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Is the Bible Too Thin? Weighing the Evidence for the Apocrypha

by J. Greg Sheryl

The first spoken words in the 1981 movie *Chariots of Fire* are, "Let us [now] praise famous men, and our fathers that begat us,"¹ a quote from the King James Version of Sirach, or Ecclesiasticus, 44:1. This book — not to be confused with the biblical book of Ecclesiastes — is part of the Apocrypha, most of which was written during a portion of the so-called "400 silent years" between the Old and New Testaments.

A RELATED MATTER: THE SEPTUAGINT

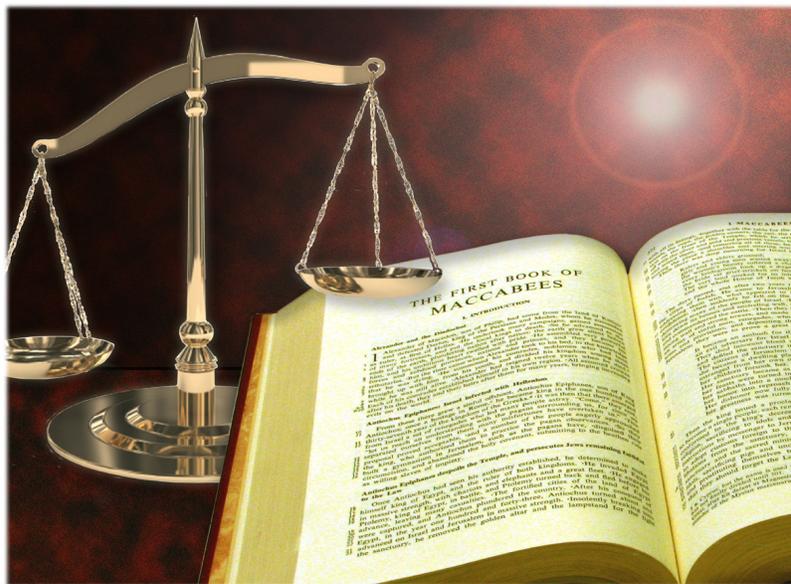
Any examination of the Apocrypha should begin with a look at the Septuagint (LXX). This word is derived from Latin *Septuaginta* (meaning "seventy") and refers to the 70 or 72 translators who are said to have produced the Pentateuch. It is the traditional but imprecise name given to the primary Greek version of the Hebrew Bible.² Further, we are told:

"The story of the origin of the LXX is told in the *Letter of Aristeas*, a pseudepigraphical [i.e., falsely attributed] book written in

the second half of the third century B.C. It states that Ptolemy II (called Philadelphus, king of Egypt, 285-247) wished to have a

translation of the Jewish law for his famous library in Alexandria. At his request the high priest Eleazer of Jerusalem sent seventy-two men, six from each tribe, to Egypt with a scroll of the Torah (the five books of Moses).³ In seventy-two days they translated one section each from this scroll and afterward decided on the wording together. Later writers elabo-

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Editorials

MISGUIDED ENTHUSIASTS: THE EARLY DESERT MONKS

For several years, Personal Freedom Outreach has reported on a troubling trend in the emerging church movement and evangelicalism at large: the idea that Christians are missing something that can be found in either the medieval mystics or further back to the solitary monks who inhabited the deserts of southern Israel, the Sinai, and Egypt.

Between the fourth and seventh centuries A.D., thousands of hermit monks lived in the wilderness in caves, built monasteries, and wrote about their solitary life. Its end came when the Persians and later Muslims overran the area. Nevertheless, a few monasteries were rebuilt and remain in service, and monks still dwell in caves today.

To understand these monks, one must look at the movement and discover the rationale behind their lifestyle. It is also important to understand their misuse of Scripture.

On the old Roman road from the Inn of the Good Samaritan to Jericho there is an amazing sight. Built into the sides of a gorge wall is the monastery of St. George. Along the gorge wall are caves with ropes dangling down. Monks called anchorites lived in the caves and the

ropes served as a pulley system for hauling baskets of food given by the communal monks of St. George. One wonders how anyone today could see this as a life to be admired, no matter how sincere the motive. Christians are not to be isolated. Jesus said, "go into all the world and make disciples." The Bible calls for infiltration of the world, not isolation. The Apostle Paul was a prime example of this.

One can only wonder what could be the rationale for this extremist view of separation.

Among the reasons given by the monks themselves are:

1. They said that they were looking back to Elijah and John the Baptist. These surely were rugged outdoorsmen, but they were not isolated from society. Elijah was fully engaged in his culture, confronted a king, had a school of prophets, and was front and center in crippling Baal worship. He was totally engaged in his culture and with people. John was also engaged with people as he had many followers and baptized many disciples in the Jordan River.

2. They said they were imitating Jesus and His experience in the wilderness. If so, they would have gone to the wilderness for 40 days and then reengaged with life and others, like Jesus did. Jesus led and taught His followers and mixed with the religious and non-religious. He chose twelve to be with Him and He was fully engaged with the people around Him — both

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News Updates

FULLER ADDS SDA PROFESSOR

Fuller Theological Seminary, which describes itself as a “center for evangelical scholarship,” has added to its faculty a Seventh-day Adventist. According to *Adventist Today Magazine*, “The nation’s largest theology graduate school and leading institution with an evangelical Protestant orientation has hired Dr. Johnny Ramirez-Johnson as a professor in its School of Intercultural Studies which offers advanced degrees in missiology and church growth.”

Ramirez-Johnson is an ordained minister in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the author of two books, and previously taught at the SDA’s Loma Linda University.

Fuller Seminary, located in Pasadena, Calif., has long been questionable in its faculty selections. In 1982, Vineyard pastor and leader John Wimber returned to the school’s staff along with C. Peter Wagner to teach a class promoting signs and wonders as a method for church growth. More recently, former Fuller president Richard Mouw (1993-2013) has argued that Evangelicals have “sinned against Mormons” by misrepresenting their beliefs and has said that Mormons are “more Christ-centered than they have been in the past.” He maintains that he accepts many of his Mormon friends as genuine followers of the Jesus whom he worships as the divine Savior.

—MKG

HINN’S FORMER CHURCH FORECLOSED AND AUCTIONED

The Florida-based church founded and built by pastor and faith healer Benny Hinn was foreclosed on and was sold at auction last summer. The *Orlando Sentinel* described the Orlando Christian Center as “One of Central Florida’s best-known religious properties.”

In 1983, Hinn unveiled plans and broke ground for the Orlando Christian Center. It later became known as World Outreach Center and then as World Outreach Church. In 2000, following Hinn’s move to Southern California, Clint Brown and his Faith World Center merged with Hinn’s church, received WOC’s facilities and 30 acres of property, and assumed its \$5.7 million debt.

Brown, who was the former worship leader for six years at Rod Parsley’s World Harvest Church in Columbus, Ohio, said at the time of the merger and acquisition that he believed the church would be paid for in five years. However, by 2005, “the church had an \$11.25 million mortgage with Evangelical Christian Credit,” the *Sentinel* reported.

According to *Path Magazine*, Brown and his Faith World Center defaulted on its mortgage in late 2013. The article also stated that Brown’s “property was recently appraised at just over 7.5 million, but he owes 9.7 million. A fact that leads many to believe the church has been misusing funds for years.”

The *Sentinel* further revealed that “Faith World also at times failed to pay its payroll taxes, according to court filings. Records show it was the subject of Internal Revenue Service liens for several tax periods from mid-2010 to the first quarter of 2012, totaling more than \$200,000.”

Last summer, the property finally hit the auction block and sold online for \$1.85 million.

—MKG

DRISCOLL EMBATTLED BY NUMEROUS ALLEGATIONS

Perhaps the best word to describe embattled pastor and author Mark Driscoll is erstwhile — erstwhile emerging church movement leader, erstwhile member of the church planting network he co-founded, and now erstwhile lead pastor. Amongst other complaints, Driscoll has recently come under fire from both friend and foe for crude remarks he made in a series of online posts nearly fifteen years ago. Those comments, along with the other concerns, have now led to his removal from the Acts 29 Network and his subsequent resignation as leader of Mars Hill Church.

The New York Times describes Driscoll as “an evangelical bad boy, a gifted orator and charismatic leader who built one of the nation’s most influential megachurches despite, or perhaps fueled by, a foul mouth, a sharp temper and frank talk about sex.”

Beginning in 2000, on an “unmoderated discussion board” on Mars Hill’s website called Midrash, Driscoll — under the pseudonym William Wallace II (a name adapted from Mel Gibson’s character in the motion picture *Braveheart*) — posted hundreds of coarse and

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IT WORKS FOR ME...

