even more striking evidence from Memphis in Egypt". Why is it more striking? Please tell me what happened there.

Dear ...

The reason the evidence from Memphis is even more striking than that from Tyre is that while the prophecy about Tyre was fulfilled two hundred years after it was given, nearly a thousand years passed before the one about Memphis was fulfilled, and this occurred in a way that no one could possibly have foreseen.

In Ezek 29 and 30 the prophet told of God's future judgments against Egypt. In these chapters he spoke particularly about the two leading cities of Egypt -- Memphis and Thebes. Thebes, in southern Egypt, was its capital during many centuries. Memphis, several hundred miles north of Thebes, was equally prominent.

There are many verses in these two chapters of Ezekiel that predict disasters for each of those great cities. (In seven places the Hebrew Bible and KJV refer to Memphis as "Noph"; in five places they refer to Thebes as "No".) Several of these verses speak of future judgments against these cities in terms of general destruction, such as most ancient cities experience in the course of the centuries. Thus we read that God will cut off the multitude

of Thebes in Jer. 46:25 and Ezek. 30:15; and that Thebes will be rent asunder and Memphis will have distresses daily (Ezek. 30:16). But there is one prediction about Memphis (Noph) that has no counterpart in the predictions about Thebes -- "Thus saith the Lord GOD: I will also destroy the idols, and I will cause their images to cease from Memphis" (Ezek. 30:13).

A thousand years after the book of Ezekiel was written Thebes and Memphis still contained hundreds of idols and images of all sorts. Each of them had been the capital city of many Pharaohs. Even today the site of ancient Thebes is one of the greatest outdoor museums in the world. When I stood in front of one of the dozens of huge statues that line a long "procession street" in Thebes, my head barely reached its knees. There are still idols to be seen in the many temples that have survived. The city was "rent asunder" on more than one occasion, but hundreds of statues and dozens of idols are still in place. (It is now customary to call the place Luxor, and to speak of its greatest temple as "the temple of Karnak".) Ezekiel did not say that the images and idols of Thebes would disappear. That part of the prediction applied only to Memphis.

A thousand years after Ezekiel wrote this prophecy both cities were filled with images and idols. Today a visitor to the place in northern Egypt once occupied by Memphis sees little more than a trace of the thousands of images and idols that were there for so many centuries. Out of all of them, nothing remained when I visited Egypt in 1929 but one small sphinx and a gigantic figure of the Pharaoh named Rameses II, broken into three parts and lying on its back.

What made the enormous difference in the fate of the two great capitals of ancient Egypt? More than a thousand years after Ezekiel made his prophecy, Mohammed began a movement in Arabia that developed into a great military force and conquered most of the nations in that part of the world.

There is one feature with which we can agree -- its hatred of idolatry. In A.D. 640 the Mohammedans conquered Egypt and desired to build a new capital where idolatry would never have existed. So they built a new city called Fostat, a few miles north of Memphis. The great palaces and temples of Memphis, with their many images and idols, were a great source for building

material, which could easily be floated down the river on barges. Three centuries later another Mohammedan group, the Fatimite Caliphs made a new conquest of Egypt and decided to replace Fostat by building a different city, a few miles further north. Eventually this new city, Cairo, would become the largest city in Africa, and again it was easy to float excellent stone materials downriver, at first from the ruins of Fostat and then from what still remained of ancient Memphis. Eventually nothing remained of this great city of the Pharaohs except the few fragments already mentioned.

No mere human being could have guessed the great difference in the fate of the two great Egyptian capital cities. God enabled His prophet to reveal facts that no human being could have guessed.

God has given us a few such amazing proofs of His power to enable his prophets to reveal truths about the future. His purpose is not to satisfy curiosity but to convince us that the Bible is an absolutely dependable source of truth. We should let its teachings guide every aspect of our lives.

We must not let our excitement about the fascinating bits of dependable knowledge about the future that the prophets have given cause us to misinterpret the purpose of prophecy. Information about future events is a rather small part of the message of the prophets. Prophecy is not primarily "foretelling", but "forthtelling".

A GLORIOUS FUTURE

A Premillennialist Looks at the Millennial Kingdom of Christ
and Examines Postmillennial and Amillennial Objections

"The Kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ" (Rev 11:15).

Eighty years ago no one could have foreseen that this would be a century of war and violence. Many declared that the establishment of the Hague Tribunal and the general desire of the nations for peace would produce a century of freedom from the turmoil that had characterized the previous century. Yet this has proved to be the bloodiest century in all history. Probably more men have been killed by violence in this century than in all the previous history of the world. Two world wars have been fought on a scale never before equaled. Acts of terrorism or senseless murder have frequently occurred. Advance in technology and increase in violence have accompanied one another.

Early in this century many expected "the evangelization of the world in this generation." Yet today there are large areas of the world where it is illegal for a parent even to speak about God to his child. In recent years many Christians have suffered imprisonment and torture for their faith. Naturally all of us wonder what is ahead.

Human guesses about the future have rarely worked out. There is only one way to know about any aspect of the future, and that is to see what the inerrant Word of God reveals concerning it.

We must be particularly careful not to read our own ideas into the Bible. It is all too easy to adopt an idea after brief consideration of a few verses and then twist everything else into agreement with it. This error should be scrupulously avoided. We should stand on whatever the Bible clearly reveals, and make sure that we do not disregard any part of God's revelation.

If God were to give us a detailed account of everything that He has done or plans to do, it would require millions of books. John said that he supposed if everything Christ did during His earthly life were to be described, the world could not contain all the books that would be required (John 21:25). How much more is this true of the many details of God's plans for the future? Where we do not understand His will we should reserve judgment and humbly wait for further light.

THREE IMPORTANT PASSAGES

Christians believe that the entire Bible is God's revelation to His people, and that we should emphasize whatever it emphasizes. When we find the same vision given to two different prophets, and described by them in almost identical language, we know that God desires us to pay special heed to the truth that it contains. In this respect the similarity of Micah 4:1-4 and Isaiah 2:1-4 is almost unique in the Old Testament. Further evidence of the importance of this vision is seen in the fact that Micah thought it necessary to add the words "*for the mouth of the LORD of hosts hath spoken it;*" and that Isaiah, though he had already given a title to his book at the beginning of Chapter 1, found it desirable to repeat part of that title as an introduction to this passage (Isaiah 2:1), thus stressing the fact that he himself had received this vision from God.

The prediction contained in this vision that God thought so important that He gave it to two different prophets, is further developed and emphasized in Isaiah 11:1-9.

These three passages describe a glorious future situation. Before examining them in detail we should note that the phrase "*kingdom of God*" can be used in three different senses. First, there is the general idea of a kingdom that includes everything God has made. The very breath that a man draws when he curses God is drawn only because God permits it. In this sense the kingdom of God includes everything in the universe.

In the second sense, which is much more common in Scripture, the term refers to the kingship of God over those human beings who recognize His sovereignty. Our Lord told the Pharisees that the kingdom of God was among them. Right in their very midst were Jesus Christ and His disciples, who were subject to Him,

acknowledging His sovereignty. In this sense we have the kingdom of God in the world today. Wherever there are individuals who desire to obey God's will we have, in a very real sense, the kingdom of God.

The third sense is but an extension of the second. The coming of the kingdom of God on earth means the beginning of that time when every individual on earth acknowledges his subjection to the law of God. Only then can we say that the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord. The kingdom in this third sense is the subject of our present discussion. It is generally called "the millennial kingdom of Christ".

The term "millennium" is derived from the Latin for "thousand years" -- a phrase that occurs six times in Revelation 20:2-7. It is often said that belief in the coming of such a kingdom rests only on the interpretation of that one passage. Nothing could be further from the truth. Many other Bible passages declare that this earth is to enjoy a long period of universal peace and justice.

THE CERTAINTY OF THE KINGDOM

The promised kingdom is not a mere hope but a definite certainty. The second Psalm emphasizes this fact. The kings of the earth are pictured as declaring their determination to break asunder the bands of the Lord, and to refuse to obey Him. In answer He declares the decree: "*The Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.*" The Psalm proclaims that Our Lord will some day reign in undisputed sovereignty over the nations of the earth.

In the 110th Psalm we find words which the New Testament writers apply definitely to Christ: "*The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.*" The declaration is here given that God will make all the nations of the earth subject to our Lord Jesus Christ.

The picture in Isaiah 11 and in Micah 4 are not given as mere hopes that something may occur, but as definite promises of Almighty God. Micah emphasizes this fact. To show the absolute

certainty that this prediction will be fulfilled, he adds at the end of verse four: "*for the mouth of the Lord of hosts hath spoken it.*" Here is no mere hope of the writer, but a declaration of that which God has promised. We shall now look at some of the characteristics of this predicted kingdom.

AN EARTHLY KINGDOM

The Bible makes it clear that the kingdom promised in Micah 3:12-4:4, Isaiah 2:1-4, and Isaiah 11:1-9 is not a picture of heaven, but of something that will occur on this earth.

Micah 3:12 speaks of the desolation that will come upon Jerusalem. "*Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as high places of the forest.*" The wonderful prediction of future glory that begins in the next two verses uses identical terms in speaking of what is coming. The very places that would then be plowed as a field would eventually be exalted.

Micah 4:3 and Isaiah 2:4 include the words "*they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks.*" Neither swords nor pruninghooks are natural in a picture of heaven. The prophecy is definitely one of a future situation on this earth.

Isaiah 11:9 says that "*the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.*" If space permitted, evidence might be heaped up from passage after passage in the Old Testament to show that the kingdom that is promised to the people of God is to be established on this earth.

A TIME OF EXTERNAL PEACE AND SAFETY

The Old Testament makes it clear that the promised kingdom is to be a time of external peace and safety. Micah 4, Isaiah 11, and many other passages plainly indicate that it is not merely something in the subjective sphere. We read in Micah 4:4 that "*they shall sit every man under his vine and under fig tree; and none shall make them afraid.*" The promise is not that a man shall be enabled to go through great calamity with a peaceful heart. That promise God indeed gives to His people for times of tribulation, but this promise is entirely different. It describes a

time when a man need not sit in a house with strong walls and with a lock on the door, in order to be safe. Instead he may sit outside under his vine and under his fig tree with nothing to protect him, or there shall be none to make him afraid. It is to be a time when war and brigandage need no longer be feared.

This thought is brought out very clearly in Isaiah 11:6-9. Animals that are now apt to kill one another will in that day live together in perfect peace. Even if we were to think of the animals as figures for people, the fact would remain that the description is one of an external condition -- a time when cruelty and hatred shall have been removed from the world, so that one can live in complete safety.

The 8th verse of Isaiah 11 is very interesting in this connection: "*The sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den.*" This is not a promise that the child shall not fear the asp, but that the asp shall not harm the child. When I was in New Mexico a man told me of an incident that occurred in his little house in the wilderness. He heard a strange sound coming from the front room. Something seemed to hit something else, and then his little child laughed with glee. Again he heard the sound of hitting, and then of the child laughing delightedly. After this had been repeated a few times, he glanced into the room to see what gave the child so much pleasure. He found that the child would hit his hand against the screen door. The door would fly partly open. A large rattlesnake outside the door would jump at the door. The door would shut with a bang. The child would again hit the screen with his hand and it would fly open a few inches, to the irritation of the snake. The child had no fear whatever of the beautiful snake which was leaping at it. Only the thin screen protected the child from the venom of the serpent. The father's blood nearly froze with fear that the screen might break and let the snake harm the child. There was no fear in the heart of the child, but there was tremendous danger in the external situation. It is not a situation like this that Isaiah describes. He predicts a time when a parent need not fear if his innocent child is playing with a serpent. There shall be nothing in this earth to hurt or destroy, "*for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.*"

NOT FULFILLED IN CHARACTER OF GOSPEL

Certainly the promises given in these and many similar passages do not refer to this present age. I am amazed to see in a commentary the statement that these prophecies are fulfilled in the character of the Gospel. Truly the Gospel is peaceful in its character. But the character of the Gospel is not the fulfillment of these glorious prophecies of a time of external peace and safety. In the fourth and fifth centuries of the Christian era, when the Roman peace was triumphant almost everywhere and war was temporarily almost unknown, there were writers who in their enthusiasm tried to show that these prophecies were already then fulfilled through the peace that was established in the earth. But the invasions of the barbarians from the north and the outworking of the decadence that was so widespread in the luxurious life of the later Roman empire, soon put an end to all such hopes. The Middle Ages came, with almost universal war and danger, upheaval and turmoil. This prophecy certainly was not then fulfilled. Then the time came in our modern days when arbitration commissions were set up and nations made treaties to settle disagreements by peaceful measures. In 1914 the statement was made by many that a great war would never come again. Arbitration was so firmly established that the nations would never again have a great war. Even as people were talking thus, World War I broke out -- the most universal and destructive war that the world had seen up to that time. No, this prediction has not yet been fulfilled. But God has spoken. We can know that it will come to pass, and that God will establish that time of external peace and safety when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

A UNIVERSAL KINGDOM

We shall glance at some of the evidence for a third feature of this kingdom. It is to be a universal kingdom. The verse that I have just cited brings this out very clearly. "*As the waters cover the sea*" -- there is not a square inch at the bottom of the ocean that does not have water above it. The entire sea is covered with water; and the entire earth, without exception, "*shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord.*" Could the universality of the promised kingdom be made clearer? Psalms 2 and 110 stress this aspect.

God will give Christ the nations for His inheritance. Even the uttermost parts of the earth are to be His possession. His enemies are all to be made His footstool. There is to be nothing left that will lift up its head against His control. This thought of the completeness of His victory over this earth is found in the New Testament as well. All the nations of this world are to become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ. In 1 Corinthians 15:25 this note of universality is especially stressed: "*For He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under his feet.*" Everything shall be subject to Him. All rule and all authority and all power shall be subject to our Lord.

AN INDESTRUCTIBLE KINGDOM

The fact that this kingdom can never be destroyed could be made clear by the passage already quoted. All enemies are to be put under the Lord's feet.

The prophecies in Daniel bring out this feature very clearly. In Daniel 2 and 7 successive human governments are symbolized in two ways -- under the picture of a great statue and under the picture of several great beasts. In chapter 2 the statue is completely destroyed and its place taken by a new regime that covers the whole earth. This new regime will never be destroyed nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever (Daniel 2:44).

