

certainly as to who wrote the books of Chronicles, or any way of making even a good guess as to who might have written the book of Ruth. Is it then impossible for us to know whether they are inspired or not?

We do not know who wrote Esther. If we assume, as has been traditionally believed, that Nehemiah and Ezra wrote the books that bear their names, it would be very difficult to find proof that either of these men was a prophet. There is no evidence that they gave the traditional signs of a prophet, or performed the activities which normally were characteristic of a prophet.

It has been traditionally believed that Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the song of Solomon were written by Solomon, and conservatives do not accept the higher critical arguments that these were written far later than the time of Solomon. Nevertheless, we must ask the question, was Solomon a prophet of God? What evidence do we have of his ever acting in a way similar to Moses, or to Isaiah or Jeremiah? It is true that God gave him great wisdom, and that in the early part of his life he showed remarkable insight in dealing with legal problems. He also seems to have had unusual scientific understanding. Later on, however, we are told that his heart drifted away from God, and he did much that was contrary to God's will, even going after false gods (I Kings 11:5-10). Deuteronomy 13:1-3 lays down explicit commands for such a case. It describes the possibility that a prophet, after seeming to prove himself by performing miracles or making correct predictions of the future, might go on to say, "Let us go after other gods." Moses' command for such a situation is absolutely clear, as given in verse 3: "Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet." Here is a man of whom we are told that he actually did go after other gods (I Kings 11:4,5,7,10). Should we hearken unto his words, even including them in our sacred canon?

Is it the duty of each of us to decide for himself whether Solomon was a prophet in such a sense that his writings, if we can prove that they were definitely his, will necessarily deserve on this account to have a place among those which we consider to be inspired of God and free from error? If we conclude that Solomon was a true prophet in his early life, but that later did what God had so precisely forbidden in Deuteronomy, does it then become our duty not to hearken to anything that he said or wrote in his later years? Does the individual believer have the responsibility of personally seeking evidence on which to determine whether Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon were written in Solomon's early days, or in his later years, and of thus deciding whether they are books that can safely be used as a guide in spiritual matters, or whether, on the other hand, they are books to which the words of Deuteronomy apply: "Thou shalt not hearken unto that prophet."

Is it an individual question for each of us to determine for himself, which of the Old Testament books were written by true prophets, and which of the New Testament books were written by apostles, or under apostolic supervision? Is this something which each believer must decide for himself, on the basis of evidence available to him? If it is, we must be very careful indeed. We dare not quote the word of fallible man as if it were the Word of the infallible God. Yet in the case of book after book the evidence is simply not available for us to determine today whether it was written by a true prophet. In the case of book after book we have no way of proving with certainty that it was written by an apostle, or under apostolic supervision. Must each believer decide which books he dares to take as God's Word? If so he must beware of sermons or doctrines drawn from other books. He soon finds himself of necessity in an almost impossible situation, with large sections of the Bible lost to him.

It is the conviction of the present writer, however, that this is not the