Pragmatism and the Twenty-First Century Church

by Gary E. Gilley



If there is a common religion to be found within the Western world it surely is pragmatism — the religion of “what works?” Pragmatism has no cathedrals, it follows no liturgy, hires no pastors, and cannot be found in any listing of denominations, yet it is woven into the very fabric of the Western church. Whether we are talking about mainline, Pentecostal, Fundamentalist, Emergent, or Orthodox, it does not take much observation to realize that pragmatism is interlaced throughout each tradition. To attempt to remove pragmatism is to pull a thread which could very well unravel the whole structure of Christianity and church life as we know it today. Yet to pull on that thread we must. The problem is that far too many of us are willing to use any approach available to accomplish our goals, even if those approaches and/or goals do not mesh with the revealed will of God. Our creed is, “If it works it must be of God” for, after all, the outward blessing of God (success) is the criterion by which we often measure the approval of God. By using the standard of pragmatism rather than Scripture, we can with all good conscience live lives and develop ministries that have the appearance of wisdom but nevertheless fall seriously short of God’s standard. We would

do well to ponder the warning found in Proverbs 14:12: “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.”

Take, for example, the wildly popular and thoroughly pragmatic book *Blue Like Jazz* by Donald Miller. The cover of *Blue Like Jazz* tells us that it was written for “anyone wondering if the Christian faith is still relevant in a post-modern culture” and “for anyone thirsting for a fresh encounter with a God who is real.” Yet Miller uses not a single biblical quote or reference and only in passing mentions scriptural situations as he purports to lead us toward an authentic encounter with God. It is for this reason that he can sing the praises of one of the most depraved college campuses in the world (by Miller’s own admission) while telling us, “I had more significant spiritual experiences at Reed College than I ever had at church.”¹

It appears that Miller would have us disregard the guidance of Psalm 1:1, “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful,” and replace it with his own counsel because this is his “experience.” For example, Miller tells us that he can

partially agree with what Christians are saying about depravity (a teaching derived from the Bible, by the way), not because it is biblical but because of his “experience” with his own depravity.²

Moreover, Miller speaks of a time living with “hippies” who “smoked a lot of pot [and] drank a lot of beer” and who were apparently immoral and stole food. Yet he asserts, “I pull them [the hippies] out when I need to be reminded about goodness, about purity and kindness.”³

It is not Scripture which guides Miller’s thoughts but situations that seem to work for him and appear to be in agreement with his own experience. Pragmatism rules in Miller’s book and resonates with millions of his readers. The Christian community has grown so used to this type of thinking that few flinch when Christian leaders, like Miller, build a whole scheme of living around what seems to be working for them.

THE PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATION

While pragmatism is simply a way of life to most people, it is also a philosophical system. One Christian thinker reminds us that philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) “made it

intellectually fashionable both to doubt that we can know reality as it is and to focus on practical things, like ethics. Later that would be echoed in the pragmatism of John Dewey (1859-1952) and the neo-Pragmatism of Richard Rorty (1931-) [one of the originators of postmodern philosophy], who both suggest that we cannot know reality in any full and final sense; we must settle for what works."⁴

Few people have extensive understanding of philosophy but it doesn't take a philosopher to recognize that the prevailing attitude today, an attitude which has invaded the Church, is to "settle for what works" and not be overly concerned about truth. After all, postmoderns believe that we can never be certain of truth anyway; therefore pragmatism will have to do. But when we exchange truth for what works or, better, what we think works, we have elevated our thoughts above God's. Or as Gordon Clark warns, "Since God is truth, a contempt for truth is equally a contempt for God."⁵

Whatever is making the rounds in philosophical circles usually manages to find its way into Christian thinking as well. J Gresham Machen said it well almost a century ago, "What is to-day matter of academic speculation, begins tomorrow to move armies and pull down empires."⁶

One of the academic speculations which is popular at the moment is portraying modern evangelicalism as a product of the Enlightenment, with its emphasis on science, reason, and systematic thought. This is especially true among those embracing a postmodern form of Christianity such as the emerging church leaders. For example, Robert Webber writes:

"Conservatives followed the Enlightenment's emphasis on individualism, reason, and objective truth to build edifices of certainty drawing from the internal consistency of the Bible, the doctrine of inerrancy, the apologetic use of archaeology, critical defense of the biblical text, and other such attempts at rational proof. ... This

Enlightenment paradigm produced three convictions shared equally by Christians and non-Christians: foundationalism, structuralism, and the notion of the metanarrative."⁷

By linking such things as inerrancy, apologetics, foundationalism, and so forth with the Enlightenment, emerging Christian thinkers attempt to undermine these concepts in the eyes of the modern Church. If these ideas spring from Enlightenment philosophy, then they can be discarded as worthless and we can march on to other philosophies, such as ones being proposed by postmodernism, or so the reasoning goes. But the issue is not whether something we have embraced happens to agree, or disagree, with a particular line of thinking, but whether what we believe agrees with Scripture. Certainly there are elements of truth in the accusations made by postmodern Christians, even though most evangelical leaders (both past and present) attempt to filter out the deadly beliefs of the Enlightenment while retaining those parts that were helpful, such as Christianity being a reasonable faith, and truth being understandable and able to be analyzed and systematized.

Still the criticism is valid that theology can be so standardized as to remove the wonder of God, leaving behind an outline of doctrines with no life pulsating in its veins. Countless believers can regurgitate their theological beliefs and favorite memorized Scripture verses yet know virtually nothing of dynamic Christian living. Rote memory and sound doctrine are not equivalent to a passionate, heartfelt love for Christ — but neither are they extra baggage.

Emerging movement thinkers and communicators provide a needed correction when they demonstrate that knowledge does not automatically lead to spiritual vitality, but they go too far when they say that spiritual vitality can be found apart from a solid understanding of the truth of God's revelation. This route has been traveled before, and not that long ago, with disastrous results.

FROM PHILOSOPHY TO THEOLOGY

As a matter of fact, it can be strongly argued that what we are seeing today in much of popular evangelicalism is not the residue of the Enlightenment, but of Romanticism. Historian David Bebbington tells us that in the nineteenth century a new way of looking at the world (Romanticism) arose to challenge and somewhat supplant Enlightenment thinking. Bebbington observes:

"Instead of exalting reason [as the Enlightenment did], those touched by the new spirit of the times placed their emphasis on will, spirit and emotion. They wanted to escape the tight framework of thinking imposed by the older rational approach in order to breathe a freer air."⁸

Bebbington informs us that it was Horace Bushnell, around the midpoint of the nineteenth century, who popularized Romantic ideas so that they began to seep into the theology of evangelicalism. Bushnell would write, "All formulas of doctrine should be held in a certain spirit of accommodation. They cannot be pressed to the letter for the very sufficient reason that the letter is never true."⁹

Bushnell argued that Christian truth should appeal to "feeling and imaginative reason," not to "the natural understanding."¹⁰

If this kind of language sounds familiar, it should. Postmoderns, including those found within the Church, would feel quite at home with Romanticism, because postmodern thinking is similar. It should therefore be carefully noted where Romanticism led Evangelicals during the 1800s — straight to theological liberalism. During the latter part of the nineteenth century virtually all cardinal doctrines of the faith were challenged or denied by the growing liberalism (derived mostly from German Rationalism and Higher Criticism) which was threatening the evangelical church. From the Godhead to the necessity for salvation to

the existence of hell to the atonement to the inspiration of Scripture to the meaning of the Gospel, every doctrine held precious by the evangelical community was gutted of biblical meaning and infused with ideas fitting the times.

Church historian and theologian Iain Murray documents that Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834), considered the father of theological liberalism, adopted the "Romanticism of Rousseau and the pantheism of other contemporary philosophers ... [and] came forward to assert that religion is primarily not a matter of doctrine but rather of feeling, intuition and experience."¹¹

"Life, not theology" became the battle cry of the Romanticized liberal church of the 1800s. As a result, matters of belief were considered of little consequence; what was important was life and experience. Orthopraxy (correct practice or living) trumped orthodoxy (correct doctrine). This was an overreaction by a Christian community which had been softened up by the infiltration of Romanticism. True, biblical Christianity has always confirmed the necessity of both life and experience. No church leader I know is content with developing people whose heads are full of knowledge but whose lives are full of sin. But the contention of conservative believers has always been that life emerges from sound doctrine; right living is never formed in a truth vacuum. Joel Beeke had it right when he wrote, "Doctrine must produce life, and life must adorn doctrine."¹²

The mood of our current postmodern moment, however, like the Romantics and liberals of the 1800s, is to minimize doctrine to the point of being nonessential and to maximize life and experience divorced from a theological core. Brian McLaren, a prominent leader in the emerging church movement (twentieth-first century's version of old liberalism), writes:

"[W]e place less emphasis on whose lineage, rites, doctrines, structures, and terminology are *right* and more emphasis on

whose actions, service, outreach, kindness, and effectiveness are *good*."¹³

McLaren would not claim that all doctrines are wrong, but since we can never be certain which doctrines are correct we must practice what he calls "generous orthodoxy," which is little different from saying everyone is right and everyone is wrong, so let's just get along and love everybody. McLaren seems unconcerned that it is virtually impossible to determine what is good unless one first knows what is right.