In Daniel 7:14 the assertion is made that the new dominion that follows all wicked human governments is to be "*an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.*"

This application of the term "millennium" to this kingdom is derived from Revelations 20:2-7, where the term thousand years is used six times. John foresaw a great uprising at the end of the thousand years that would attempt to destroy this kingdom but would utterly fail. The kingdom is indestructible. This parallels the statement in 1 Corinthians 15:24 that after He has reigned He will deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father. We do not know just what sort of change in conditions will occur at that time, but the kingdom will certainly not end. It is indestructible.

REMOVAL OF THE CURSE

God did not create this world as a place where pain and suffering would be a normal fact of life. We are told in Genesis 3 that as a result of man's sin God placed a curse upon nature. The earth would bring forth thorns and thistles. There was to be enmity between a part of the animal creation and humanity.

In every part of nature signs of this curse are visible. Animals live upon other animals. Cruelty and suffering are widespread in the animal creation. The infirmity of the human body, with its weakness and its suffering, is part of this curse.

Paul tells us in Romans 8:18-23 that the day is coming when this curse will be lifted. He says, "*For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.*" (v.22) In verse 21 he declares that "*the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.*" As we have already seen, the essential idea of the picture in Isaiah 11:6-9 is not peace in the heart but freedom from external danger. If taken literally the passage says that the animals will no longer be a threat to one another or to human beings. Paul's statements suggest very strongly that such a change will be accomplished and the earth restored to Edenic conditions.

THE TIME OF THE KINGDOM'S ESTABLISHMENT

Having noticed the strong evidence in the Old Testament that this earth is to experience a long period of complete peace and justice, we now ask two questions: 1. how is this to be brought about? 2. when is it to come? Although various Old Testament passages suggest the answer to these questions, there is comparatively little in the Old Testament that deals directly with them.

The Bible nowhere promises that the period of universal peace and justice is to be produced by the preaching of the Gospel.

Jesus did not say to His disciples: "You are to conquer the world for Christ; you are to establish the kingdom by your preaching." He said, "*You are to be witnesses unto Me.*" He told them that there would be wars and rumors of wars before the present age would end (Matthew 24:6).

Many passages in the Old Testament predicted the coming of

the great Son of David who would rule the nations with justice and maintain universal peace. Other passages predicted the coming of One who would be humiliated and would give His life a ransom for many. Before the power of sin could be broken, redemption was necessary. The New Testament principally deals with this latter aspect. It tells of the coming of the matchless Son of God, of His victory over the powers of evil, and of His death to expiate the sin of all who would believe in Him. Yet the New Testament also looks beyond the great work of redemption to the triumphant return of the King. In his very first epistle Paul said that the Thessalonian believers had turned to God from idols "to serve the living and true God; and to wait for his Son from heaven" (1 Thessalonians 1:9-10). Paul continued throughout his life to look forward to his Lord's return to earth, referring to it in one of the last epistles he wrote (cf. 2 Timothy 4:1,8). Other New Testament writers also looked forward to it. The expectation of Christ's return to this earth is frequently mentioned in New Testament books and was specifically taught on various occasions by Christ himself.

At least a dozen verses in the New Testament declare that no human being can predict the time when Jesus Christ will return. This declaration is often connected with an exhortation to watch and be ready for His coming. Whether the Master of the house comes in the evening, or at midnight, or in the morning, it is important that He find us serving Him faithfully (Mark 13:35-37). Although Jesus told the disciples that they were not to be misled by false rumors that He had already returned, and that there would first be wars and rumors of wars (Matthew 24:6), He declared that they should live in constant anticipation of this event (Luke 12:35-40). To take these many exhortations to be ready for His coming as referring to something that cannot occur until long after a predicted period of universal peace and justice, would seem to put the event so far off into the future as to make the exhortations quite meaningless. Thus it would be most logical to think that the return of Christ would come before the period of universal peace rather than afterwards.

WERE THE DISCIPLES COMPLETELY MISTAKEN?

The disciples were familiar with the Old Testament. When Jesus had taught them "the things of the kingdom of God" for

forty days after His resurrection (Acts 1:3), they asked a very natural question: "*Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom of Israel?*" The natural interpretation of these words would be that they wanted to know whether the resurrected Lord was now going to introduce the long period of justice and peace that had been promised. Jesus answered, "*It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you;: and ye shall be witnesses unto me ... unto the uttermost part of the earth*" (Acts 1:7-8).

Jesus did not say that the disciples were mistaken in their expectation. He did not say that the promised kingdom would consist simply of peace in the hearts of believers in the midst of a wicked world. He did not say that their witnessing would be the means of establishing the promised time of universal peace and justice. He merely said that it was not for them to know the times or the seasons. Very soon after he made these statements he ascended into heaven and the disciples were assured that "*this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.*" (Acts 1:11)

There is much evidence that during the first few centuries after Christ's ascension, Christians looked with longing and expectation for the return of Christ and the universal establishment of His kingdom. It was only after the persecutions ceased and the Roman empire became nominally Christian, that some began to say that the kingdom of peace and justice had already arrived.

WHAT ABOUT REVELATION 20?

It is the writer's belief that the fact that a long period of universal peace and justice is to be introduced by Christ at the time of His return could be proved without the necessity of drawing any evidence from Revelation 20 (the chapter where the term "thousand years" is introduced), but that this chapter gives additional information and clearly shows the relation to each other of two great elements of Christian hope -- the return of the King and the establishment of the universal kingdom. Since so much argument has centered around this chapter, it is important that we examine it carefully.

There is no need here to investigate all the details of the Book

of Revelation, though we should note that it is the only book of the Bible that includes a special blessing for those who read it (Revelations 1:3) and the only one that includes a very solemn warning against adding anything to it or removing any part of it (Revelations 22:18-19).

It is sometimes asserted that Revelation is entirely a book of symbols, and that therefore nothing in it should be taken as literal. Such an approach would allow every interpreter to find anything he desires in the book and to exclude from it any idea that does not suit him. We must beware of coming under the condemnation of Revelations 22:18-19.

It should readily be admitted that the book contains symbols and that some of these are difficult to understand at this point in history, but that is no reason to ignore statements that are not symbolical to explain away symbols whose meaning is clear from the context or from other parts of Scripture.

THE COMING OF CHRIST

The latter part of Revelation 19 contains a symbol that should be quite clear. It describes the coming of a man on a white horse, with an inscription on his robe bearing the words "*KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.*" He leads his forces into a great battle in which the opposing force is utterly destroyed and all the fowls are filled with their flesh. No Christian could reasonably doubt that this is a symbolic picture of Christ's coming to earth. It must be interpreted in one of two ways. Either it points to Christ's first advent and indicates that the preaching of the Gospel will be completely victorious in bringing to an end all the forces of evil, or it is a symbolic picture of His future return to earth and depicts a literal destruction of evil forces.

It seems to the present writer that the first of these interpretations is decisively ruled out by a figure that is used twice in the passage, that of the destruction being wrought through the agency of a sword that comes out of His mouth (vv. 15 and 21). In 2 Thessalonians 2:8 Paul gives us the inspired interpretation: "*And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.*" Even though Paul's words do not fully explain the meaning of the figure, they have two important

consequences: 1. they show that when Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, he regarded the figure as pointing to something that is still future; 2. they obviously give the inspired interpretation of Isaiah 11:4 and show that Paul considered the glorious period of universal freedom from external danger described in Isaiah 11:6-9 to be a portrayal of the situation that would follow Christ's second advent. Thus John's use of this same figure in Revelation 19 would seem to provide conclusive proof that the event described there is not the first advent of Christ but His return.

IS THERE A CHRONOLOGICAL SEQUENCE?

The next question to be resolved is whether Revelation 20 describes events that follow the return of Christ depicted in the last half of Revelation 19, or whether it should be assumed that a new section of the book begins with Revelation 20. This is a valid question and its answer should not be assumed without definite proof.

Such proof is not hard to find. Revelations 19:20 says that "*the beast*" and "*the false prophet*" were cast into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. Revelations 20:10 says that after the thousand years "*the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are.*" Thus it is made clear that the events of Revelation 20 follow those of Revelation 19.

The picture of the millennial kingdom in Revelation 20 fits that derived from the Old Testament passages. Many attempts have been made to explain away its obvious meaning. These various attempts have little in common with one another. Two of them have already been examined -- the idea that Revelation 19 pictures the first advent rather than the second; and the suggestion that Revelation 20 begins a new section, rather than following in chronological order.

In addition to reemphasizing what other parts of the Bible have revealed about the millennial kingdom, Revelation 20 adds two important facts: the binding of Satan for a thousand years and the resurrection of the righteous dead at the beginning of this period. Each of these has been the object of attacks upon the whole idea of a millennial kingdom.

THE BINDING OF SATAN

Revelations 20:2-3 says that Satan was bound for a thousand years "*that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled. and after that he must be loosed a little season.*" When he is loosed he deceives a great number of people and raises an insurrection, but fire from heaven devours those involved in the insurrection and Satan is cast into the lake of fire. The last attempt to destroy the kingdom of Christ fails. Though there may be a change in the administration of the millennial kingdom at this time, the kingdom itself will last forever. (Interpreters differ as to whether Revelation 21 described a renewed and cleansed earth, or one that is entirely new.)

We shall mention three of the various attempts to interpret this binding of Satan as not referring to an event that will follow the return of Christ.

One such view is that of the great 19th century Lutheran scholar, E. W. Hengstenberg, who considered the binding of Satan to represent the conversion of the Germans to Christianity at about A.D. 800, and suggested that events in his own day might be evidence that Satan had then been "*loosed for a little season.*" A second view sometimes advanced is that the thousand years represents the condition of Christians between death and resurrection, and the binding of Satan his inability to deceive them during that time. A third view is that the binding of Satan represents Christ's victory at Calvary, that the thousand years represents the greater part of the time between Calvary and the return of Christ, and that the "*little season*" will be a short time just before Christ's return during which Satan will again be loosed.

The first two of these three views hardly need refutation. The third should be examined. First, it should be noted that he is to be bound so that he can no longer deceive the nations. The history of wicked and ungodly nations during these two thousand years has been too full of wickedness to allow the idea that Satan was bound. More important, we find that the New Testament frequently warns Christians to beware of Satan's clever schemes and also of his fiery darts (e.g. 1 Peter 5:8, Ephesians 6:11, 16). If Satan were already bound, such exhortations would be quite unnecessary.

Actually, there is no reasonable way to interpret the prediction of Satan's binding except in connection with the millennial kingdom of Christ.

THE FIRST RESURRECTION

The other new fact revealed in Revelation 20 is the resurrection of the righteous dead at the beginning of the thousand years. Revelation 20 says that at the beginning of the thousand years the righteous dead were brought to life, "*but the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.*"

A number of writers insist that what is here called "*the first resurrection*" refers to the new birth of Christians. Dean Henry Aiford, who is widely considered one of the outstanding commentators on the Greek New Testament, strongly rejects this idea, saying:

"I cannot consent to distort words from their plain sense and chronological place in the prophecy, on account of any considerations of difficulty, or any risk of abuse which the doctrine of the millennium may bring with it. Those who lived next to the Apostles, and the whole Church for 300 years, understood them in the plain literal sense: and it is a strange sight in these days to see expositors who are among the first in reverence of antiquity, complacently casting aside the most cogent instance of consensus which primitive antiquity presents. As regards the text itself, no legitimate treatment of it will extort what is known as the spiritual interpretation now in fashion. If, in a passage where two resurrections are mentioned, where certain *psuchai ezesan* at the first, and the rest of the *nekroi ezesan* only at the end of a specified period after that first, -- if in such a passage the first resurrection may be understood to mean spiritual rising with Christ, while the second means literal rising from the grave; -- then there is an end of all significance in language, and Scripture is wiped out as a definite testimony to any thing. If the first resurrection is spiritual, then so is the second, which I suppose none will be hardy enough to maintain; but if the second is literal, then so is the first, which in common with the whole primitive church and many of the best modern expositors, I do maintain, and receive as an article of faith and hope."

Opposition to the idea of the saved and the lost being raised at different times results from a widespread idea that God will call every individual before Him for judgment at one specific time. Yet this popular idea contradicts the teaching of John 3:18, "*He that believeth on him is not condemned; he that believeth not is condemned already.*" The only way one could prove that all must be judged at the same time or must be raised to life at the same time, would be to assume, on the basis of questionable interpretation of a very few verses, that "*judgment day*," "*the last day*," or "*the end of time*" are technical terms for a particular time. Actually such terms are used in various ways.

It is a rather common error among Bible students to take common terms as always being technical expressions for a precise idea. The Bible was written by many different people at different times, and the precise usage of a word often has to be determined from its use by the particular author. Thus if one should take the word "faith" as having the same identical meaning both in what Paul said and in what James said, he would think they contradicted one another. When we examine the context and see how each is using the word, we find that there is really no contradiction.

It is neither reasonable nor scholarly to assume without clear evidence that all judgment must occur at the same time or that all resurrections must be at the same time. One may properly attempt to prove such ideas from Scripture, but it is quite wrong to assume them without proof. The Old Testament often speaks of the coming of the Lord, but does not indicate that there is to be more than one coming. It is only after Christ came that it became clear that some Old Testament predictions refer to His first coming and some to His second coming. Between these two there is a period of at least 1900 years that is not indicated in the Old Testament.

The present writer considers the two new facts added in Revelation 20 as important additions to our knowledge of the future. Yet I do not consider that an interpretation of Revelation 20 which would explain them away would disprove premillennialism, for I find its principal features to be clearly taught elsewhere in the Bible.

POSTMILLENNIALISM AND AMILLENNIALISM

I have often been puzzled by hearing men say that they knew they were against premillennialism but did not know whether they held the postmillennial view or the amillennial view. Actually these two are at opposite extremes. The postmillennial view holds that there will be a millennium on this earth. The amillennialist denies it. The amillennialist holds that the coming of Christ will be at an unexpected time and might be rather soon. The postmillennialist holds that there must be a long period of universal acceptance of the Gospel before the Lord returns.

Thus postmillennialism and amillennialism are at opposite extremes, with premillennialism halfway between. It accepts the biblical teaching of a period of universal peace and justice on this earth; and also the New Testament teaching that the Lord will come at a time that no one knows, and that we should always be looking forward to His coming with anticipation and should be prepared for it whenever it might come.