Best-selling author and former emerging church pastor Rob Bell concurs with McLaren's emphasis, "Perhaps a better question than who's right, is who's living rightly?"¹⁴ Bell then illustrates his convictions through the use of a trampoline. In Bell's illustration the springs that hold the tarp to the frame are Christian doctrines and even the most sacred doctrines (springs) are dispensable. He offers the doctrine of the incarnation as an example, suggesting that if it could be proven that Jesus was not born of a virgin it would not in any sense affect the Christian faith.¹⁵

The big question for Bell is not what is true. Instead he wants to know, "Is the way of Jesus still the best possible way to live?"¹⁶ This pragmatic question is Bell's one essential for the Christian life. Bell is "far more interested in jumping than ... arguing about whose trampoline is better."¹⁷ In other words, what matters is how we live not what we believe. These men see no vital connection between what we believe and how we live, between orthodoxy and orthopraxy. Having accepted this disconnect they move on to elevate orthopraxy to the exclusion of orthodoxy. Right beliefs are simply superfluous. How we live is all that matters. Pragmatism reigns.

Presumably, if Bell or McLaren found a better "way to live," they would dump Christianity and adopt that better way. This might explain why Bell was an official participant at the Seeds of Compassion conference in April 2008 with Hindu, Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, and Sikh leaders,

and featuring "His Holiness the Dalai Lama."¹⁸ According to their website:

"The concluding session of Seeds of Compassion is a **Youth and Spiritual Connection Dialogue**. Global, national and local luminaries representing faiths from around the world will gather to discuss nurturing youth with spirituality."¹⁹

Perhaps Bell, who was one of the "luminaries" and does not want to argue over beliefs, has found a better trampoline on which to bounce. If youth can be nurtured better by the Dalai Lama or a Muslim Imam or a Zen Buddhist Master then trampoline upgrading would seem appropriate, because the big question for Bell, as he has stated, is not what is true, but, "Is the way of Jesus still the best possible way to live?"

If a better way can be found then Jesus' trampoline would need to be replaced by the better, higher bouncing model. Because ultimately all that matters is what gives us a higher bounce. So what we believe is inconsequential and what the Dalai Lama has to offer might be superior.

Is the way of Jesus *still* the *best possible* way to life? It depends on how you define "life." Biblically there is no question. The Word of God says that Jesus is "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). When Scripture speaks of spiritual life it is speaking of unity with God and, therefore, when Jesus says that "No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6), He is telling us that true spiritual life is the opposite of spiritual death, which is separation from God. Life means being brought into a saving relationship with God. At times that might experientially mean that we are overwhelmed with the greatness of God and the joys of Christian living. At other times, life on this planet, even for the strongest believer, can be a great struggle with the forces of evil, a sinful world, and our own flesh.

Scripture never minimizes these experiences, even though it redeems them (e.g., Romans 5:1-10). What the Word does *not* do is invite us to the

Father through the Son in order to experience a happier existence (a higher bounce) and then trade up if we can find a better deal. Instead the invitation to know God is based on the truth that God is real and Jesus is the only way to union with the Father (Acts 4:12).

The issue is not whether Jesus is the best possible way of living the “good life,” but that Jesus *is* the life and the *only* way to true life as defined as a relationship with God. If we follow Bell’s formula a better way may seem to pop up every so often. If we follow the biblical formula no such alternative is possible. When Jesus asked the apostles if they were going to follow the crowd and abandon Him too, Peter replied, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life” (John 6:68). Peter saw that Jesus was the only option if someone wanted the truth that led to eternal life.

A BLAST FROM THE PAST

McLaren, Bell, and others from the emerging church camp write and speak winsomely about what they are offering, but history, not to mention Scripture, suggests great caution must be exercised at this point. Church historian Iain Murray reminds us that nineteenth century “liberal theology very rarely presented itself as being in opposition to Scripture. On the contrary, its exponents claimed the authority of the New Testament for the view that Christianity is life, not doctrine.”²⁰

Some using this line of reasoning, like the eventual Archbishop of Canterbury William Temple, could say, “An atheist who lives by love is saved by his faith in the God whose existence (under that name) he denies.”²¹ It was living by love that mattered, not what one believed about God. Nineteenth-century liberal theologian Freidrich Schleiermacher went so far as to bar doctrinal preaching from the pulpit for “Experience, not teaching, has to be the object of the preacher.”²²

As theologically the twenty-first century seems to be an echo of the nineteenth century, so too is the reaction by Evangelicals. While there

was a concerted effort to combat liberalism on the part of some of the most conservative believers toward the end of the 1800s,²³ many chose to hang back and express tolerance. Murray reports:

“There were some who were unsure what to think, and in their uncertainty they erred on the side of neutrality and false charity. It was probably the attitude of this group which eventually allowed the new teaching to become so general.”²⁴

This is the error often being repeated today by well-intentioned Evangelicals who don’t want to make waves and fear, above all things, that they might be called “Fundamentalists.” Historically, Fundamentalists in America marched to the front lines to do battle with the opposing liberalism of the early twentieth century. On the other hand, Evangelicals in Great Britain took a more relaxed approach and unintentionally, as Murray would confirm, allowed liberalism to ultimately win the day. Much criticism has been launched at the Fundamentalist movement, some of it deserved, but arguably it is the Fundamentalist who should be given much credit for the preservation of the evangelical faith in America.

RELEVANT AND AUTHENTIC

But just as concerning to many Evangelicals as being termed dreaded Fundamentalists is being labeled “not relevant” or lacking in authenticity. Being relevant and authentic are two buzz words popular in many Christian circles today. Everyone wants to be relevant and authentic, although defining what these words mean often proves to be difficult.

Several years ago, I had lunch with a pastor from one of the most well-known “authentic” churches in America.²⁵ Because this church was known the world over for its authenticity and relevancy, and because until recently it was the poster church for these coveted features, I asked him to describe for me in what way his church members were authentic and relevant. I was especially curious of

his answer within the context of my local church which could be described as conservative, Bible-centered, and basic.

The pastor stumbled around a bit, behaving as if he had never before heard such a question. Possibly I was the first person he had met who was dumb enough to not know what “relevant and authentic” meant. (By the way, you will find the same response if you ask what it means to be missional or what the kingdom really is — two other buzz words in postmodern church circles.)

Finally he told me that most of his people wear jeans to church, to which I replied some of ours do too. He then said his people lived authentically in the community, to which I replied that many of ours do as well (although in theory you are not supposed to define a word by using the word).

Upon further urging from me he then said that his people drink beer. (I assume he did not mean during the church services themselves.) I am pretty sure that some of our people do too, but they don’t talk about it (at least around me) and it surely would not be a badge of authenticity. I asked, “Is that all you got?” But he was finished and had nothing more to say.

Surely casual dress at church services and drinking alcohol is not the definition of either “authentic” or “relevant.” And I am sure this pastor could have provided some better descriptions of the same had he had more time to reflect. Still, from reading his church’s literature and website I know that added to this list is the use of any form of music in church gatherings, no matter how godless or if performed by unbelievers, foul and gutter language, use of sexually inappropriate comments and illustrations, and involvement in almost any form of entertainment and amusement which is attractive to unbelievers. As a matter of fact, I get the idea that relevancy and authentic are terms being used today, at least by some, to describe what Evangelicals of another generation called “worldliness.”

“Worldliness” — now that is a word you won’t often find in “relevant” Christian literature and churches, except to make fun of “prudish” Christians who still care about such things. Past generations of believers saw purity and separation from questionable activities as not only obedience to God (Romans 12:2), but also a witness to unbelievers. Not that unbelievers necessarily understood or appreciated the Christian’s desire for living a separated life (another old fashioned term you won’t hear in most Christian circles today), but they recognized that in many regards true Christians lived differently from the way they did (1 Peter 4:3-4). While this repelled and even infuriated some, it nevertheless served notice that Christ transformed the life and the lifestyle of those He regenerated.

It is this very thing against which many crying “relevancy” today have reacted. How, they ask, can we expect to draw people to Christ by modeling for them a lifestyle they find repugnant? If we are to win the unbeliever to the Lord we must identify with them. We must show them that we enjoy the same things they do. They must be made to realize that Christians can drink and cuss and wear attire and gamble and be foul and enjoy all the same forms of entertainments that non-Christians do.