Essentially the term amillennialism represents not a view but a denial. It means "no millennium." Those who apply this term to themselves hold a great variety of views. There are even a few who call themselves amillennialists who, though rejecting the literal interpretation of Revelation 20, recognize the essential features of the eschatological teaching of other parts of Scripture, and say that their view differs from premillennialism in that they believe the earthly kingdom will not end after a thousand years. Actually premillennialism does not hold that the kingdom ends after a thousand years -- simply that it proves indestructible when the final assault fails, and that there is some kind of change of administration at that time.

Some postmillennialists object to premillennialism on the ground that we should not think the Holy Spirit so weak as to be unable to convert the world. This objection denies the sovereignty of God. He can do what He chooses, but we have no right to assume that it is His will that the entire world be converted by the preaching of the Gospel unless we find this definitely taught in Scripture.

I have often heard premillennialism attacked with the accusation that it would require that people in resurrection bodies and others in natural bodies be on earth at the same time. Regardless of whether premillennialism requires such a coexistence or not,

the argument is not valid. Christ, in His resurrection body, spent forty days with His disciples in their natural bodies. No one can put limits on what God may choose to do. The only valid arguments are those based on clear scriptural teaching.

SPIRITUALIZATION

Most of those who deny premillennialism find it necessary to resort to so-called "spiritualization." This is simply a term for carrying the use of figures to an extreme, making all Old Testament references to external peace and safety become references to peace in the heart. It is true, of course, that the Bible, like all literature, contains figures of speech; but when the use of figures of speech is carried to an extreme, it causes language to lose all meaning.

Some apply this method only in a few chapters. Others apply it widely. It is not a matter of merely taking figurative language as figurative. Most writings contain figurative expressions. It is a matter of taking the entire framework of a passage figuratively, and passing beyond the bounds of any sane use of figures. A pinch of salt in a dish of soup is good. If one pours a quart of salt into a bucket of soup, the result is disagreeable and dangerous to health. If a man rejects premillennialism, let me plead with him to restrict his spiritualization to a few passages. One who applies it widely may easily approach the attitude of those who consider the bodily resurrection of Christ as merely "an expression of the permanence of personality."

IN CONCLUSION

Many Christians have found the teaching of Scripture about the premillennial return of Christ to establish His kingdom of universal righteousness on earth to be a constant inspiration to Christian service and godly Christian living. There seems to be something in this doctrine that results in increased purity of life and increased zeal or service. Most of the great evangelists of recent years have been strongly moved by this great hope. It has occupied a prominent place in the thoughts of most of the great missionary leaders of recent years. If one takes the whole Bible as God's Word, rather than only certain parts, I believe that it teaches the premillennial view of future events. God wishes us to

regard His entire Word as precious, and not explain away any part of it.

Yet we must remember that what is most important is not how God will work things out in the future, but what He desires for our lives today. It is possible to have eternal life right now. "*He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.*" (John 3:36) May every reader give thought to the most important questions of all: Have you repented of your sin and disobedience to God? Have you received Jesus Christ into your life and asked Him to enable you, by His strength, to live a life of peace and joy? I would like every reader to accept the plain teachings of God's Word about His plan for the earth; but even more, I hope and pray that each reader may make sure that he can say with certainty, "Jesus Christ is my Savior; He died for me."

LETTER 85
1973

AMERICAN SCHOOLS

There have been tremendous changes in the American schools in the last 50 years. I see two outstanding causes for this. One is that there has been a considerable number of college professors with an evangelistic background who were led by specious arguments to give up faith in the Bible and its teaching. Some of these men had a tremendous emotional drive to make their lives count for something good, and this drive came from their evangelical background. No longer believing in Christian teachings, it was shifted into the idea of establishing a kingdom of God on earth and destroying all that seemed imperfect in the present system.

There were a few such men of very considerable ability in our

colleges and theological seminaries 60 years ago, and the number subsequently increased. Over the years they have exerted a great influence.

Perhaps an even greater influence came from men who had no practical ability but who possessed keen minds for academic subjects, along with an ability to convince students of their ideas.

Such teachers saw men whom they considered intellectually inferior to themselves heading corporations and making big salaries, while they themselves were scarcely recognized. They were able to influence impressionable young students, and affected enough men of intellect to cause a constant accretion to their number, during the last 50 years. As a result, today the universities, the secular colleges, most of the religious colleges, and, especially the teachers' colleges, have in the departments of English, of Sociology, and of related subjects teachers who brainwash their students into the idea that the American system is utterly bad, and thus make them ready to give their support to almost any suggestion as to ways to completely change it. In recent years this influence has reached down into the high schools and even into the grammar schools. When I was a boy Americans loved to march on Independence Day and to extol the virtues of the founders of our country. Today patriotism has largely disappeared, and in my opinion, the leading cause is the condition of the educational system.

During the last 50 years businessmen have proudly given great sums to education, but have taken practically no time to see what kind of education was being given and what its effect would be upon the American system. Today the bulk of our educated class has been indoctrinated with the idea that corporations are wicked, businessmen are bad, and it is wrong for a government to do anything to help "a soul-less corporation" when the same money could be given to the poor, and used to help minority groups.

Actually the greatest help that can be given to the poor and to minority groups is to make the nation strong and to enable the corporations to continue to make the good things of life available to all our people in far greater profusion and at far less cost than could possibly have been done under any other system.

LETTER 86
1982

THE STUDY OF LITERATURE

Dear Dr MacRae,

I am writing to you at the suggestion of my friends at ... Church who feel that you are in a better position than they to offer advice relating to my academic career at Cornell. As a graduate student in English I am one of the few representatives of the Humanities at the church, which tends, as you probably know, to attract scientists in general and engineers in particular. As a result, no one there shares my academic experiences, or feels qualified to help me with my dilemma.

It might be helpful for you to know a little of my background. I came to Cornell last fall with the intention of working for a Ph.D. in English primarily because I enjoyed the study of literature as an end in itself. I had no specific career goals, but my values and priorities were determined by a humanistic, pluralistic view of the world. To me, literature, as the collective expression of intellectual thought throughout the ages, was the embodiment of all that is most enduring and valuable in man's life. I looked upon it as the framework of meaning within which I evaluated the world and formulated my philosophy of life. It seemed that one could do nothing nobler or more worthwhile than devote one's life to developing a greater knowledge of, and expertise in, the great writings of the world.

Nearly three months ago, however, as the culminating point of a long, slow religious conversion, I began attending ... Church. My brother has been a Christian for more than two years ... so I had ample exposure to the truth of Christianity. As he grew in his knowledge he became a more effective witness to me. Finally, the Lord started to change my heart while I was home during my Christmas vacation, as I found myself vaguely dissatisfied with my life, despite the fact that I had just spent a semester doing what I thought I loved best and wanted to spend the rest of my life pursuing. After more discussions with my brother and more

reading, I returned to Ithaca in January determined at least to find a church and resolve my indecision, regardless of where it led me, to faith or unbelief. As that unintentional pun indicates, I was led to ... Church where, on January 31, I repented of my sins and asked Christ to enter my heart as my personal Savior.

Since becoming a Christian involved such a sweeping change in my perspective on the world, causing such a breach with my old humanistic philosophy and all that I attached to it, my first inclination was to leave school and pursue my education in a Christian setting. I felt that my brains were being prostituted by forcing myself to imbibe the kind of pluralistic philosophy which, implicitly or explicitly, is foisted upon me every time I read and discuss a text. When I discussed this with someone at the church, however, I was encouraged to stay for the doctorate, since there are so few Christians in that field. I have, for the time being, decided to remain as I was, but I cannot do that without a clear sense of how my studies can be dedicated to the Lord and how I can plan them in such a way that I can get the most out of them in my future Christian service. Although Pastor E. and I have not had a chance to discuss this at length, a brief conversation with him indicated to me that he sees my primary goal as cultivating an ability to write. At this point in my career, however, I can either write or I can't; the purpose of studying English at this level (as you well know) is to develop a deeper and broader knowledge of the literature, to acquire critical skills and methodologies, and to prepare for a teaching career. How, within the framework of that program, can I approach my work as a Christian?

I am still not convinced that I'm not trying to fit a round peg into a square hole, but if a Christian can use his English Ph.D. for the Lord (and that is the only condition under which I still want to work for one), I need to know the best way to do that. Fortunately, the program at Cornell is fairly flexible, as I'm responsible for putting together a committee of three faculty members, one to represent my major area of concentration, the other two the minor. There are only three required courses and I have taken them all this year. By the end of my third semester I have to take a Qualifying Exam ("Q") based on a broad sweep of all literature, but stressing areas not covered by my majors and minors; by the end of my third year I have to take the Admission-to-Candidacy Exam ("A"), a fairly rigorous set of written exams dealing with

my major and minor fields. After that I'm through with course work and ready to start my dissertation.

Right now my tentative major is Prose Fiction and my minor is Nineteenth Century. Although these reflect my pre-Christian interests, a case can be made for not changing. The major gives me a synchronic method of dealing with literature, as it covers the late sixteenth through the twentieth centuries; it also involves gaining knowledge in literary criticism in general and novel criticism in particular.... In many respects, the modern mind is just a slightly further development of the Victorian mind (Walter Houghton's *The Victorian Frame of Mind* covers this).

There are certain areas for which my preparation so far is so inadequate that the time expenditure involved in becoming competent in them would probably not be outweighed by the knowledge gained. Such is the case with Medieval Studies and, perhaps, the Renaissance. It is sobering for me to realize that those are two time periods when literature implicitly and explicitly Christian was being written; but that's just the problem: I don't know if I should be learning about Christian literature (how could that help me be a better apologist) or simply developing an approach to literature. If the latter, is there still a period or area which would be more helpful for the apologetics battle than an other? It is only with a strong sense of purpose and conviction that what I am doing in the classroom now will better equip me to fight Christian battles later that I can stay in this program.

Richard Kinch, who has given me some advice so far, says we need Christians in my field, since it is so barren of them, but I still can't figure out what I can do. I won't be taking that Ph.D. and attempting to infiltrate a secular university; I plan to go to seminary and, if I stay in academia, it will be in the Christian academy. He says we need a Christian viewpoint in the Humanities, but I see that as a contradiction in terms; the absolute, rock bottom presupposition of my department is anti-Christian (whether they realize it or not). They recognize no absolutes and regard the Bible as just another (mythical) text. That is not a viewpoint to be reformed or subverted; it simply has to be rejected. Once one starts reading as a Christian a lot of material becomes irrelevant or offensive.

This is not at all to suggest that I have lost my sense of

appreciation for literature, far from it. I merely question how or why the study of that literature can become a vital part of my Christian mission, vital enough to warrant another four years studying it.

Dear ...

Thank you for your very interesting letter. I was glad to note your clear understanding of the anti-Christian attitudes that characterize so much of modern thought and your realization of the way the anti-Christian attitudes of 20th century literature has developed from what was already present in that of the 19th century.

However, I don't quite agree with your statement that "a Christian viewpoint in the humanities" would be "a contradiction in terms". It may well be that this is true of the way the humanities are widely taught today, but it should not be so. The term originally represented the study of all that was best in the activities and thoughts of human beings, and surely all that really deserves to come under this category is a gift of God.

Yet unbelief is nothing new. It began in the Garden of Eden, and Satan has been busy trying to mislead us ever since.

I took my undergraduate work in a small Christian college that had a very high academic standing. It had been organized by Christian people two or three decades before I entered and when I was a student there was still a very strong Christian influence on the campus. The dean told me once that they sometimes had difficulty finding good men in the scientific fields who had not been affected by anti-Christian attitudes and were therefore particularly careful that their teachers in other areas be men who could be recognized as Christian thinkers. Yet I soon noticed that aside from questions regarding the theory of evolution there was comparatively little in the attitude of its scientific departments at that time that might pose a problem to a man's faith. In the courses in literature some of the teachers were solid Christians and had a good influence on the students, but even during the time I was there I saw new professors with unchristian viewpoints coming into these departments and having a far greater influence over the minds of the students than any of the professors in the scientific fields. While most of the students thought they were simply discussing literature and not dealing with philosophic or

theological matters at all, some of the professors, knowingly or unknowingly, were introducing anti-Christian attitudes into their thinking. I observed that a teacher of literature or history can influence his students in almost any direction he chooses.

I thoroughly agree with R. that we need Christians in the humanities. In fact, I think our need for them in this area is greater than in almost any other, aside from study of the Bible itself.

When students who have been extensively trained in science have come here to study the Bible under our direction, I have rejoiced at their being trained to think in a positive and objective terms, and dealing with experiments and observations, even though they have had to face an anti-Christian background, but have realized that immediate contacts between their previous training and their Bible study occur at comparatively few points. A background in the humanities would constantly relate in one way or another to biblical interpretation and biblical teaching.

In any area of Christian activity into which one might enter, training in the humanities could be useful. I shall mention a few of its values.

The first that occurs to me is that of ability to write. The statement that one either can write or can't is true only to a limited extent. The ability to express oneself clearly and effectively is not innate. With little training some can write far better than others, but everyone can develop tremendously in this area.

Whatever one's thoughts may be, his ability to express them clearly is a vital factor in his effectiveness. I gather from your letter that this area does not impress you directly but one could hardly study literature without learning a good bit about the difference between effective writing and ineffective writing. The ability to express one's thoughts and to help others to express their thoughts well would be of tremendous benefit to the cause of Christ....

You say you are not interested in infiltrating a university with Christian teaching. Yet one can never be sure how the Lord might lead. I know of professors in various universities who help Christian students in many ways, though often only as an extra-curricular activity.

Within the last few decades Christian people have established a considerable number of colleges in various parts of the United

States and other countries, seeking to give a thoroughly Christian training. All of these are having difficulty getting teachers of literature with a really Christian attitude. In most of them the influence of teachers in the field of literature is to some extent a counter-influence to the teaching of the institution as a whole, and in some cases this fact is quite unrealized, even by some of the teachers themselves. A professor of literature in a Christian college could do a great work for Christ both directly and indirectly.

The course that you have outlined impresses me as a very good one. I believe that training in these lines could be used very effectively in Christian activity, provided of course that one should keep his feet solidly on the Rock and be constantly and carefully watchful against being swept unknowingly into anti-Christian attitudes and thought patterns.