Living this way, we are told, will be winsome to the unbeliever for they will see in us an authentic life which is transparent and free from hypocrisy and smugness, which the unbeliever claims to see so universally in Christians. We are, after all, no different from them except that we believe in Christ. Emerging movement leader Jim Henderson, in a book co-authored with an atheist and sponsored by George Barna, writes: “[Unbelievers are] just like me, except they’re not currently interested in Jesus to the same degree I am.”²⁶

Certainly, this caricature of Christians is sometimes realistic. Too often believers are afraid to admit their weaknesses and deficiencies. They may put on airs while they are

struggling with the same things that all people do: sin, loneliness, disappointment, pain, and so forth. On this type of pretense we need to call a moratorium. But it is surely an over-reaction to adopt a lifestyle characteristic of those who do not know the redeeming power of Christ in a misguided notion that we will attract them to the Lord as a result.

TRUTH AND AUTHORITY

What we are talking about ultimately are the issues of truth and authority — two concepts which emerging church thinkers and leaders will tell you come from the Enlightenment, not Scripture. As we have seen, postmodern church leaders, like those of liberalism of the past, have tried to drive a wedge between life and doctrine. If they are correct then what we believe does not matter; what matters are our experiences, our emotions, and our behavior. It needs to be clearly stated that no one I know is discounting the importance of “life,” but there are numerous things wrong with equating Christianity with life alone.

For one thing this reductionist approach is simply impossible. There is no life, good or bad, that does not stem from our beliefs. Even as emerging movement leaders such as McLaren and Bell decry doctrine, they are nevertheless teaching their own brand of theology. The very rejection of doctrine as our basis for authority is a theological pronouncement.

Conservatives may affirm the ideas that emerging church adherents reject, but both are testifying to a system of beliefs. Those holding to an emerging church philosophy believe that many things the Bible teaches and Evangelicals avow are not true, or at least not necessary for life and spiritual experience. One proclaims certain truths, the other rejects them, but both are expressing their approach to theology. It is merely word-play to speak of “life, not doctrine.”

Our source of authority is another problematic issue with the life vs. doctrine school of thought. Ultimately everyone has linked his beliefs and

life to some concept of authority. For the biblical Christian that source is the Word of God. When Scripture speaks, and on whatever subject it speaks, it has the last word. All other voices are silenced in the presence of God’s revelation. Our task as believers is to seek to understand what the Word teaches and apply it to our lives.

Some in the Christian community will challenge this idea head-on. They will tell us the Bible is an outdated book full of stories, myths, and historical accounts that bear witness to God’s revelation, but is not the very revelation of God itself. It is a book written by men and, as such, its pronouncements and teachings can be seen as little more than sage advice which we are free to filter, adopting or rejecting as this advice conforms to our own opinion. In this same vein others would make Scripture subservient to science, psychotherapy, and modern thought. After all, the Bible is an ancient book and can hardly be expected to have much to say to citizens of planet earth in the twenty-first century. In both of these scenarios authority rests either in the individual or in the collective wisdom of men rather than the Word of God.

The average Christian follows neither of these scenarios, however. Most would give lip-service to the authority of Scripture, but in practice their real master (authority) is pragmatism. They would never deny the infallibility and the value of God’s Word, but in reality “what works,” or at least what they think works, calls the shots. It is not that they have consciously rejected what God has revealed, but what seems to be working at the moment is their default mode.

And what seems to be working right now? On an ecclesiastical level the churches and parachurch organizations that are most likely to be successful, if you define success as “nickels and noses,” are the very ones who are giving people what they want to hear rather than what God wants them to hear. People want to hear about how to be successful, how to have a happier marriage, and how to feel good about themselves as opposed to the biblical concepts of

how to glorify God, how to have a godly marriage, how to deny self, how to take up one's cross and follow Him.

Because most Christians have the wrong goals for their lives, having derived them from conforming their thinking to the world rather than being transformed by the renewing of their minds (Romans 12:2), it is not surprising that they live by the world's methodologies as well. Individual Christians now wanting the same things the unbeliever wants must use the methods the unbeliever has created.

When we have accepted that the purpose of life is being successful, popular, powerful, wealthy, having a healthy self-image, and so forth, the Scriptures have little to offer because these are not biblical categories. That is, God does not define true life in the same way the world does. The Lord has much to say about denying self, but nothing about loving self. He has much to say about joy, but nothing positive about amusing ourselves to death (as one author calls it). He offers loads of principles concerning finances, but little about how to be rich — and even warns about the desire for wealth (1 Timothy 6:9-10). The Bible is filled with ways of bringing honor to God and lifting up His greatness, but calls us to focus on personal humility (Luke 9:46-48).

We do not naturally think as God thinks. While regeneration changes our nature, it is a life long process to "be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:2) — a process never completed in our lifetime. It is not surprising to find that because we so easily turn to the wrong sources (such as self) for understanding life, we also use the wrong means in our effort to find life (such as pragmatism). If life is defined as succeeding at what one does, then whatever enables one to succeed will become one's controlling influence (dare we say "god"?).

Pragmatism therefore, simply because it seems to "work," is dominating the Christian landscape today. Truth, as revealed in God's Word, is

taking a backseat to the doctrine of "what works." King Pragmatism is on the throne of too many lives and churches, but fortunately there is a means of overthrowing the king. Paul paved the way when he said that we are to be "casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5).

We must challenge our thinking with the Revelation of God. We must allow the Word to have the first word and the last word in our lives. As Isaiah said to the ancient people of Israel, "To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8:20).

CONCLUSION

John Piper, in his excellent book *The Supremacy of God in Preaching*, writes of the need for preachers to diligently remind their listeners of the grandeur of God, although most have no idea that such a message is important to them. The majority would rather hear "relevant" sermons and will criticize the pastor who focuses on God and not on their personal felt-needs.

One critic complains and challenges Piper with, "Can't you see your people are hurting? Can't you come down out of the heavens and get practical? Don't you realize what kind of people sit in front of you on Sunday?" To which Piper replies:

"The greatness and the glory of God are relevant. It does not matter if surveys turn up a list of perceived needs that does not include the supreme greatness of the sovereign God of grace. That is the deepest need. Our people are starving for God."²⁷

George Gallup, in a book which explores spirituality in the twenty-first century, suggests, "The problem is not so much that people do not believe anything; it is that they believe everything."²⁸

Gallup sees this as a problem for the foreseeable future because at this

time "The emphasis is on a desired feeling or fleeting moment of wonder, not on understanding truths with a larger view or power to truly transform."²⁹

Not too long ago, if your child wanted a stuffed animal, you went to some local retail outlet and bought one off the shelf. While there may have been a large number of possibilities, still the options were limited to the stuffed animals in stock. Enter the "Build-A-Bear Workshop" franchise which began in 1997 and now has over 400 locations worldwide and online. At Build-A-Bear children can create their own stuffed animals. They can be as creative as they like, for Build-A-Bear allows children to be sovereign over their own creations, leaving the toy store with a unique critter unlike anyone else's. The only question is, what does the child want in a stuffed bear? But what may be desirable in a fuzzy friend is not desirable when it comes to God and the Christian faith.

Neither the Lord nor the faith is left to our desires or designs. While there is much diversity within the body of Christ, there is only one Lord and one faith (Ephesians 4:5). We are not free to "build a God" or "build a faith." The one true God and the one true faith have been handed down to us in the Word. We must reject the temptation to be our own creator and humbly accept that which the Lord has revealed to us. Pragmatism, the god of "what works," is a creation of our own imagination and ingenuity. We must rest in the true God of the Word.

Endnotes:

1. Donald Miller, *Blue Like Jazz*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2003, pg. 42.
2. *Ibid.*, pg. 23.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 207, 208.
4. Brian Morley, "Understanding Our Postmodern World," in John MacArthur, general editor, *Think Biblically!* Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2003, pg. 140.
5. Gordon H. Clark, *A Christian Philosophy of Education*. Jefferson, Md.: Trinity Foundation, 1988, pg. 158.
6. J. Gresham Machen cited in George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, pg. 137.

7. Robert Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1999, pg. 19.
 8. David Bebbington, *The Dominance of Evangelicalism*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2005, pg. 148.
 9. Horace Bushnell cited in *ibid.*, pg. 164.
 10. Horace Bushnell cited in *ibid.*
 11. Iain H. Murray, *Evangelicalism Divided*. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2000, pg. 5.
 12. Joel R. Beeke and Ray B. Lanning, "The Transforming Power of Scripture" in Don Kistler, general editor, *Sola Scriptura!* Morgan, Pa.: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1995, pg. 253.
 13. Brian McLaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy*. El Cajon, Calif: Youth Specialties Books, 2004, pg. 223, italics in original.
 14. Rob Bell, *Velvet Elvis*. Grand Rapids,

Mich.: Zondervan, 2005, pg. 21.
 15. *Ibid.*, pg. 26.
 16. *Ibid.*, pg. 27.
 17. *Ibid.*
 18. Seeds of Compassion website, "Inter-Spiritual Day." Document accessed at: www.seedsofcompassion.org/involved/interreligious_day.asp.
 19. *Ibid.*, bold in original.
 20. *Evangelicalism Divided*, op. cit., pg. 12.
 21. William Temple cited in *ibid.*
 22. Freidrich Schleiermacher cited in *ibid.*, pg. 11.
 23. See *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, op. cit., pp. 171-228. This was especially true of the old line Presbyterians represented by Princeton Theological Seminary, Dispensationalists, and the Holiness movement.