Many of the writers in the 19th century, particularly in its first half, had a strong Christian background in their upbringing or in their thinking, and one can see in their works how they were facing problems. Many of them were gradually swept away from their mooring.

Study of literature can indeed become a vital part of Christian mission and if one keeps his feet solidly on the rock of God's truth it can give him material that can be greatly used for the work of Christ, both material and skills. It can also give a fund of illustrations for seminars and Bible lessons. I would not presume to say whether these values are sufficient to "warrant an other four years studying it," but when you add the prestige of the Ph.D. to the value for Christian life and testimony it is probably more worth it than the same amount of time spent in various scientific fields.

I hope these rather off-hand remarks will be of some help to you. My knowledge in the field of literature is rather superficial and yet I have dabbled in many of its areas. If there is any particular point on which I could be of further help please let me know.

LETTER 87
1948

CHRISTIANITY AND CULTURE

Dear Dr MacRae,

Anthropological research has of late, brought forth an interesting and, what is believed, a most important question:

What should be the orthodox Christian's concept of the phenomena called Culture: what is it, how did it begin, and are there men today with no culture?

Your consideration of, and views concerning this question would be greatly appreciated and aid us in the formulating of a stronger, more consistent polemic on this subject, to the intellectual non-Christians of today.

Dear ...

You asked for my opinion on certain matters connected with anthropology. It is something on which I have neither read nor studied and consequently any opinion that I give is purely off-hand. At the same time it might be worth while to express the ideas that occur to me on the subject. You asked whether there might be a nation without culture. To my mind culture would be a term used to express those habits or skills which a group of people pass on from generation to generation. It would not refer to any type of innate ability but to customs, manners of behaviour or ways of doing things which are taught from one generation to the next. From this viewpoint, while it might be conceivable that there would be children somewhere in the world who would be left alone by the death of their parents and still be in a region where the climate was pleasant enough and the natural food available in sufficient quantities that they would grow up without having anything from their parents, such circumstances would be extremely unusual. Ordinarily any group of children growing up would have learned a good deal from their parents and this would

come under the heading of culture. Even if one supposes that a group of children were left alone this way to bring themselves up using the natural food which grow on trees and bushes about them, it would seem inevitable that they would learn things from trial and error which would be worth passing on to the next generation and so a certain amount of culture would inevitably develop.

It would seem to me then that culture is a term which would express something that would hardly ever be absent with any group of people. Of course there would be tremendous variety in the amount of culture as between one group and another group of people.

In the Bible we are told that Adam and Eve were taught a good many things by the Lord. We are also told that they possessed considerable ability and were placed in a situation where they would naturally learn a good deal. Consequently I would think that culture would develop from these two sources, that which was revealed to them from the Lord which they passed on to others and also that which they learned by trial and error. As we read the early chapters of Genesis we find a description of various types of skill and utilization of different kinds of material resources which were acquired by certain individuals and in most cases it says that he "began to do" this or that "then men began to do" such a thing. It would suggest then the development of culture as various things were found out by trial and error and thought worth passing on to the next generation.

LETTER 88
1954

THE CHRISTIAN STUDY OF HISTORY

There is great value in the study of history, as a help to the promotion of the cause of Christ, but it is a value which few history teachers attain, because they make history an end in itself. I am very strongly of the opinion that we must always make exegesis primary. It is God's revelation that is important, rather than what we observe in history. History is helpful to us as giving illustrations of the way that God has worked, and of the way that men have failed. It is extremely useful as illustrative materials, and for alerting us to questions and problems, the answers which must be sought through careful exegesis of the Bible. It is for this reason that up to the present point I have never had any enthusiasm about trying to secure a full-time man for Church History. I feel that it is vital that a man in Church History be greatly interested in exegesis, and that his exegetical interest pervade his whole approach to history.

It is my conviction that if you can study history in this way, keeping the exegetical approach and background primary, it can be of great value, but that if it becomes primary itself, it is almost impossible to avoid going off into points of view that are contrary to God's will.

LETTER 89
1968

THE CULTURAL MANDATE

I have always felt grateful to God that He laid it upon your heart to come over to this country and to help us here in inculcating Christian ideas and Christian attitudes in the minds of our students. How we need Christian warriors today who will stand foursquare for the Gospel, and put their full emphasis upon the Word of God, putting all their emphasis where the Scripture puts it, and standing for the whole counsel of God, rather than for human ideas or conclusions derived from isolated verses.

So far as Genesis 1:28 is concerned, if there were any reason to think that it is a command resting upon all Christians, surely Calvin would have seen it. Yet he has not the slightest suggestion of any such thing in his Commentary, nor can I find any evidence that the Westminster divines had any such idea about its interpretation. I have looked at all the chapters of the Westminster Confession, and all the questions in the Larger Catechism that you mentioned, and find much in them about Adam's responsibility to fulfill the moral law, but nothing at all about any cultural mandate.

We are all fallible human beings, I perhaps more than most. I am thrilled at the presentation in your paper of the great privilege the Christian has in enjoying all the good things that God has put into His world. If there was in it an implication that advancing human culture was in some way to be put on a level with advancing the knowledge of Christ and repulsing the forces of apostasy I overlooked it. I see from your letter that there are a few phrases that could have been taken in this sense. It impresses upon me all the more that we must not look to human beings or human wisdom for our ideas, but to the Word of God alone. The more I look at Genesis 1:28 the more I am convinced that it is not in any sense a cultural command or a cultural mandate, but rather a declaration of the privilege that God gave to unfallen man of having dominion over birds, fish and snakes, and that a similar privilege will be ours in the New Jerusalem. May God hasten that day!

LETTER 90
1976

WRITING FOR PUBLICATION

It is not easy for an inexperienced writer to get a book published, unless he pays the cost of publication himself, and if he does it is very hard to get it advertised and distributed. Publishing companies put their own money into editing, printing, binding and distributing of the books they publish, and in many cases fail to get back what they have spent. Therefore they are very slow to accept a work unless it is unusually well written.

Some of our best writers were turned down repeatedly when they first sent magazine articles and books to publishers, and it was only after a great many efforts that they succeeded in getting one published.

Writing is an entirely different art from speaking, and in most cases a man cannot become a good writer without first expending great amounts of time and energy to develop himself in this regard.

Once I read a statement by a man who was an expert in this field in which he said that an aspiring writer should not start with writing short stories or articles, but should write a long novel. He explained his reason somewhat as follows:

After one has worked hard at writing a long novel and carefully revised his material as he went along, the practice in writing it has probably developed his ability to express himself in writing to so great an extent that when he finishes the book he will look back at the beginning and it will appear to him to be very poor. Then he should start writing the book all over again, bringing the earlier part of it up to the standard that he has attained for its latter part. As he goes on he will improve. If he is careful, thorough and self-critical, his ability to write will increase as he goes along to so great an extent that when he finishes he will look back at the beginning and it will again appear to him to be very poor. After having rewritten the entire long novel three times, he

should have made sufficient progress such that he would be able to write in a way that would impress a publisher enough to lead him to feel that he would not be throwing away his money if he should go the expense of publishing it.

The writer went on to say that if one begins with writing magazine articles and sends them to publishers, the publishers soon become so accustomed to thinking of him as a poor writer such that after he develops a good style it will be extremely difficult for him to get a publisher even to look at his work.

My own experience has been mostly in lecturing and it is only lately that I have been trying to develop myself as a writer. I have been working intensively at this for a number of years, as I feel that the Lord has given me a considerable amount of material that should be put into a form that can be of value to His people.

I understand that several organizations have held seminars for Christian writers and that these are often advertised in Christian magazines or other publications. If one of these is held in your area you might find it useful to attend it.

LETTER 91
1970

PERSONAL PROBLEMS

We live in a world of woe. There are miseries and troubles on every hand. God does not expect any one of us to change this world into a world of complete goodness and happiness. That will be done by our Lord Jesus Christ when He returns and sets up His wonderful kingdom of peace and happiness. During the present period He wants us to be His witnesses, to point others to the wonderful Saviour.

I was glad to hear that you had been assured that there is nothing wrong with your mind and nerves. This is also my opinion, but I must point out that there is no guarantee that you will always continue to be psychologically normal if you allow yourself constantly to worry and be upset over matters you cannot change.

Right now you have a duty to think over your decisions, and to decide whether you intend to carry through on them.

The first decision is: are you right in thinking that the Lord has called you to get a theological training? Are you right in thinking that it is His will that you should make your life count for Him? Are you sure that you are willing to pay what it costs? Are you ready to endure whatever suffering and misery may be involved in serving Christ? Everything that any of us could ever do for Christ is as nothing in comparison to what He did for us, when He bore our sins on the cross. We owe everything to Him, yet many of us find it hard to be willing to give up things for His sake.

If you decide that you really want to put Him first, then it is your duty to determine that nothing will be allowed to stand in the way of your accomplishing the utmost for Him. Jesus Christ said, "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me." If we are truly to follow Him we must always put Him first. If we do so, we shall find in the end that we have actually done far more good for the people we love than if we put them first.

If you put the Lord first, then you must determine to make your life develop as He would have it develop. One of the most important parts of this development is to learn to go forward with a calm and secure mind, drawing your confidence and joy from Christ, not from other human beings. As an invaluable help toward this goal, I would suggest that you meditate a great deal over four wonderful verses:

1. "In nothing be anxious, but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:6,7, first part slightly modernized to give the correct meaning.)

2. "Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you." (1 Peter 5:7)
3. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose." (Romans 8:28)
4. "This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:13, last part)

I strongly recommend that for a time you repeat these four verses to yourself at least once every hour. If you truly love Christ you can cast your burdens on Him. If you truly believe in Him you can look to Him to give you the peace of mind that is necessary if your life is to be worthwhile. If you really trust Him you can be assured that He works all things together for the good of all who love Him. This is always true, even if we are unable as yet to know just how. God sees the end from the beginning. He understands it all. We must realize that we can surely leave things in His hands, doing what we reasonably can, and trusting Him to work His holy Will.

I feel very strongly that you ought to put all thoughts of marriage out of your mind for the present. There are two reasons for this: the first is that you would not be a satisfactory husband for any woman until you have gained the strength of purpose and peace of mind that is necessary. Until you have solved this problem you will be foolish to think of marriage. Learn to forget the things that are behind, and to press forward to serve the Lord. Do what you can to help others, but do not allow them to weigh upon your mind. Unless you develop this strength, any woman who would marry you would only be entering a life of misery.

The second point of great importance is that as long as B. is in her present attitude of mind she would never make a satisfactory wife for you. I once heard someone say, "If you want to know what a woman will be like 20 or 30 years from now look at her mother." From what you have told me of her mother's dominant attitude, I fear that if you married her you might be as miserable in future years as your sister is now. You would be very foolish to think of marrying her unless she first established her proper freedom by moving away from her parents, living

alone, and yet reestablishing and maintaining a friendly relationship with them in which neither side would dominate the other. Until she has done this over a period of two years you would be simply looking for disaster to entertain seriously any thought of marrying her.

If you are to put the Lord first you cannot put any woman first. If your life is to count for Him you have to gain the strength of mind and peace of soul that you need to help others, rather than having constantly to look to others to help you. The Lord can give you this strength. He will, if you resolutely set to work to acquire it. Unless you move forward resolutely in this direction it is foolish for you to think of going further in the Seminary course. Until you accomplish this, it would be very unwise for you to give any thought to marriage.

Please try what I have suggested here. Meditate frequently on these four verses. Determine to draw your strength from God and His Word. I believe that you will accomplish far more in this way than by constantly looking to other people for your strength. God desires that you should learn to become strong enough so that you can help others instead of looking to them to help you. He wants you to learn to keep your troubles to yourself, except perhaps for one or two people from whom you can get helpful advice.

May the Lord bless you and enable you to use the good mind and abilities that He has given you to train yourself and to develop into one who can be a real leader for His purposes.

LETTER 92
1952

SOUND TRAINING

I want to thank you for your gracious words about Dr Harris and myself. Both of us would find it a privilege to do everything possible to help in your training for the service of our Lord, particularly, in view of your desire to put Him first in all things. In the end, compromise never furthers the cause of Truth. In all ages it has been necessary for those who stand four-square for God's Word to band themselves together in order that their influence may count for the utmost. If one is in a relationship where he is obligated to cooperate in any way with those who deny the Word of God and present another Gospel "which is not another," he is bound to find that his ministry is seriously hindered. If he stands true to his convictions and does not bend, he eventually is quite certain to experience severe personal loss as well. Apostasy in the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., has tremendously increased its power and influence during the past thirty years. A minister is now tremendously under pressure to go along with a denominational program which exalts unbelief and promotes modernistic ideas in many ways. It is far more difficult now than before for one to resist or ignore this program. A few older men are able to keep on with a strong evangelical testimony without much interference: they are considered less harmful and their time is numbered; hence they are not actively opposed. But in case after case in the last few years, younger men who have tried to do this have soon found themselves in great difficulty with the denominational organization. In the end, one is far happier and more effective if he takes an out and out stand right from the start.

As I mentioned to you, I feel that there is no greater need now than for men who are capable of doing real solid interpretive work in the Scripture, to discover in it its vital teachings. For the average person, he can pass on a message without much examination of its details and can do something that is worthwhile. In the end, however, if we are to meet the intellectual and spiritual needs of our day, it means learning the precise teaching of the

Scripture on many points which were considered comparatively unimportant a few years ago. This is no easy task. It requires thorough linguistic training, good personal mentality, and also some knowledge of the tradition of sound exegetical method which has disappeared from most of them as Modernism has taken over. Men whose only training has been received under modernistic professors, may be able to develop good methods for defending the established teachings of Christianity, but unless they are very rare geniuses, they can hardly be expected to build up by themselves the whole scholarship here which is vital in this particular field. This is particularly true in the Old Testament. In addition to preserving this continuity, Dr Harris and I have been working for many years in carrying forward methods of sound exegesis, and I do not think that anything equivalent can be built up by men without a similar background, at least not in a period less than twice as long as that in which we have been working in the field.

LETTER 93
1954

EXAMINING CANDIDATES FOR ORDINATION

M. has let me see the letter you sent out to those who were present at the meeting of the K. presbytery on April 13th, and I have felt moved to express to you my opinion about some of its statements.

First, however, let me tell you how very happy I am about your statement regarding the Lord's blessing upon the meetings in B. Surely nothing but our own lack of faith can prevent great things being accomplished for Christ! We must push forward and let Him use us in a mighty way.

M. felt quite discouraged and disheartened as a result of the discussion that he heard at the meeting, and these feelings were increased when he read your letter. It made him feel as if he were not wanted in our movement.

I can readily understand how these experiences would produce such an effect, and yet I do not altogether think that M. has correctly understood your letter. You have not so much criticized him as criticized the presbytery for rushing the examination through in too much of a hurry. As you said in your letter, it was quite unfair to the candidate, (especially after he had made the long trip to B. for the licensure examination) to try "to determine these things during a half-hour recess for lunch, or during a spot check quiz on the floor of the presbytery when time becomes a premium." It is impossible to get a fair idea of a candidate under these circumstances. Anyone who has had as much experience as I have in connection with examination of candidates in three different Presbyterian denominations, over a long period of years, becomes quite aware of the fact that some of the very best men make a rather poor impression in a rapid examination. Surely a man should be called before the committee in ample time that there would be full opportunity to put him at his ease and to secure a fair impression of what he knows, or else an effort should be made to secure information on major items through correspondence with men who have known the candidate over a period years.

I feel especially sorry about this particular case, because M. is an outstanding man in many ways. His marks in Seminary show a high quality of work, considerably above the average of his class. He is a man of deep consecration, with great interest in reaching the lost for Christ. He is thoroughly devoted to all the major emphases of our ... movement, and is in many ways as fine a candidate as has ever come before any of our presbyteries.

The subject of your letter is of extremely great importance to the whole cause and it is for this reason that I feel disposed to write you. I agree thoroughly with all that you are trying to accomplish by it, and feel that it is important that we think along these lines. At the same time it impressed me that there were certain phrases in it which quite naturally upset Mr F., and which in themselves might have a harmful influence on the church as a whole. Therefore I hope you will pardon me for expressing my opinion about these matters at some length.

I thoroughly agree with your objection to "spot-checking a candidate for licensure". There is nothing more important in church government than the proper selection of the men who are to be preachers and leaders of our churches. It is precisely at this point that Satan has been able to come in and to wreck so many great denominations. A tolerance which allows unbelief or apostasy to gain a foothold or which unnecessarily lowers the standards of the ministry is bound to result in great harm to the cause of Christ. It is surely wise to insist that a committee always spend a full measure of unhurried time examining candidates very thoroughly in private, and that a full theological examination be conducted on the floor of the presbytery with opportunity for any questions that members may desire to raise on this or other points, so that the presbytery may have no question that it is right in its selection of men for licensure and for ordination.

It has impressed me that even a full day of careful examination sometimes fails to give sufficient knowledge of a candidate for proper decision. In some instances far more can be gained by talking privately to those who have known the candidate over a period of years. Occasionally I have found it a bit irksome to spend a long time examining our own graduates who I had already known for three years, and with whose qualities I was already far better acquainted than I could possibly become in any brief examination. Yet, I am always anxious that others who do not thus know them should take as much time as they feel necessary, in order that they may make their own independent judgment, as far as possible.

After expressing my full agreement with you on these vital matters I must, however, tell you I was very disappointed, for a number of reasons, with the wording of your statement of qualifications for licensure.

Perhaps the most important of these reasons was the fact that it might give a false impression as to what we consider most vital. You state that we should be absolutely sure that a man has been "called, prepared and garnished for the ministry by the Holy Spirit," and then proceed to say that in order to be sure of this we must ascertain five specific matters, all of which are intellectual in nature. Neither among the five qualifications nor in the succeeding paragraphs is there any reference to spiritual qualifications. Surely we must be men of prayer and spiritual power if God is able to use us at all. If a man does not have in his heart

the love of Christ and a desire to serve Him to the very utmost, all the scholarship in the world would be absolutely worthless. What can be more important than to inquire into the extent of a man's consecration and sincere desire to follow the Lord, the nature of his personal devotional life and experience in leading souls to Christ, and the reality of the blessing that God has already given through his witnessing and his preaching. Your statement could easily lead to the impression that these matters were not important. I know that this would be a false impression, and that it is not your idea at all, and yet the fact that the letter was sent out in mimeographed form leads one to fear that it might fall into the hands of those who would get a wrong idea of the attitude of our ... Church. It is even more necessary that we examine these things than the intellectual qualification that you have described. I know that you fully agree with this, and yet the omission of it from the letter could easily give a different impression.

It is particularly important to mention these matters in this case because M. is a man with unusual depth of consecration and desire to serve Christ wherever He leads. During the past year he has been devoting himself sacrificially to work among a portion of the population which our ... Church must not neglect, even though most of our members do not belong to it. He has been dealing with people in slum districts and in the poorer families, and has been in contact with all sorts of different human problems. He has been leading children out of broken homes to the Lord and helping families that were in great difficulty. He has been working at engineering for his support, while performing this difficult and important task. Sometimes he has been tempted to feel that our church is not interested in this sort of work. God forbid that we should ever take such an attitude! God loves these people and it is His will that many of them should come to the knowledge of salvation and be born again through Christ. M. has a great love for souls, and a passion for the work of Christ. He is also as devoted to the great essential principles of the ... Church as any man who has ever graduated from the Seminary. I believe that our church honors itself in receiving him into its ministry.

This of course would not be an argument for ordaining him if his scholarship were badly deficient. It is, however, something that is in a way even more important than scholarship and in his case I can say with confidence that there is no deficiency in scholarship. He says he is not a scholar and I would not say that

he is one of our top students. Yet he is well within the top third, and if his scholarship were insufficient for ordination in our church I fear that two-thirds of those who are now ministers would have to drop out.

After mentioning my disappointment at the fact that a letter of this type should seem altogether to ignore the vital spiritual qualifications, I must go on to say that I felt a bit discouraged about the way in which you expressed the first four of your five qualifications. We want to maintain high standards but not impossible ones. I doubt if anyone who has ever come into the ministry of the ... Church could even approach the levels you have described. Take, for instance, your first qualification. I am sure that I myself do not have "the entire contents of the English Bible obviously under control, with no weak spots whatever." Although I have been studying the English Bible for many years, I know that I have still much to learn about it, and that there are many of its sections with which I am sadly unfamiliar.

I have taught a two-year course in Church History three times, but I would still come very far short of being able to fill your second requirement. I certainly could not truthfully say that I am "perfectly acquainted with the problems, trials, discussions of two thousand years of the existence of the Christian church." I have learned a good bit about it, but I would come very far short of such a standard as your letter has described and I doubt if many of our graduates know one-tenth as much in this field as I do.

Your third point is somewhat more generally expressed than the previous two, but it does seem to me that it also is expressed a little too strongly. I am not sure that I have ever known a graduate of the Seminary of whom I would say that he is able "to cope with all the major theological problems." It would need ten years of careful study of theology alone before we could expect a man to reach a standard such as your words seem to imply. I believe that all our graduates could preach on a good many minor doctrines "with a fully systematic theology background", but in order to do so, they would need to spend two or three days on special study of the materials with which we try to familiarize them in Seminary. They certainly could not do it on short notice.

I do not like the wording of your fourth qualification at all. I am sure that I would not be "able to deal death blows to the modernist through ability to handle the Hebrew and Greek texts."

I do not quite see how the Hebrew and Greek texts will deal death blows to the modernists anyway, although, of course, they may be of great importance in any discussion with them. Their primary importance, it seems to me, is not so much for argument with modernists as for help in the interpretation of the Bible, in order that Christians may grow thereby. I wish that every one of our graduates was so familiar with Hebrew and Greek that he could read any passage in Old or New Testament at sight, but I fear that we will never reach this point. It would take much more than a three year course to attain it, even with the highest ranking students.

I fear that these four requirements that you have described would be impossible of attainment, even if the seminary course were fifteen years, instead of three. I agree thoroughly with the desire to hold our standards extremely high, yet I feel that we must be careful not to express them in such a way as simply to discourage people by making the standards impossible of attainment.

I fear that your statement that a man who has never had philosophy can gain a working knowledge of it in a couple of weeks time with a college review handbook, is much too sanguine.

Your suggestion that the man should stand examination on the full contents on the form of government of the ... Church, and likewise a full examination on the contents of the Book of Discipline is a good one. I was at a meeting of the P. Presbytery not long ago, when discussion was taken up of a very important point of procedure, and the group argued for nearly half an hour as to exactly what should be done. Finally someone arose and read a very clear statement in the Form of Government, which completely settled the matter. All the members of the presbytery seem to have completely forgotten this point, if they had ever known it.

The ... Church, like any other church, is faced with a practical situation. We can imagine the sort of perfect ministers we would like to have, but they do not exist anywhere. We have to pick the best men that we can find among those who are available. If you had sat in committees and in presbyteries during many years as I have, you would often have felt quite discouraged as to the outlook. And yet, you would have seen, as I have, some men who made very poor examinations, later become outstanding leaders

in the church. (These are often men who have done excellent work in class, but who do not seem able to make a good impression in an examination.) It is really very difficult, from an examination alone, to make a real judgment.

Agreeing as thoroughly as I do with the great central purposes of your letter, and knowing that Mr F. agrees with them just as much as I do, I feel that I regret very much the discouragement that has come to him from the whole experience, and the wrong impression that some have received of him, and that he has received of the attitude of our ... Church.

Please forgive me for writing at this length, but I believe that the matter is one of very great importance, since I thoroughly agree with your fundamental purpose in the letter, and with your enthusiastic desire to raise the level of presbytery examinations. I look forward with anticipation to Christian fellowship with you at Synod in the near future.

LETTER 94
1962

MARXISM

Ever since reading your column in the Philadelphia Bulletin for Thursday, January 18, which was headed "Conceptual Wall of Marxism More Stubborn Than Berlin," I have been intending to send you my reaction.

First, I would like to give you a word of encouragement. The column described your frustration at the inability of the visiting Russian economists to see the logical results of the information that you spread before them. In the face of all the facts that you presented, they still refused to admit that democracy and private

enterprise in America are real and not a hypocritical sham. Although they seemed to be men of intelligence and ability, you say that you were unable to evoke from them any sign of being the least bit impressed by the facts and arguments that you and your friends considered so strong. On this point I believe that your column was unduly pessimistic.

You would not feel so frustrated if you put yourself in their situation. Probably all of them have families in Russia. They themselves expect to return to that country. If you had been able to elicit from them even one word of criticism of their system or praise of ours, it might result in tragedy for them and for those they love. One who has lived in free America cannot imagine the constant fear that results from living in a country where every idle word is under constant investigation, and where hundreds of thousands of people are herded off to the misery of concentration camps, merely for expressing a slight shade of doubt as to the absolute perfection of whatever view is advocated by the party in power.

The words that these men expressed do not necessarily show their real thoughts. Your data and your arguments may have made far more impression than you imagine. A few more such interviews and one or more of them, if not prevented by fear of reprisals to his family, might decide to defect and, like Kravchenko, to choose freedom.

In Kravchenko's book, *I Chose Freedom*, he mentioned that after he decided to seek entrance to the free world, he found it necessary to be particularly careful not to say anything that might arouse suspicion. Constantly spies tried to lead him into making some critical remark about the Soviet regime, but he constantly spoke all the more strongly in its favor, when he had determined to escape from it as soon as he could.

In addition to this note of encouragement, I feel that I must express my dissent from the main thought of your editorial. The heavy wall that separates Russians and westerners is not, in most cases, a wall of Marxist ideology. It is the difference between living under a regime where one is permitted to think for himself and to express his ideas freely, and living under a regime in which free expression is forbidden and is extremely dangerous. If the Russians were free to express themselves about their system, I wonder if as many as ten percent would declare a real

acceptance of the principles of Marxism. The first step in getting over this "ideological" wall is to secure for those living under tyranny a chance to think in safety. The division between "east" and "west" is not a matter of two philosophies of economics, but a wall that separates brutal tyranny from freedom for individual development and individual expression.

LETTER 95
1967

THE KHAZARS AND JEWS TODAY

I have devoted many years to careful study of historical materials, and have attended courses in the leading universities of the United States and Europe. My training has been very thorough in learning to check statements with extreme care and to be careful not to make any statement for which I cannot give absolutely definite proof.

It is easy for a person without consideration to make a statement as if it were a fact. If this appears in a book someone may quote it as a source. If four or five others take it as an authority and include it in their own books or articles, soon we find it claimed to be established by six authorities, when actually it may be only the offhand statement of one original person. In this way erroneous ideas sometimes become widely circulated.

I have carefully looked over the pamphlet that you sent and am returning it herewith. I was sorry to find that it did not leave me with a very high impression as to the scholarly accuracy of the author. It contains many statements for which I know of no evidence whatever, and many others that are clearly contrary to fact. Let me mention a few of these.

At the beginning of the article, in the right-hand column, the author states that the writing of the Talmud took over 1100 years. Actually, there is no evidence that any word of the Talmud was written before A.D. 70, and he himself says that it "was finished in Babylonia in 500 A.D."!

The next sentence reads: "For nearly 4000 years the Pharisees have not deviated from their purpose." This is quite as absurd as if someone were to say, "For the last 2000 years the United States of America has been trying to conquer the world." Our nation did not come into existence until less than 200 years ago. To speak of Pharisees as existing so long ago is utter nonsense.

Olney's statements about economics and government show amazing ignorance. Thus in the right-hand column of page 30 he says: "The government of England has nothing to do with control of the Bank of England." This is quite untrue. Ever since 1844 the government of England has been exerting a great measure of control over the Bank of England. The Bank Charter Act of 1844 closely defined its privileges and policies and many actions of the government since have exerted tremendous control over its various activities. In 1946 the British government bought all the stock of the Bank of England and made it a completely government owned institution. Its officials are all appointed by the British government, and it is completely subject to the government of England.

The very next sentences reveal similar ignorance about the institutions of our own country. He says: "In 1913 the Pharisees, through manipulation, established the Federal Reserve Corporation in the United States, which is a private corporation to control the money of the United States. It is completely a private organization, and not a branch of the federal government." This statement is completely false. The 12 regional Federal Reserve Banks are private corporations, and the various member banks are required to purchase stock in them and have the privilege of voting for some of their directors. However, these directors have no power to make important decisions. Such power is vested entirely in the directors of the Federal Reserve System in Washington, all of whom are appointed by the President of the United States, with the advice and consent of the Senate, for fourteen-years terms.