24. *Evangelicalism Divided*, op. cit., pg. 14.
 25. This pastor was an assistant pastor at Mars Hill Church, which at the time was pastored by Mark Driscoll.
 26. Jim Henderson and Matt Casper, *Jim & Casper Go To Church*. Carol Stream, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, 2007, pg. xxxiii.
 27. John Piper, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1999, pp. 10-11. While I am not in total agreement with Piper on some important theological issues, he is insightful at this point.
 28. George Gallup, Jr., *The Next American Spirituality, Finding God in the Twenty-first Century*. Colorado Springs, Colo.: Cook, 2000, pg. 129.
 29. *Ibid.*, pg. 130.



IS THE BIBLE TOO THIN?

(continued from page 1)

rated on this story to the effect that the seventy-two had translated the whole OT (not the Pentateuch only), each independently of the other, in seclusion. The exact agreement of the seventy-two copies proved the work's inspiration. What is the truth of this story? It is generally agreed that the Pentateuch was translated from Hebrew into Greek in Egypt around the time of Ptolemy II, ca. 280 B.C. The rest of the OT was done by various scholars in various places during the next two centuries. It seems most likely that the LXX originated not by the desire of Ptolemy II (although the project may have had his approval), but out of the need of the Alexandrian Jews. Alexandria of the third century B.C. was a large city with a great Jewish population that spoke Greek rather than Hebrew."⁴

Bruce Metzger concurs regarding the *actual* reason for making the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament:

"The actual motive for undertaking the work, it is now generally agreed, arose from the liturgical and educational needs of the large Jewish community in Alex-

andria. Many members of this community had forgotten their Hebrew or let it grow rusty and spoke only the common Greek of the Mediterranean world. But they remained Jews and wanted to understand the ancient Scriptures, on which their faith and life depended."⁵

As with the term "Apocrypha," the word "Septuagint" can have more than one meaning:

"Some scholars use Septuagint (often in quotation marks) to refer only to the Pentateuch while others intend the term to include the entire collection of Jewish-Greek scriptures [i.e., the Hebrew Bible, plus the books of the Apocrypha]."⁶

This article will use the word "Septuagint" in referring to the entire Hebrew Bible, whose contents are identical with the Protestant Old Testament, *plus* the books of the Apocrypha, which it eventually contained.

Theology professor Robert Lightner explains:

"The Septuagint with dates ranging from about 250 to 160 B.C. is a Greek translation of the Old Testament. Christ used the Septuagint frequently in His quotations and references to the Old Testament. The use of the Septuagint was widespread in Christ's day. Its popularity in the ancient

world would probably compare with the popularity of the Authorized Version in our day. Christ's use of the Septuagint in no way indicates that He thought that version to be inspired."⁷

Due to the widespread use and popularity of the Septuagint, both during and beyond the time of the earthly ministries of Jesus and the apostles, the Septuagint became the Old Testament widely used by the early Christian Church.

It should be noted that the books in the Jewish Bible were exactly the same books that would later become the Protestant Old Testament. However, the Jewish Bible combines some biblical books in such a way that, while the Protestant Old Testament contains 39 books, Jewish Bibles contain either 22 or 24 books, depending upon how the books are grouped. The order of books in the Hebrew Bible also differs at some points from the order of books in the Protestant Old Testament.

THE APOCRYPHA: AN INTRODUCTION

The dictionary defines the adjective "apocryphal" as: "Of questionable authorship or authenticity" and "Erroneous; fictitious."⁸

While these definitions are not ones we will specifically be using in our discussion of the Apocrypha, it may be helpful to keep these definitions in

mind, concerning the Protestant view regarding the Apocrypha.

As to the meaning of the word "Apocrypha," Metzger explains:

"Etymologically, the word *apocrypha* is of Greek derivation and signifies books that are 'hidden away.' (Like the word *data* it is plural number; the singular is *apocryphon*.)"⁹

According to one definition of the Apocrypha, "As commonly defined ... it refers to a nucleus of fourteen or fifteen documents, written during the last two centuries before Christ and the first century of the Christian era."¹⁰ As Lightner explains:

"That these literatures existed in [Jesus'] day is an agreed fact by scholars. The extreme limits¹¹ between which all of these non-inspired books were completed is some time between 300 B.C. and A.D. 100."¹²

The Septuagint eventually included the entire Old Testament, along with books of the Apocrypha, with the exception of 2 Esdras.¹³ However, as Norman Geisler and Ralph MacKenzie have pointed out:

"[I]t is not certain that the Septuagint (LXX) of the first century contained the Apocrypha. The earliest Greek manuscripts that include them date from the fourth century A.D."¹⁴

Bible scholar John Wenham agrees:

"The large codices on which we depend come at best from the fourth and fifth centuries. In these codices apocryphal books appear, but with no consistency as to the books contained or their order; they are mixed up with the undisputed books of the canon. ... Many of these books were known in the first century, but to suggest that there was at that date a clearly-defined deuterocanon [i.e., Apocrypha] included as part of the Septuagint, seems to be entirely contrary to the evidence."¹⁵

The term "Apocrypha" was first used by the great ancient biblical

translator and scholar Jerome (c. 347-420) to refer to certain books, most of which were written in between the close of the Old Testament and the beginning of the New Testament. Most of them were included in the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament, but were not in the Hebrew version of the Old Testament. Nevertheless, it is important to underscore that these books of the Apocrypha were written by Jews.¹⁶

Exactly *why* these books are referred to as "Apocrypha," or "hidden," isn't clear.¹⁷

Perhaps the best *functional* synonym to describe the Apocrypha is the word "non-canonical," that is, books that do not belong to the list of inspired or God-breathed books of Scripture and, thus, do not have His authority behind them.

Because, as mentioned above, most of books of the Apocrypha were written during the time between the last writing prophet of the Old Testament (i.e., Malachi) and the first book of the New Testament, it is technically more accurate to speak of these books as the *Old Testament Apocrypha*. One reason for this qualification is that there are also books written after the close of the New Testament that are considered *New Testament Apocrypha* or "pseudepigrapha," meaning "falsely-attributed writings." However, whenever the word "Apocrypha" is used by itself, without any qualifying adjectives, it is normally equivalent to the phrase "Old Testament Apocrypha."

Metzger tells us that, "According to traditional usage 'Apocrypha' has been the designation applied to the fifteen books, or portions of books," which are:

"The First Book of Esdras
The Second Book of Esdras
Tobit
Judith
The Additions to the Book of Esther
The Wisdom of Solomon
Ecclesiasticus, or the Wisdom of Jesus the Son of Sirach
Baruch
The Letter of Jeremiah

The Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Young Men
Susanna
Bel and the Dragon
The Prayer of Manasseh
The First Book of the Maccabees
The Second Book of the Maccabees."¹⁸

Metzger further explains:

"None of these books is included in the Hebrew canon of holy Scripture. All of them, however, with the exception of 2 Esdras [which is called 4 Esdras by the Roman Catholic Church], are present in copies of the Greek version of the Old Testament known as the Septuagint."¹⁹

Toward the end of the fourth century A.D. Jerome produced a famous Latin translation of the Bible known as the Vulgate, which the Roman Catholic Church endorsed in the 16th century at the Council of Trent (1545-1563). Metzger states:

"The Apocrypha ... are those books and portions of books which appear in the Latin Vulgate, either as part of the Old Testament or as an appendix, but are not in the Hebrew Bible."²⁰

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE APOCRYPHA

The Roman Catholic Church accepts 12 of the 15 above-listed books (or portions of books, in the case of the additions to the book of Esther and the three additions to the book of Daniel). The three books of the Apocrypha, listed above, which the Roman Catholic Church does *not* include in the Old Testament portion of its Bible are 1 Esdras (which they call 3 Esdras), 2 Esdras (which they call 4 Esdras), and The Prayer of Manasseh. The reason Catholics label 1 Esdras as "3 Esdras" and 2 Esdras as "4 Esdras" is because they formerly referred to the biblical book of Ezra as 1 Esdras and the biblical book of Nehemiah as 2 Esdras.²¹ ("Esdras" is the Greek form of the name "Ezra.")

With respect to the Apocryphal additions to the book of Esther, the

Roman Catholic Church distributes these 107 additional verses at certain places within the book. Regarding the Apocryphal additions to the book of Daniel, those additions consist of 68 additional verses inserted between the Protestant Bible's Daniel 3:23 and 3:24. These verses are sometimes referred to as "The Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Young Men." Daniel chapter 13 is sometimes called "Susanna" and Daniel chapter 14 is sometimes called "Bel and the Dragon."