Thus the Federal Reserve System is not only not "completely a private organization": it is not a private organization at all; it is

"a branch of the federal government," and this government appoints its officers. The Act of 1913 sought to ensure that its decisions should represent the opinions of the American people over a period of time, rather than temporary shifting political changes, and therefore ordered that its members be appointed by the President, with the advice and consent of the Senate, for fourteen-year terms.

When an author is guilty of such false statements on matters on which a glance at any standard encyclopaedia would quickly give the true facts, one can hardly expect him to be accurate on matters that are subject to various interpretations. However, even in this area it is easy to find statements that are clearly erroneous.

Thus he says on page 29: "The Khazars adopted Judaism (Pharisaic Talmudism) in the 7th century A.D." Actually very few Khazars ever became Jews. Only the king and a few of his nobles did so. When the Russians conquered the Khazars (in 1016, not "about 1200 A.D." as Olney says), the few nobles who were Jews fled to Spain. There is no proof that any present-day Russian Jews are descendants of Khazars.

You mentioned in your letter ... that you wish ... to ask me whether the present people in the land of Israel are literally the blood descendants of Abraham. In answer to that I can only say that there is absolutely no proof to the contrary.

I presented this question to the Rev John V. G. Koontz who is at present giving me valuable assistance in research. His answer impresses me as being so excellent that I shall include it as my answer to this particular question: You question whether the Jews living in Palestine today are Abraham's blood descendents. Well, when the Lord Jesus was here upon earth He said to the Jews who were living then, 2000 years after Abraham, "I know that ye are Abraham's seed" and "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day." (John 8:37, 36) The Jews addressed in this manner were unbelieving Jews, Jews who were seeking to kill Christ, Pharisees if you will, and yet Christ calls them the blood descendants of Abraham.

It is one thing to affirm that many, perhaps most, of the Jews living in Palestine today are unbelieving Jews (Jews who have not accepted Christ as Saviour) and it is an entirely different matter to claim that the Jewish occupants of Palestine today are pseudo-Jews. The Scripture teaches that the Jews will return in

unbelief to the land God covenanted to them through Abraham, and that the nation Israel living in the land in the day of Christ's coming will be converted (Zechariah 12:10; Ezekiel 20:33-40; 3:21-25). God has solemnly declared that Abraham's physical descendants will not cease from being a nation before Him for ever (Jeremiah 31:35-37). God is not going to leave Israel unpunished (Jeremiah 30:7-11), but when His purposes in judgment are accomplished His purposes in grace will be fulfilled (Jeremiah 23:5-8; Hosea 2:14-16; Romans 11:26, 27).

It is too bad that articles such as the one you enclosed are upsetting the faith of many good people in the promises of God concerning His ancient people Israel. It creates an unhealthy mental attitude toward the Jew to whom we as Christians owe a debt of gratitude. We need to recall the teaching given by the Apostle Paul in Romans 9-11 and, as Gentiles, heed the warning there given. The root of our problem is not to be found in any one race or nation but in the sinful heart of man and the answer for this is found in the blood of Calvary's cross.

LETTER 96
1967

THE KHAZAR JEWS AND COMMUNISM

The book by Col John O. Beatty has been in my private library for a number of years, and I have rejoiced to see how he has exposed so many of the tentacles of the socialist-communist conspiracy. We need more books that undertake this necessary task.

It has grieved me, however, to see the anti-Semitic bias which, I believe, is to some extent blunting the force of his very fine presentation.

One thing that I liked about Col Beatty's work was the way that he exonerated the German people as a whole from the accusation that they had conspired to conquer the world. Kaiser Wilhelm's exalted ideas of his own authority and purposes caused millions of German people to follow his orders blindly without themselves actually being implicated in his attitudes. Back in 1919 I myself was greatly shocked at the widespread feeling against all German people. When I studied in Germany for two and a half years between 1927 and 1931 I was surprised and pleased to see the fine attitude of the German people as a whole.

I was also pleased to see how Col Beatty defends the Russian people as a whole. Many of the Russians are very fine and kindly people. It is indeed sad that they are today enslaved by the comparatively small group that make up the communist conspiracy. The tyrannical one-party government of Russia holds the nation in complete subjection, and does not allow its people even to hear news, except what the officials desire. The Russian people as a whole should not be blamed for the attitude of their communist rulers.

I certainly did not intend to exonerate "any appreciable group of Jewish people from any attachment to communism, past or present." There have been many Jews, as there have been many Germans, many Englishmen, many Americans, and many from almost any country, who have been deceived by the clever propaganda of the communists. To blame the Jewish people as a whole for the fact that a sizeable number of their people were misled, is, in my opinion, just as foolish as it would be to blame the American nation, or the English, for the fact that many of their citizens have been similarly deceived.

Actually, communist ideology is simply a means of ensnarement and enslavement. Those who refuse to accept Christian teaching are often quite susceptible to anti-Christian teaching. Communism comes with a pretense of idealistic, philanthropic, humanistic attitudes, but soon brings those who accept it completely under the control of superiors whose names they may not even know. It is a very clever device, worked out by Lenin and his associates, for getting large numbers of people into a movement that can be used to try to achieve world domination. Every American needs to be awakened to this danger, and to be alerted to watching for and opposing its many activities. If we confuse

this crisis by blaming a race or a religious group, we weaken ourselves and make it easier for the enemy to conquer us.

Since reading your letter I have again gone very carefully through Beatty's second chapter. It contains many references to other books, but all of them are secondary sources and there is no reference to any first-hand authority on the statements about the Khazars. In order to judge as to the accuracy of the various statements, I would have to examine all of the books referred to, in order to see what authority they offer when dealing with matters that did not come within the first-hand experience of their writers ... I have found no proof that any sizable number of present-day Jews are descendants of Khazars, or that the Jews as a group are in any way implicated in the communist conspiracy. A statement can hardly be accepted as evidence, simply because it has been printed somewhere. I have had a lifetime of training in going to primary sources trying to be sure of real evidence for every view that I adopt.

It is sometimes said that if an idea is repeated often enough it will attain acceptance. In this second chapter Beatty keeps on about "the Jewish Khazars" or "the Khazar Jews". Actually, the evidence that he gives that any sizeable number of Jews have Khazar blood is practically nil. About all that we know about the Khazars is that they were a group of people who had a powerful kingdom for a few centuries in what is now South Russia, and that some of their kings became Jews. Beatty, himself, after speaking on p.16 about the king and "about 4000 Khazars" being circumcised, goes on to say: "it was only by degrees that the Jewish teachers gained a foothold among the population." Since a few centuries later visitors found great numbers of mosques all through the area, we must require definite evidence before accepting as fact the idea that Jewish teachings ever made any great inroads among the Khazars.

There is considerable evidence that those Khazars who had become Judaized fled to Spain and other countries after the conquest of the area. We know from Roman sources that long before the coming of the Khazars there we already know about Jews in this area.

It is my observation that the Jews train their children to work hard in school, and to endeavor to get ahead in the world. They are given to understand that they should not expect the

government to give them a living, but that it is necessary for them to work to get ahead. While still young they learn that if they are to have the respect of their associates they must earn it by hard work, careful thinking, and alertness. I wish that a similar attitude was to be found in all other sectors of our population; unfortunately I have come into contact with many fine people who have been satisfied to give their children the impression that it does not matter particularly whether they make a good record in school or not, and that society owes them a living. As a result of this attitude toward their children's training individual Jews in every nation have achieved clerical and professional positions out of proportion to their numbers. In Russia, when the communists took over, it was entirely natural that they should find a great many of the men best fitted for positions in the second or third levels in the communist hierarchy to be men of Jewish background. The Jews had been greatly persecuted under the Czars, and, like most Russians, were glad to see the Czarist regime ended. It was easy, therefore, to find among the Jews individuals who were glad to take these positions in the second and third ranks of the communist government. Yet I understand on good authority that for every Jew who occupied a position of importance in the communist movement in Russia, there were five or six other Jews who opposed the movement, and who were liquidated by the communists when they obtained power. The communists talk a great deal about the claim that they give equality and liberty to everyone under them, but, in fact, everyone under them is really a slave. Although the communists were glad to make use of a certain number of Jews while they were becoming established, they were really quite anti-Semitic all along. As more Russians were trained, Jews were gradually eliminated from governmental positions. Out of about 300 present members of the Central Committee that governs Russia, I have been told that only one is a Jew, and that he is on the way out.

Col Beatty says that he had heard that Stalin and Lenin were half Jews. I know of no evidence for this and am very skeptical about it. Stalin persecuted the Jews very severely and did his best to remove them from all positions of importance. In the early days of communism one of their most able leaders was Leon Trotsky, a Jew. As soon as Stalin secured control, he took measures to get Trotsky removed from all of his offices and eventually expelled from the country. Stalin's agents followed Trotsky to Mexico and murdered him there.

The Russian government has given over a billion dollars' worth of armament to Arab nations to enable them to destroy the State of Israel, and has constantly attacked Israel in the United Nations.

We should oppose harmful actions of any individuals, whether Jew or Gentile. When it comes to punishment of individual wicked people, God's judgments are sure. As to the attitude that we should take toward the Jews as a nation God has clearly stated in His Word that He will bless those who bless Israel, and will curse those who curse them. In our effort to save our nation from the terrible world-wide communist conspiracy we shall make much greater progress if we do not allow it to become confused with an erroneous attitude on this point, and thus bring ourselves into danger of coming under this divine condemnation....

LETTER 97
1967

THE KHAZAR JEWS AND THE TALMUD

The Lord has given me the opportunity of being thoroughly trained in these lines. Not only have I spent many years in study of the Old Testament; I have also been privileged to take advanced work in historical study at various universities, and to learn the difficult art of distinguishing proven fact from statements that rest on no evidence except someone's personal hatreds. In view of those books that you have been reading -- and I am appalled to see the amount of unhistorical nonsense that has been included in some of the books that have come to your attention -- it is not at all strange that your letter should contain the quotations that it does. Yet these expressions are utterly contrary

to the spirit and attitude that the Lord wishes all Christians to have, and are such as are bound to bring misery and trouble if one continues to hold them. Therefore, I am glad indeed to give you some facts about them which should enable you to escape from this web of falsehood. Even true Christians are sometimes misled by Satan, and are thus caused to adopt attitudes that are thoroughly unchristian and contrary to biblical teaching.

The Bible clearly teaches that every person is an individual before God. There are many who hate all Germans and love the French, or who hate all French and love the Germans, or who take similar attitudes toward various other nationalities. I have had experience with many different national groups, and have found that every nation includes many fine people and also many who are wicked. Each individual is responsible before God, and it is impossible to categorize people simply on the basis of race, nation, or family.

Since the Jewish people constitute a rather distinct and separate group in certain ways, it is easy for a person, after having an unpleasant experience with an individual Jew, to categorize all Jews this way. I have known individual Jews who have done things that I greatly disliked, but I can say the same about Germans or Dutch or English or Americans. I have also known very fine people among them, as I have among each of these other groups. It is quite unfair to categorize any group by a few of its members.

There is no real historical evidence for saying that the Jews in Russia have a different racial background than the Jews in other countries. The idea that a great part of the Russian Jews are not Jews at all, but "Khazars," is quite without foundation.

God declared in the Old Testament that if Israel sinned He would scatter them among the nations of the earth. There is evidence that as early as 500 B.C. there were Jews in the area that is now southern Russia. At about the time of Christ, Strabo, the famous Roman geographer, declared that there was hardly a section of the known world without Jewish inhabitants.

Comparatively little about the Khazars is known with certainty. Any attempt to connect them with people that lived within the last 500 years is only a guess.

It seems likely that the first Khazars did not enter the region

of southern Russia earlier than about 100 B.C. When they arrived they found a good many Jews there already. What little we know of their history shows a confused picture of advances and declines until about 600 A.D., when they succeeded in establishing a strong kingdom which was very active in trade and transportation. They could certainly not then be called a barbaric nation, for they were very effective in these rather advanced lines of activity. At about 720 A.D. one of their kings decided to become a Jew, and persuaded many of his nobles to follow his example. The favor that he showed to the Jews led many Jews from other lands to migrate to Khazaria at that period. This king doubtless desired that his whole nation should adopt Judaism, but it appears unlikely that he had any great success, because years later visitors to the leading cities of this region reported that they found there many Mohammedan mosques.

In 1016 the Byzantine or Eastern Roman Empire, and the Russians, jointly attacked the kingdom of Khazaria and overcame it. Its people were either destroyed or scattered. There is no evidence that they continued to have a separate existence for any extended length of time. There is no historical basis for attributing any events in Russia in recent years to the Khazars. Such an idea is hardly more sensible than if one were to say that the ancient Amalekites had migrated to America and that all that is evil in America is due to the Amalekites. Like the Amalekites, the Khazars have entirely disappeared or been absorbed.

Aside from the Jews, there is no other instance in history when a nation has been widely scattered and yet has retained its identity. We find Jews in many different countries. It is amazing to note the variety of parts of the world from which groups of Jews have recently migrated to Israel. So it is not at all strange that there should be a large group of Jews in Russia. Whilst some of these may perhaps be the descendants of proselytes from among other peoples, I do not believe it can be proved that any sizeable number had such an origin.

The only ancient people that has preserved its identity to modern days are the Jews, and this was due to the purpose of God. The Bible clearly teaches that there have always been good Jews and wicked Jews. However, God chose them as a nation whom He would give us His Word, and through whom He would bring His Son into the world. Bible prophecy clearly shows that

the Lord has definite plans for the Jewish people in the future.

God has promised that He will bless those who bless Israel, and will curse those who curse them. (Genesis 12:3; 27:29; Numbers 24:9) This does not mean that God overlooks wickedness on the part of individual Jews. It does mean that punishment of Israel as a nation is strictly in God's hand, and those who try, like Hitler, to destroy them will suffer terrible consequences. On the other hand, the greatest blessing that anyone can bring to a Jew is to lead him, through loving witness, to accept Christ as Saviour.