In standard Roman Catholic Bibles, the various additional books are dispersed among the books of the Old Testament. By thus omitting three of the 15 works of the Apocrypha, using others as additions to existing books, and by adding seven entire books to their Old Testament, Roman Catholic Old Testaments contain 46 books, in contrast to the Protestant Old Testament which consists of 39 books. Thus, the Apocrypha contained in the Old Testament of Roman Catholic Bibles is actually a *subset* of the Apocrypha. However, Roman Catholic and Protestant New Testaments are identical in number of books, as well as in their names and contents.

That said, Roman Catholics do not refer to these books, and additions to books, as "the Apocrypha," although Jerome did. Instead, Catholics use the term "deuterocanonical" (a word which means "second canon") to refer to these books and portions of books. One Catholic dictionary explains the use of the term in this way:

"The expression 'deuterocanonical' derives from Sixtus of Siena (1528-1569), who used the word to designate those books of Scripture whose placement in the canon of Scripture was at some time challenged."²²

Likewise, Metzger states:

"The terms 'protocanonical' and 'deuterocanonical' are used to signify respectively those books of Scripture that were received by the entire Church from the beginning as inspired, and those whose inspiration came to be recognized later, after the matter

had been disputed by certain Fathers and local churches."²³

It must be underscored that Roman Catholics make no distinction between the inspiration and authority of the deuterocanonical and the protocanonical works of their Old Testament. They believe that both are inspired by God and have His authority behind them.

To further complicate matters, Roman Catholics *also* use the term "Apocrypha." However, Roman Catholics use the term to refer to books that are outside *their* canon of sacred Scripture; for those books that Roman Catholics refer to as "Apocrypha," Protestants typically use the word "pseudepigrapha" (i.e., falsely-attributed writings).²⁴ Examples of books that Roman Catholics would designate Apocrypha — and which Protestants would refer to as pseudepigrapha — would be books such as First Enoch (also known simply as "Enoch"), Assumption of Moses, and Psalms of Solomon,²⁵ among others. The Catholic Church, in common with Protestants, actually *does* use the term "Apocrypha" for the three works of the normal Apocrypha that Catholics do not include among their deuterocanonical works: 1 Esdras (which they call 3 Esdras), 2 Esdras (which they call 4 Esdras), and The Prayer of Manasseh.²⁶ Thus, from a purely practical standpoint, as explained above, the technical term "Apocrypha" *functionally* amounts to the term "noncanonical."

While both the 15 works *and* the Catholic subset of them are properly referred to as the "Apocrypha," this article will refer to the Catholic subset of the Apocrypha as "the Catholic deuterocanon," or "the deuterocanonical works," and to the 15 works of the Apocrypha as "the normal Apocrypha" to distinguish it from the Catholic subset.

AN EXPANDED VERSION OF THE APOCRYPHA

There is also an *expanded version* of the Apocrypha that is contained in some Protestant Bible translations, such as in certain editions of the Revised Standard Version (RSV), an

edition of the English Standard Version (ESV), as well as in some editions of the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), and the Common English Bible (CEB). These versions of the Apocrypha contain all 15 books included in the Apocrypha, *plus* these three additional works: Psalm 151, 3 Maccabees, and 4 Maccabees.

The apparent reason for this expanded version of the Apocrypha was to be as ecumenical and inclusive of as many major Christian church bodies as possible. In addition to the Catholic deuterocanonical works, the Eastern Orthodox Church also adds 3 Maccabees and Psalm 151 to its Old Testament. As Metzger explains:

"[T]he text of a 'Common Bible' (approved by both Roman Catholics and Protestants) was issued in 1973. Subsequently, in order to include all the texts accepted as Deuterocanonical by Eastern Orthodox Churches, the Standard Bible Committee prepared a version of 3 and 4 Maccabees and Psalm 151. These were issued in 1977, and the expanded edition of the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books was endorsed by representatives of Orthodox communions."²⁷

Metzger adds that "the contents of the collection known as Deuterocanonical Books vary among the churches that recognize them as authoritative."²⁸

Therefore, such an all-inclusive Bible could be used by Protestants, Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, and Slavonic (Russian Orthodox) churches. The Slavonic Bibles accept all of the books included in Eastern Orthodox Bibles, and also 2 Esdras (which Roman Catholics refer to as 4 Esdras). To confuse matters further, Slavonic Bibles refer to 2 Esdras (i.e., the Roman Catholic 4 Esdras) as 3 Esdras!²⁹

Catholic author Daniel Harrington said of the expanded edition of the Apocrypha, "This collection of books is larger than the New Testament and about thirty percent the size of the Old Testament."³⁰

Professor David deSilva comments that all of the books/portions of books in the expanded Apocrypha, “were all written between 185 B.C.E. and 100 C.E. (with the possible exception of Tobit, which may predate the second century B.C.E.)!”³¹

THE 18 WORKS OF THE EXPANDED APOCRYPHA

The 18 works of the expanded Apocrypha include several genres of literature: Historical narrative (e.g., 1 Maccabees), wisdom literature (e.g., The Wisdom of Solomon, also known simply as “Wisdom” and Ecclesiasticus, also known as “Sirach” or “the Wisdom of Jesus the Son of Sirach” or as “Ben Sira”), and apocalyptic literature. The term “apocalyptic” refers to visionary prophetic literature, like Daniel 7-12, or the book of Revelation.

The book of 2 Esdras (or 4 Esdras), which is not contained in Catholic Bibles, is the one piece of apocalyptic literature in the normal Apocrypha.

There is also an epistle (The Letter of Jeremiah), fictional moralistic tales (Tobit, Judith, Susanna, and Bel and the Dragon), pseudo-historical works (3 Maccabees), and devotional literature (the Prayer of Manasseh).³²

WORKS ONLY CONTAINED IN THE EXPANDED APOCRYPHA

Beginning with the works only included in the expanded version of the Apocrypha, the following is a summary of the contents of these works.

Psalm 151 — This brief Psalm purports to be David’s account of the killing of Goliath.

The Third Book of the Maccabees — This book is misnamed, because it has nothing to do with the Maccabees, who only came on the scene some 50 years after the events related in this book supposedly occurred. According to one description of the book:

“[Its] contents deal not with the exploits of the Maccabean heroes, but with the struggles of Egyptian Jews who suffered under Ptolemy IV Philopator (221-203 B.C.), half a century prior to the

Maccabean period and the persecution of Palestinian Jewry under Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 B.C.)”³³

The Fourth Book of the Maccabees — This book is a philosophical treatise — probably an oration or a lengthy sermon — on the virtue of reason being able to rule the emotions. Its central thesis, repeated more than once in the book, is expressed within the first chapter:

“I could prove to you from many and various examples that reason is dominant over the emotions, but I can demonstrate it best from the noble bravery of those who died for the sake of virtue, Eleazar and the seven brothers and their mother. All of these, by despising sufferings that bring death, demonstrated that reason controls the emotions” (4 Maccabees 1:7-9, RSV).

Indeed, the majority of the book’s 18 chapters focuses on the above-mentioned Eleazar (especially 4 Maccabees 5:1-7:16), the seven brothers (especially 4 Maccabees 8:3-14:11), and their mother (especially 4 Maccabees 14:11-17:7). These three sets of martyrs are presented much more briefly in 2 Maccabees 6:18-7:42, on which these events recounted in 4 Maccabees are doubtless based.

There are also works of the Apocrypha which are not part of the Catholic Deuterocanonical works. These three works that are part of the normal Apocrypha, but which do not appear in the Catholic deuterocanon, are:

The Prayer of Manasseh — 2 Chronicles 33:10-13 relates that when the Lord afflicted the wicked King Manasseh of Judah, Manasseh “implored the LORD his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed to Him; and He received his entreaty, heard his supplication, and brought him back to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD was God” (2 Chronicles 33:12-13; see 33:18-19). This anonymously composed prayer is alleged to be Manasseh’s entreaty.

1 Esdras (which Catholics call 3 Esdras, although it is not in Catholic Bibles) — This book seems to be a combination of certain parts of Old Testament historical books — yet there are some significant differences in some of what it relates compared with what we find in the biblical accounts that it seems to be attempting to parallel. One source says:

“Beginning somewhat abruptly with a description of the great Passover held by King Josiah in Jerusalem ... the book reproduces the substance of 2 Chr. 35.1-36.23, the whole of Ezra, and Neh. 7.38-8.12, breaking off in the middle of a sentence after an account of Ezra’s reforms ... There are numerous minor discrepancies between the apocryphal and canonical accounts, including a rearrangement of the materials; and the story of the three young men in the court of Darius ([1 Esdras] 3.1-5.6) has no parallel in the Old Testament.”³⁴

Whereas the description above says that there are “numerous minor discrepancies,” some of the discrepancies are not minor.