In every century since the time of Christ there have been individual Jews who have accepted Him as Saviour, and some of them have become great Christian leaders. The same is happening today, even though the mass of the nation continues in unbelief.

The Bible tells us that the time is coming when God will convert them all to Christ, as "a nation born in a day." You asked my opinion about the Talmud. I find that most people have very little idea what the Talmud is. Actually it is a very extensive collection of the opinions and discussions of a large number of rabbis in the early days of the present era. These men, who differed widely from one another as to intelligence and outlook, found pleasure in exhaustively discussing many minute subjects. Sometimes their logic was very excellent and at other times it seems rather twisted.

The Columbia Encyclopaedia rightly designates the Talmud as "a vast compilation." Further on in the same article this Encyclopedia describes one of the main sections of the Talmud in the following way: "The scholars engaged in the work were led away by their zeal and their love of hair-splitting dialectical arguments into so many extraneous channels that the work became an amazing mass of unsystematized information and comment on a variety of subjects such as astronomy, geography, historical gossip, domestic relations and folklore." Since the Talmud is such a miscellaneous collection of material no selection from it can give a true idea of its nature. It is extremely varied in quality and in material. One can select from the Talmud statements that will seem to be as degrading and disagreeable as one would find anywhere, or one can make a still larger collection of statements that are lofty and inspiring. It is a vast, miscellaneous collection of the views of many different

persons, and is extremely difficult to characterize. I doubt if most Jews have read more than a small part of it.

The claim that all Jews are working together in some sort of world-wide conspiracy is being rather widely circulated today. Yet if one really examines the evidence that is submitted, he soon finds it to be largely an issue of misrepresentation and falsehood. Much of it consists either of statements that are definitely contrary to fact, or of assertions for which there is no evidence whatever, aside from the imagination of the writers. Individual Jews, like individuals of other groups, often work together to help one another, and sometimes make great plans, but usually these plans come to nothing. The only organized conspiracy that I know of that has had any great and long-continued effect is the Communist conspiracy.

The idea that communism is in any sense a Jewish movement or can be blamed on the Jews is quite contrary to fact. There have been Jews among communist leaders and among communist followers, but they have always been a minority. The communist ideology was developed by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels.

Marx was a Jew, but only a small percentage of those who have been prominent in communist movements have been Jews. As a matter of fact, the ideology is not the really important thing in the communist conspiracy. The real strength of the movement comes from its clever system of organization which enables a small clique of leaders to exercise complete control over the actions, and even the thoughts, of a large body of devoted men, and through them to master great multitudes of people.

Marx advocated a program in which he conceived of the great mass of people as taking over and democratically controlling the whole of society. Lenin, the son of a Russian government official, changed this into a system where a small group would have complete control over everyone else. The strength of communism is not in the ideology of Marx, but in the diabolically clever power system that was worked out by Lenin.

This very effective system of seizing and holding power, which is characteristic of communism everywhere, has enabled small groups of people to seize large areas, and to destroy everyone in them whom they thought capable of ever becoming an obstacle to their complete domination. The communist conspiracy has been moving forward vigorously for some decades in its effort to seize control of the world.

The statement that you quoted that "all communist leaders are Jews," is utterly contrary to fact. Neither Lenin nor Stalin nor Khrushchev, nor Brezhnev nor Kosygin nor Mao Tse Tung nor Ho Chi Minh nor Castro is a Jew. The only top communist leader who was a Jew was Trotsky, and he was driven out of Russia by Stalin, took refuge in Mexico, and eventually was murdered by a communist sent from Europe for the purpose. I do not know of any outstanding communist leader today who is a Jew.

So far from communism being a Jewish movement, the Jews in Russia are now under heavy persecution, and the communist government is trying to destroy all remnants of Judaism in that country. Any doubt of the real attitude of the communists to Judaism should be dispelled when we see the attitude that the Russian government is taking toward Israel. Recently all the communist representatives in the United Nations voted solidly against Israel. During the last decade Russia gave over a billion dollars worth of armament to Egypt and other Arab nations to use in attempting to destroy Israel. If it had not been for the careful training and skillful leadership of the Jews in Israel, they would have been overcome and massacred by the Arabic attack with the backing of the communists.

Having been a life-long student of accurate history, it causes me pain when those who know little about history write books that misrepresent and twist facts, as in the statements that you quoted in your letter....

LETTER 98
1945

LOCATING NOAH'S ARK

While I believe that everything that is stated in the Holy Scripture is dependable and free from error, I think we must be very careful about adding our inferences and guesses to what is stated. The Bible states that the ark landed on Ararat. There is no statement there that it was not destroyed or that God caused that in any way it should be preserved for future ages. This does not prove that He did not do so. It simply means that we have no ground for certainty that He did.

My colleagues, some of whom are more familiar with science than I am, have told me that they see no reason why it might not be possible that the ark, if covered with snow and ice, should last many thousands of years without injury. At the same time they point out that we have no certainty, of course, that it was ever thus covered, and consequently should be hesitant about putting too much confidence in the possibility that it may be discovered.

The various evidences which you have brought to light, as far as I have seen them, may possibly indicate that a structure of tremendous importance is hidden in the mountains of Ararat; at the same time it is not at all impossible that all of these stories might have originated with someone's guess and not actually prove that anything of importance is there. Even if such a structure was there thirty years ago, it would still be possible that it might have burned down or been blown up at some time during this period.

If publicity were to be given to the fact that an expedition were going to discover it, and then nothing were to be found, it could easily have an effect exactly opposite to that desired, and result in tearing down faith in the Bible instead of building it up.

I looked at a map of Turkey and gained the impression from it that the Ararat region is a pretty large one. Before being certain that nothing of importance was to be found there, it might be

necessary to spend many months exploring the region. Doubtless the best way to do this would be with a helicopter if the service of one could be secured. On the other hand, of course, even with the meager information available it is not impossible that a group might be able within two or three days to find the exact spot where the structure is in case it is still there.

If I know the Turkish language, and had credentials from the Turkish government which would be sufficient to protect me from interference or suspicion of being a spy in that border area, it would be a great pleasure for me to roam over the region and hunt out whatever might be there. I would enjoy spending many months doing this. However, my colleagues tell me that they do not feel that I would be justified in taking a period of months away from my work here at the Seminary unless I had pretty definite certainty of actually finding something at the end of the time. They say if it were possible to talk with someone of trustworthy character who had been there within the last year and was ready to say that he had personally seen something that impressed him as similar to the ark, one would have much more to go on.

One of them went so far as to make the suggestion that if an Armenian Christian could be found who had been brought up in the area and knew the customs and language, and who was rather sturdy and able to camp out and travel through rough country, it might be the best plan if he could be sent to the area to spend months there if necessary hunting to see if something could be found which seemed to him to at least bear a resemblance to the ark. Then if he were ready to certify that he had found something of this nature a small group of experts could go and verify it, and if they were satisfied a larger expedition could be invited to come and make a thorough examination. Of course, to carry out this plan it would be necessary to be sure that the agent was entirely trustworthy. It might be difficult to find such a person, and the only alternative might be that one or two would go from this country and ask the Turkish government to furnish them guides and interpreters for the hunt. As I said, it would give me great pleasure to be a member of such a party, but I doubt if I would be justified in taking the time from my work, unless first someone within this year had actually seen something there.

If you should be able to find the lieutenant who is said to have been in charge of the expedition thirty years ago, and talk with him personally, it is possible that the information he could give

both as to the actuality of the thing, and as to its location might altogether change the picture.

If sufficient evidence were secured both of the fact of something being there, and of its location, to render it highly probable that an absence of two months from this country might be sufficient to carry the project through, it would be a real pleasure for me to take part in such an expedition. Until more definite evidence were secured than is yet available, however, I would feel that it would not be right for me to enter into it unless it were expressly stated and understood that if nothing were found after a search of a stipulated length of time, I would be free to return to this country without any undesirable publicity.

I am, of course, intensely interested in the discovery of any thing which might be of help in increasing faith in the accuracy and dependability of the Word of God, and am anxious to do anything I can to assist in such a project.

LETTER 99
1967

PENTECOSTALISM

The various Pentecostal groups include some very godly people. In certain areas the Lord has used their efforts to bring many individuals to the knowledge of the Saviour, for which I greatly rejoice.

Yet I am convinced that they are quite wrong at certain points, and their most conspicuous errors often lead to worse ones, opening the door for developments that make it practically impossible for them to reach beyond a very limited segment of the population. I have known of several instances where the introduction of Pentecostal ideas and attitudes into a sizable evangelical church

have resulted in its being so disrupted that it almost completely disintegrated. Paul dealt vigorously with some of these aspects in his first letter to the carnal Corinthian church, but they are never so much as referred to in those other marvellous letters by Paul, Peter or John, in which they emphasize the higher spiritual blessings and expound principles for the spread of the Gospel and the establishment of the churches. For special purposes the Lord provided certain unusual manifestations in the very beginning of the Gospel period, but we have no reason to believe it to be His will that similar manifestations should appear at later times, or even in the latter part of the Apostolic age, when most of the New Testament was written, particularly in view of the fact that all these great apostles never refer to them except in the case of this one epistle to the carnal Corinthian church. Even there Paul was not urging establishment or continuance of a practice, but he was trying to cut down the extremes to which it had been carried. Nowhere in the New Testament is it suggested that speaking in tongues was an evidence of having attained a higher spiritual life. It is indeed striking that neither the Epistles to the Ephesians nor to the Colossians, nor any of the Pastoral Epistles, nor any of the writings of Peter or John even mention such a practice....

LETTER 100
1975

MORMONISM

Dear Dr MacRae,

Recently we had the pleasure of meeting two fine young Mormon missionaries who aroused our interest in the Book of Mormon, and the Church of Latter Day Saints. In reading the Book of Mormon we realized that the book could very well be about the House of Joseph, being one of the two sticks of

Ephraim (Ezekiel 37). We were also impressed by the emphasis placed on the family and the care of the body, but there are many unanswered questions in my mind, and through many sad religious experiences, I have learned to be cautious and thoroughly understand what we would be embarking on as any oath taken in the name of Christ is sacred and important to us.

Knowing your lifelong devotion to God, and Jesus Christ, we felt it important to receive your advice and guidance as we wish to continue to move ahead.

We would feel it a great honor if you could give us some of your ideas regarding the Book of Mormon and of the Church of Latter Day Saints, each as a separate entity....

Dear ...

I was glad to read your statement about your desire to pattern your way of living to satisfy our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. We live in a world of imperfection and sin, and there are many who would lead us astray away from the Saviour. It is only through putting our complete trust in Him and following the Bible that we can live lives that are pleasing to God.

I am sorry indeed that you have not yet found a church that has satisfied your needs. All churches are made up of human beings, so all have imperfections.

It shocked me to read your statement that "some churches go so far as suggesting that you let them save your soul, so go out and have a good time." God did not give us the Bible simply to be kept on the shelf. The first and most important matter is to have a personal saving relationship with Christ, but if this is genuine it must be followed by studying His Word and living in accordance with the Bible.

At present I am working very steadily on a book expounding a portion of Isaiah. The great truths of this book are so tremendous that it is a great blessing to study them and present them. However, these truths are valueless unless they become real in our lives.

Satan is very active trying to lead people away from the study of God's Word and from the truth of the Bible. At times he comes as a roaring lion attacking the Scripture and trying to lead us into

obvious wickedness. At other times he comes as an angel of light, giving very plausible reasons for adopting teachings that are not found in God's Word.

I can readily understand your pleasure at meeting the two young Mormon missionaries. Many of the Mormons are very pleasant people and are devoted to what they believe. A considerable number of their young men are asked to spend two years in an assigned area trying to lead new people to accept their beliefs. The emphasis on the family and on the care of the body that you mentioned are very good. These emphases are already in the Bible and one does not need to learn them from the Book of Mormon.

I am glad that you plan to be cautious about accepting their teaching. Although many of them seem to be very fine people, I believe they have been sadly misled. In the 66 books of the Bible God has given us His complete revelation. All other books are merely human ideas or human interpretations. While I do not know a great deal about the Book of Mormon, I know that it has no such evidences of truth and dependability as the Bible possesses. The study of its origin is highly imaginative and very questionable. I would advise that you be very slow about giving it a place in your thought at all comparable to that of the Bible.

It is also my impression that the Church of the Latter Day Saints holds to many ideas that are very different from the teachings of the Bible. In the Scripture the Apostle Paul wrote: "though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." (Galatians 1:8)

I have spent a great deal of time studying the Bible but have not investigated this particular movement to any great extent. However, I have good access to means of checking on specific facts about it and about the truth or error of any of its specific teachings and would be glad to discuss with you any particular question that you might care to write me about.

LETTER 101
1958

BRITISH ISRAELISM

Dear Dr MacRae,

We are confronted with a rather peculiar problem on which we would appreciate advice. An old Presbyterian minister retired, formerly a missionary under the USA Church, has applied to our Presbytery for membership. He is strongly of the "British Israel" persuasion. He says there is nothing in this position that contradicts the Gospel or the Westminster Confession. None of us feel that we are well enough acquainted with this teaching to pass a fair judgment and we all have the rather natural apprehension about "something new".

If you ... could give us some factual advice to help us reach a clear and fair decision in this matter, we would certainly appreciate it....

Dear

The view that you mention can be a comparatively minor error or it can be an extremely serious problem, depending on how thoroughly one holds it and how much he allows it to interfere with his view on other matters.

If one truly believes that the Bible is God's Word and free from error and that the only way that anyone can reach heaven is through the salvation that is made available to us through faith in our crucified and risen Saviour, the belief in British Israel might conceivably not be a great hindrance, except when it comes to prophecy. If one were to take all the prophetic teachings and mix them up with guesses about the future of the British empire, it might work havoc with many precious truths of prophecy. If one did not do this but held it only as a sort of sentimental attitude, it might not do a great deal of harm.

It is my observation that most of the arguments of British Israelism are rather silly and based upon simplistic methods of interpreting Scripture. This always raises the danger that similar methods might be used in relation to the great problems of the Word. You really ought to have some rather full talks with the man before you are in a position to make much of a judgment.

A statement that I often make is this: If a man agrees with me on sixty per cent of our viewpoints, and he and I are both convinced that the sixty per cent on which we agree is the most important part of our belief, we may be able to work together most amicably and to accomplish a great deal for the great objects that we both hold dear, and the forty per cent on which we differ may interfere comparatively little with our cooperation in the work of the Lord. If, on the other hand, a man agrees with me ninety-five per cent but feels that the five per cent on which he differs is so important that it is necessary for him to propagandize and push and work for it constantly, then cooperation is made extremely difficult and may even be utterly impossible.

Of course these are rather extreme instances. Most situations would be somewhere between them.

While one might be able to accept the system of doctrine in the Westminster confession and to believe thoroughly in the great fundamental doctrines that we hold, and still to accept a certain part of British Israelism, yet I would be very much afraid of anyone who held it strongly enough that he felt it necessary to push it or to propagandize at all about it. It is a rather touchy question and unless you were absolutely convinced that it would not become a hindrance, and that there was no danger of its becoming a serious problem in the future, it might be best to be very careful about receiving anyone with such views into your fellowship.

LETTER 102
1961

THE UNITED NATIONS

I fully agree that it is foolish for men to think that they can bring peace on earth. Greed and wickedness are present to some extent, even in those who have accepted Christ as Saviour. All others are under the dominion of their evil natures, even though many are greatly affected by good qualities in the environment in which they have been brought up. Since man cannot make a complete change in human nature, only God could bring in a time of universal peace and safety. When man thinks that he can accomplish this, he soon finds that he is merely building another Tower of Babel.

As you doubtless know, it was decided at the very inception of the United Nations not to have any prayer or even to recognize the existence of God, for fear of offending the Russians. At the first meeting, in San Francisco, a minute was set apart for silent meditation, in the place of prayer! An institution that was started in such a way is bound to be come an instrument of Satan, and I have little hope that it will accomplish much permanent good.

This does not mean that the Christian should oppose efforts to make this world a better place in which to live. Wherever such efforts appear practicable and promise real accomplishment, a certain amount of his time might well be devoted to furthering them. However, the most effective way to make this world better is to change the people in it. Far more has been accomplished for good by changing sinners into saints through leading them to accept Jesus Christ as Saviour than in any other way. It is to this objective that the primary interest of the Christian should be directed.

Satan is the ruler of this world. Yet he is not in complete control. If he were, everything would dissolve into chaos and utter corruption. He can only go as far as God permits. He

constantly has to reckon with the fact that there are many Christians in the world, and that many others are so affected by the results of Christian teaching that their support of his plans is limited. The only way to draw a line in determining our activity in the world is to make careful study of what the Scripture says and to determine all things in the light of its teaching. Good and evil are always struggling in this world. The time is coming when God's own power will intervene to put an end to the evil and to establish His righteous kingdom of peace and joy.

Romans 13:1-4 and other passages point out that the Christian is normally to be subject to the existing government of the area in which he lives. During this confused age it is God's will that human governments preserve a measure of order. This is necessary for the proclamation of the Gospel and for the carrying on of the lives of God's people. Even though a government is corrupt, it is God's will that it be supported insofar as it maintains law and order and enables its subjects to live peaceful lives. Jesus Himself paid taxes and declared that we should render to Caesar the things that belong to Caesar.

Some Christian interpreters have taken these passages to mean that a Christian must do whatever the existing government requires. Such a conclusion would go beyond the clear teaching of many passages of Scripture. Wherever God's Word and human authority clash, the Christian must obey God rather than man. It is not God's will that the Christian spend the bulk of his time trying to establish perfect government on earth, for such a thing is impossible as long as unregenerate men are here. It is God's will that the Christian should make his influence count for good order and for all that is just and right.

This brings us to the question about the use of the sword in Romans 13:4. Jesus told his apostles to do their work through the proclamation of the truth rather than to try to establish the kingdom of God by force. Christians are to avoid everything that would involve attempts to push themselves forward at the expense of others, or to rob other people, as was usually done by individuals who carried swords in New Testament times. However, the Bible clearly teaches that human governments may use force against evil-doers. Romans 13:4 expresses God's approval upon the use of the sword for the maintenance of order and the suppression of disorder. In Old Testament times God frequently commanded His people to make war, for the carrying out of His

purposes. If a soldier kills for selfish reasons, or is guilty of brutality, he sins against God and man. If a man takes part in an army for the defense of his nation against the efforts of wicked aggressors, he is only doing what the Christian is normally expected to do.

You ask about the attitude of the Christian toward such a government as that of Khrushchev. To the extent that the Russian government maintained law and order and made it possible that the Gospel should be preached, the Christian would be bound to obey its laws. When a government makes laws that oppose the Word of God or that deny the principles of the Scripture, the Christian has no obligation to obey such laws. The Russian government forbids all public propaganda for religion, calling it counter-revolution. Communism deprives men of their freedom, and of the rights to which they are entitled. It establishes its economy upon principles contrary to those taught in the Bible. It would seem to be the duty of all Christians to oppose such a government in any way that would offer hope of accomplishing something toward freeing the people whom it holds under its tyranny, and of giving them the opportunity to hear the proclamation of the Word of God.

LETTER 103
1961

THE MORAL REARMAMENT MOVEMENT

About 40 years ago Mr Frank Buchman was a student pastor at Penn State College in Pennsylvania. While there he originated an approach to students which made much of personal confession and introspection, but paid little attention to the great verities of

the Christian faith. His movement spread from Penn State to various other universities in this country and was generally known as Buchmanism.

Later on representatives of the movement spoke in various English universities and gathered groups of students to advance their principles. One of these groups was at Oxford University and the Movement assumed a new name: The Oxford Group Movement. Since the group is constantly talking about "absolute honesty" it seemed that a more honest thing would be to name the movement after the school where it started instead of one of the many to which it spread.

For a number of years at that time I used to hear of Mr Buchman's travels around the world, always in first class accommodations, and of his contacts with prominent individuals whom he tried to influence for the particular views of his group. His influence was so widespread as to lead me to believe that he must have an unusually persuasive personality.

Shortly before the second World War the group assumed still another name, that of Moral Rearmament. It declared its purpose of solving national problems by changing the attitudes of individuals, and led many to believe that Hitler and his associates were about to come under its influence. As a result of this attitude much of the popularity that had previously attended it disappeared, and there was a considerable reaction against it.

Gradually, since the war, it again seems to be gathering strength and endeavoring to become a force. My own inclination is to be skeptical of its claims.

I have known a number of individuals who have been for some time adherents of the Movement and then have turned against it. They feel that it lays a morbid emphasis upon introspection and confession (which it calls: "sharing"), and that it fails to put proper emphasis on the great central teachings of the gospel, which alone are able to save men from sin and to make their lives worthwhile.

A number of books have been written dealing with the organization, either pro or con. You can probably find sufficient objective evidence on which to make your own evaluation. My advice is simply that you go slow and make sure before allowing yourself to become in any way identified with it.

LETTER 104
1961

WAR AND SOCIAL STUDIES

The comments relate to a conference at Goshen College and Biblical Seminary on August 18, 1961 at which Dr MacRae was one of the speakers.

I was hoping that you might have some stimulating comments about my discussion of the illumination of the Holy Spirit. It pleases me that you are planning to give special study to the inspiration and authority of the Bible. Surely this must be the determining factor in all truly Christian life and witness, to determine exactly what the Word of God really teaches. It is sad to see many Christian groups, some of them with long histories of loyalty to Christ, departing little by little from this important standard. Though not agreeing on every point with Mennonites, I have had great regard for their record of standing for the Word of God in spite of terrible obstacles. One of our faculty made a study of Menno Simons recently. Surely he was a great man of God.

In my discussion that last morning at the Conference, I had no intention of criticizing Mennonite attitudes. The question addressed to me asked how I could justify using force in defense of our western way of life. The emphasis, as I understood it, was not on whether war is ever justified, but rather on the question whether, if war is justified, it is proper to wage war to defend our freedom. Personally I feel that if war is ever justified at all, then surely it would be justified if waged for the purpose of protecting the world from such bandits as Khrushchev and Castro by defending our way of life from their attempts to eradicate all freedom and all Christianity from the face of the earth. If I could have known in advance that I would be asked this question, so as to have had a little time to prepare, I would surely have found a way to make this distinction clear.

During the Conference I was a bit disturbed by some of the talks on social studies, when it seemed to me that they tended to make human observation primary in this field. I do not see how we can make any real progress in this field, except by giving the Word of God its absolute place of primacy.

It is true that the Bible is not a complete textbook of history, any more than it is of physics or chemistry. Wherever it touches on these fields it is absolutely dependable, but it only touches to a limited extent and there is much additional information that we must secure from human study. However, the field of sociology and social studies, not in the sense of learning details of history, but of learning principles that condition human life, is one in which it seems to me that the Bible should be absolutely primary. I am afraid that there is a great deal of study being done in this field that is altogether divorced from relationship to the teachings of the Word of God, and that consequently tends more to be harmful than helpful.

I have made considerable study of Church History in recent years, especially of the period of the Reformation, and have been thrilled to learn more about the activities of some of those great men of God. Would that we had more leaders today who were ready to stand foursquare for the Word of God, no matter what it might cost. I feel that God would do a great work in our own day if more of us were determined to put His Word first in all things.

LETTER 105
1949

**HENDRIK WILLEM VAN LOON
ON RELIGIOUS ART**

I think we must be careful to recognize that religious art can never usurp the place of the Word of God in the church. It may be a most valuable accessory to Christian teaching or Christian worship but can never occupy the central position in a truly Christian church. In the early days of the Eastern church its pulpits were occupied by great teachers, men like Chrysostom, Athanasius, Basil, the two Gregorys and others who constantly presented the Word of God to the people and brought blessing to their lives from its teaching. It was the substitution of other matters for the Word of God which led to the declension of the Eastern church and also of the Western church. The great glory of the Reformation, of course, is that it put the Word of God back in the central place where it belongs.

To Luther and Calvin any human means of advancing knowledge of the Word of God was helpful if kept subordinate to the central purpose of instructing in the teaching of that Word.

In view of the fact that we know nothing about the actual appearance of Christ any emphasis on an image or picture of Christ would surely be idolatrous and could not but lead to harm.

I wonder if you have looked into the use of art by Luther and his friends in the books which did so much to advance the cause of the Reformation. Your statement about the instances where "the artist has been so gripped by some Scriptural truth that he paints it boldly, interpreting it for us so that we can see it fresh again" would find numerous exemplifications in these books which were so important in advancing the Reformation.

Since both Calvin and Luther thought nothing else of comparable importance to the Word of God, we can hardly expect to find much discussion of the value or meaning of Christian art in their works. This, of course, proves nothing as to their personal

attitude toward art as an aesthetic object. In the church itself Luther's attitude was that the presence or absence of images, pictures, etc. was comparatively unimportant and he vigorously protested against their removal in any disorderly or hasty fashion. Calvin, on the other hand, while also opposing disorderly individual motions against images in churches, felt that the church authorities should make sure that nothing remained in the churches which could divide the attention of the worshipper and hinder him from whole-hearted attention to the Word of God.

I read the quotation from Van Loon with much interest. I had long known that his writing is mostly extremely superficial and that he takes little interest in questions of fact, preferring to give his imagination free play. However, I had never realised that they went quite the length which he did in these two pages. They abound in illogical statements and absurdities. Nine-tenths of what he says is purely based upon his imagination and has no evidence whatever as to its truth or falsity. What could be more illogical than the contrast between the two statements about Luther's relation to the arts? First, he condemns him as a German peasant who had no capacity to understand the beauty of art (as if the question of whether one's parents were farmers or noble men would matter much one way or the other in determining the question of his ability to appreciate art!). On the second page he recognizes Luther as an ardent champion of all the arts that appeal to the ears. After condemning him as gross and incapable of appreciating art, he recognizes that all this is entirely false if one thinks of music rather than of painting and sculpture! I wonder how many great musicians one would find today who are experts on painting or how many great artists have a real appreciation for music. Surely a person who can appreciate either one of these is truly artistic. Yet the capacity of most human beings as far as time and energy are concerned is sufficiently small to keep them from being particularly skilled in more than one field. When we think of the thousands of people in the United States who show no evidence of appreciation for anything particularly good either in the visual arts or in the musical field it becomes quickly evident how absurd it is to heap such calumny on Luther because he did not include in his great works on the religious problems of the day a few pages of enthusiastic admiration of the statues and paintings that he may have seen! There is so much that is absurd in the two pages -- and so much

that is simply contrary to fact -- that I find it hard to stop writing. Perhaps I may find time to mention more details of this nature and if I do I shall leave the letter with the Lins, in case I am not here when you pass through.

I only hope that Van Loon has a little more knowledge of the true facts about some of the other subjects he discusses than he shows in his absurd slander of Martin Luther. However, I doubt this when I note the end of the quotation "ever since music has been so much of a German specialty, that German has been the lingua franca of the musical world." I can't imagine what he could mean by such a statement. It is true that most of the great books of a scholarly nature in any field are written in German. Yet if one speaks of a lingua franca, it would seem to me that he could not but notice that practically all our musical scores carry their notations in Italian, not in German!

I hope these scattered remarks will be of some help to you. Perhaps it would be good if someone would warn the Christian people against accepting any statement of Van Loon without checking it very thoroughly.

BIBLICAL CHRISTIANITY

Prof Allan A MacRae is a staunch supporter of the complete inerrancy of Scripture. His deep knowledge of the cognate Semitic languages has provided for incisive defence of Scripture in the face of liberal theology.

In this collection of letters compiled by Dr Quek Swee Hwa, Prof MacRae writes on a wide range of topics. They include the JEDP Theory, special creation, Mormonism, baptism, eschatology, education and dispensationalism.

The scholarship of Prof MacRae's discussions makes this collection unique among many writings today. Serious Bible students should consult this book for a compelling view of biblical Christianity.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Prof Allan A MacRae is the Chancellor of the Biblical Theological Seminary in Hatfield, Pennsylvania. He has been a leader, scholar and mentor in the area of theological education for over sixty years. He obtained his BA and MA from the Occidental College in 1922 and 1923. In 1927, he graduated with a ThB from Princeton Theological Seminary, and went on to obtain another MA from Princeton University. In 1937, he received his PhD from the University of Pennsylvania. Prof MacRae has also taught on the faculties of Westminster, Faith, and Biblical Theological Seminaries. He now lives with his wife Grace in Quarryville, Pennsylvania.