2 Esdras (called 4 Esdras by Catholics, although it is not in Catholic Bibles) — This is the only apocalyptic (i.e., visionary prophetic) book in either the normal or expanded versions of the Apocrypha. It appears to be the work of three authors. The main portion of the book (chapters 3-14) is apparently the work of a Jewish author, writing about A.D. 100, and consists of seven visions experienced by one representing himself as the biblical scribe Ezra, who played a prominent role in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. However, in 2 Esdras, he presents himself as a prophet (2 Esdras 1:1), a role he did not have in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

In answer to Ezra earnestly seeking the Lord about certain matters that trouble him, an angel of God named Uriel is sent to Ezra to respond to his questions, and also to teach Ezra about the end times.

Finally, following are the 12 works of the Apocrypha. Because Roman

Catholics combine the Letter of Jeremiah with the book of Baruch, making it the final chapter of that book, their count of deuterocanonical works is 11, rather than 12. Their deuterocanon thus consists of seven books plus one piece added to the canonical book of Esther and three to Daniel.

Tobit — A fictional morality tale involving the poverty and suffering of the virtuous man Tobit and also the affliction of a woman named Sarah, whose fiancées keep dying because of a demon. In answer to the prayers of Tobit and Sarah, God sends an angel named Raphael to help them.

Judith — A fictional tale involving a woman named Judith who, with God's help and like the biblical Esther, delivers the people of Israel from an enemy. In this case, it is an Assyrian general who is bent on their destruction. Judith's act of deliverance is similar to that of Jael, the wife of Heber (see Judges 4:17-22).

The Additions to the Book of Esther — These 107 verses are distributed in six specific places in the book of Esther and give additional information not provided by the Hebrew version of the book of Esther, including frequent mention of God's name, which is famously missing from the Hebrew version.

The Wisdom of Solomon — An example of wisdom literature by someone writing under the guise of Solomon. Although never explicitly identified as Solomon, his identification is clear in the book. While portions of this book contain beautiful passages, the latter portion of the book contains absurd and unjustified elaborations and interpretations of certain biblical events.

Ecclesiasticus or the Wisdom of Jesus the Son of Sirach — The name *Ecclesiasticus* "comes from the title of the Latin version, and is generally explained to mean 'The Church Book.'"³⁵ Metzger states, "Ecclesiasticus is not only the longest but also one of the most important and most highly esteemed of the Apocryphal books. ... This is the only Apocryphal book the author of which is known."³⁶ Written in a style very

similar to the biblical book of Proverbs, it is a fascinating book, covering a wide range of subjects, "all culminating in the fear of the Lord."³⁷

Baruch — Although this short work is obviously fictitiously written under the guise of Jeremiah's secretary, Baruch, it nonetheless contains some very beautiful passages that sound biblical in substance. The first part consists of an introduction and a confession of sin by the Israelites in exile and the second part consists of an exhortation to God's people.

The Letter of Jeremiah — In Catholic Bibles, this is not a separate work, but the final chapter of the book of Baruch (above). It is a letter denouncing idolatry, supposedly written by the prophet Jeremiah to the Israelites taken into captivity by the Babylonians.

The Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Young Men — This is a 68-verse insertion between Daniel 3:23 and 3:24 in the canonical book of Daniel, containing a prayer by Azariah, followed by a hymn of praise made by the three men thrown into Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace (see Daniel 3).

Susanna — Daniel 13 in Catholic Bibles. This is the story of a woman named Susanna, who was falsely accused by two lying elders of committing adultery. In response to her prayer to God, the youth Daniel is appointed to deliver her from death by exposing the lies of the elders.

Bel and the Dragon — Daniel 14 in Catholic Bibles. This chapter relates two tales of Daniel's exposing the falsity of idols to the Persian king. After Daniel kills the dragon, the Babylonians, in anger, throw Daniel into a lion's den (not the same incident recorded in chapter 6 of the canonical book of Daniel), but the Lord saves Daniel from the lions.

The First Book of the Maccabees — First Maccabees covers a period of struggle and persecution of the Jewish people under Syrian rule from approximately 175 B.C.-134 B.C., including the famous revolt of Jewish separatists under the leadership of Judas

Maccabeus (whose nickname "Maccabeus" may mean "hammer") in his opposition to the efforts of Antiochus IV (nicknamed "Epiphanes")³⁸ to cause the Jews to apostatize from their allegiance to the true God. Both 1 Maccabees and 2 Maccabees also recount the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem (1 Maccabees 4:36-59; 2 Maccabees 10:1-8) and the origin of the Jewish feast of Hannukah (called "the Feast of Dedication" in John 10:22). For the most part, 1 Maccabees appears to be a straightforward historical account, although not without some apparent inaccuracies and favorably biased reporting, for example, concerning the Romans in 1 Maccabees 8.³⁹

The Second Book of the Maccabees — This work, although independent of the book of 1 Maccabees, relates a history of the Jewish people during a shorter portion of the same period covered by 1 Maccabees; specifically, it relates events of Jewish suffering and persecution under the Syrians from about 175 B.C.-160 B.C.,⁴⁰ and its history is roughly parallel to the events covered in 1 Maccabees 1-7,⁴¹ although some of the events, such as the death of Antiochus Epiphanes are not in the same chronological sequence as in 1 Maccabees, and the author presents a seemingly less objective and a more supernatural view of the events covered. Overall, this work, which its author confesses is an abridgment of a five-volume history by a certain Jason of Cyrene (2 Maccabees 2:23), seems less reliable and more sensationalized than the history recounted in 1 Maccabees. Second Maccabees 6:18-31 records the martyrdom of an elderly scribe named Eleazar and chapter 7 records the martyrdom of a mother and her seven sons at the hands of Antiochus Epiphanes. This latter event may be alluded to in Hebrews 11:35.

THE APOCRYPHA IN CHURCH HISTORY

Except for the first two chapters and the last two chapters of 2 Esdras, all 18 books of the expanded Apocrypha seem to have been written by Jews. Despite that fact, since at least the

first century or so after Christ, Jews have never considered the books of the Apocrypha to be Scripture. Exactly when the Jewish canon of Scripture became fixed is a matter of some debate. However, the evidence is clear that either at some point before the time of Christ or, at the latest, within the earliest centuries after Christ, the Jewish canon of Scripture was settled and it did not include the Apocrypha. Rather, it contained only the books that would later make up the Protestant Old Testament.

While Jesus and the apostles quoted from many of the 39 books that make up the Protestant Old Testament (the same 22 or 24 books that comprise the Hebrew Bible), they never once quoted from any of the books of the normal Apocrypha. To balance this out, Metzger has observed:

“In some cases, however, both the thought and the phrasing are so close between the two [i.e., portions of the New Testament and portions of the Apocrypha] that it must be concluded that the Christian writers had been influenced directly or indirectly by the intertestamental books. Among the several New Testament authors, Paul, James, and the anonymous writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews display the greatest number of coincidences with the Apocrypha.”⁴²

Likewise, deSilva says:

“While the Apocrypha are never explicitly cited [in the New Testament] as Scripture, there are many places where the relationship between New Testament text and Apocrypha text goes beyond echo or parallel into influence.”⁴³

After the books of the New Testament had been written, but before the Christian Church had discerned a fixed list of books that were divinely inspired Scripture, various books of the Apocrypha were cited by different figures within the Church. deSilva notes:

“At the end of the first century and beginning of the second, Christian authors refer more and

more to these texts and even ascribe to them the status of Scripture (shown usually in the way the quotation is introduced, as in ‘as it is written’).”⁴⁴

As examples of early Christian documents that cite passages from the Apocrypha, deSilva mentions the *Didache* (a church manual written at the turn of the first century), the pseudonymous *Epistle of Barnabas*, *First Clement* (written by Clement of Rome around A.D. 96), and Polycarp’s *To the Philippians*.⁴⁵ Additionally, well-known personalities in early Church history, such as Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian seem to regard certain portions of the Apocrypha as Scripture.⁴⁶

Enter two giants in early Church history: Augustine, the theologian (354-430) and Jerome, the biblical scholar (c. 347-420). Their views on the Apocrypha were simultaneously so important and divergent that deSilva remarks:

“To use a gross oversimplification, if it were not for Augustine, these books might have been lost to the church; if it were not for Jerome, we might never have distinguished them as a collection separate from the Old Testament.”⁴⁷

Later, deSilva elaborates:

“The debate concerning the status of these books became part of the permanent tradition of the church universal on account of the work of two weighty authorities in the church: Jerome, who was responsible in large measure for the translation of the Vulgate, the Latin Bible that would be used by the Western church for more than a millennium, and Augustine, whose theological works became foundational for Christian theology. ... [Jerome] advocated a division of the broader Old Testament canon into works that were ‘canonical,’ which would be used to inform doctrine and practice, and works that were ‘ecclesiastical,’ which would be read in churches and used for edification but not for

the confirmation of doctrine. ... Augustine vehemently opposed Jerome’s attempts to reform the more popular usage of the church. He advocated following the Septuagint text, in part due to its common use in the Eastern churches and Augustine’s desire to maintain unity with them. He also advocated quite explicitly the broader canon of the Old Testament, which was to include Tobit, Judith, 1 and 2 Maccabees, Wisdom [of Solomon], and Ben Sira [i.e., Sirach].”⁴⁸

Metzger notes:

“In the Old Testament Jerome followed the Hebrew canon and by means of prefaces called the reader’s attention to the separate category of the apocryphal books. Subsequent copyists of the Latin Bible, however, were not always careful to transmit Jerome’s prefaces, and during the medieval period the Western Church generally regarded these books as part of the holy Scriptures.”⁴⁹

Elsewhere, Metzger states:

“Jerome, standing in this respect almost alone in the West, spoke out decidedly for the Hebrew canon [which excluded the books of the Apocrypha], declaring unreservedly that books which were outside that canon should be ranked as Apocryphal. When he prepared his famous Latin translation of the Bible, the Vulgate, he scrupulously separated the Apocryphal Additions to Daniel and Esther, marking them with marginal notes as absent from the original Hebrew. Nevertheless, against his more considered judgment, he allowed himself to be persuaded by the importunity of two bishops, his friends, to make a hurried rendering of the books of Tobit and Judith.”⁵⁰

Also deSilva comments:

“Augustine’s authority resulted in the affirmation of his canon by several church councils, includ-

ing the Council of Carthage (397),⁵¹ and in the more general acceptance of these books as canonical. This view was never unanimous, however. Many Catholic ecclesiasts questioned the place of the books of the Apocrypha in the Old Testament canon. ... Cardinals Ximenes and Cajetan, both [Catholic] contemporaries of Luther, also promoted a distinction between the Hebrew canon and the Apocrypha, books which they held to be useful for edification but not for establishing official doctrine. ... The question of the status of the Apocrypha was brought to the forefront once more, however, by the Protestant Reformers."⁵²

The Roman Catholic Church had declared the books of the Apocrypha to be canonical prior to the Protestant Reformation at the ecumenical Council of Florence (1439-1445).⁵³ However, as noted above, Cardinals Ximenes and Cajetan, both of whom were Roman Catholic contemporaries of Luther, differed with the Council of Florence's judgment regarding the books of the Apocrypha. As Metzger notes:

"Subsequent to Jerome's time and down to the period of the Reformation a continuous succession of the more learned Fathers and theologians in the West maintained the distinctive and unique authority of the books of the Hebrew canon."⁵⁴

PROTESTANT REFORMATION VIEWS ON THE APOCRYPHA

Luther and the Protestant Reformers did not consider the books of the Apocrypha to be Scripture, although Protestant Reformers and creeds expressed a variety of opinions as to their worth. Metzger explains:

"The central aim of the Protestant Reformers was the examination and correction of current ecclesiastical practices and doctrines in the light of the Bible. In the controversies which emerged they soon perceived the need to be certain which books were

authoritative for the establishment of doctrine and which were not. It appears that Luther was first led to disparage the books of the Apocrypha when his opponents appealed to passages in them as proof for the doctrines of Purgatory and of the efficacy of prayers and Masses for the dead (II Macc. 12:43-45). Likewise the emphasis that certain Apocryphal books lay upon merit acquired through good works (Tobit 12:9; Ecclus. 3:30; II Esdras 8:33; 13:46, etc.) was naturally distasteful to him."⁵⁵

Metzger observes:

"Luther's German translation of the entire Bible, completed in 1534, contained the books of the Apocrypha (except I and II Esdras) in an appendix at the close of the Old Testament."⁵⁶

The reason Luther gave for omitting I and II Esdras was his light esteem of them; however, another man, Daniel Cramer, translated these books for later editions of Luther's Bible.⁵⁷

Metzger states:

"Luther prefaced the section of his Bible in which the books of the Apocrypha were collected together with the statement: 'APOCRYPHA — that is, books which are not held equal to the Holy Scriptures, and yet are profitable and good to read.'"⁵⁸

Although Luther had gathered the books of the Apocrypha and placed them in a section between the Old and New Testaments — a practice followed today in some Protestant editions of the Bible containing the Apocrypha — he was not the first to separate the Apocryphal works from the rest of the Bible. Metzger writes, "The first Bible in a modern vernacular to segregate the apocryphal books from the others was the Dutch Bible published by Jacob van Liesveldt in 1526 at Antwerp."⁵⁹ This was eight years prior to the 1534 edition of Luther's complete Bible. Also prior to Luther's Bible, there were at least two different editions of the Swiss-German Bible, prepared by ministers of

the Church in Zurich which segregated the books of the Apocrypha from the rest of the Bible.⁶⁰

What was the Catholic Church's response to the Reformers' denial of the canonical status of the books of the Apocrypha? Metzger answers:

"In reaction to Protestant criticisms of the disputed books, on April 8, 1546 [at the Roman Catholic Council of Trent], fifty-three Roman Catholic prelates at this Council pronounced an anathema⁶¹ upon any who would not receive the old Latin Vulgate Bible, with all of its books and parts, as sacred and canonical."⁶²

Catholic apologist Gary Michuta notes that in 1870, the Catholic ecumenical council, Vatican I, "reaffirmed Trent's decree on the canon."⁶³ He also notes that this council "attached an anathema to any who deny Trent's decree on the canon."⁶⁴

As to other Reformers, deSilva says:

"Calvin was more forthright in his rejection of the Apocrypha from canonical consideration [than was Luther or Karlstadt⁶⁵] (though he was nonetheless well read in them). Following his lead, the framers of the Westminster Confession (1646) stated, 'The books commonly called the Apocrypha, not being of divine inspiration, are no part of the canon of the Scripture; and therefore are of no authority in the Church of God, nor to be in any otherwise approved, or made use of, than other human writings.'"⁶⁶

Further deSilva notes that:

"The place of the Apocrypha in the Eastern Orthodox churches has also been rather varied. ... The tendency in modern Greek Orthodox churches is to view the books as canonical."⁶⁷

The first edition of the King James Version of the Bible in 1611 contained the books of the Apocrypha in a separate section between the Old and the New Testaments.⁶⁸ At times, subsequent printings of the King James

Version omitted the Apocrypha.⁶⁹ However, “for several generations most printings of the King James Version continued to include the Apocrypha.”⁷⁰ Nevertheless, in 1827, the British and Foreign Bible Society, based in London, prohibited circulating the Apocrypha. “Several other Bible Societies, including the American Bible Society ... followed the decision and practice of the London Society.”⁷¹ After this “it soon became difficult to obtain ordinary editions of the [Protestant] Bible with the Apocrypha.”⁷²

Metzger states:

“Among the several Protestant Churches today, none of which regards the Apocrypha as the Word of God, various degrees of respect are shown the Apocryphal books. The Church that accords them the greatest degree of consideration is the Anglican or Episcopal church.”⁷³

Commenting on the attitude of the Anglican or Episcopal Church toward the Apocrypha, deSilva states:

“The sixth article from the Articles of Religion, the closest thing we find to a ‘Confession’ in the Anglican church, includes a clear statement concerning the Apocrypha: ‘And the other Books (as [Jerome] saith) the Church doth read for example of life and instruction of manners; but yet doth it not apply them to establish any doctrine.’ The article then lists all the books of the Apocrypha except 3 and 4 Maccabees.”⁷⁴

WORDS OF MEN OR THE WORD OF GOD?

Protestantism stands against both Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy in rejecting the Apocrypha as God’s Word, whereas Eastern Orthodoxy has historically vacillated in its opinion of the Apocryphal books. Since at least the 16th-century Council of Trent (if not a full century earlier at the Council of Florence), Catholicism has dogmatically proclaimed as Scripture the works in its deuterocanon.

What matters, however, is not the traditions of men, no matter how noble or well-intentioned, but the Word of God. The issue is vital, and space doesn’t permit a thorough examination of the question. In the words of R.T. Beckwith:

“What qualifies a book for a place in the canon of the Old Testament or New Testament is not just that it is ancient, informative and helpful, and has long been read and valued by God’s people, but that it has God’s authority for what it says. God spoke through its human author to teach his people what to believe and how to behave. It is not just a record of revelation, but the permanent written form of revelation. This is what we mean when we say that the Bible is ‘inspired,’ and it makes the books of the Bible in this respect different from all other books.”⁷⁵

COUNCIL OF TRENT’S ARBITRARY DECISION

Protestant scholar John Wenham explains:

“The Reformers believed that they were correcting a false trail begun in patristic times. The doctors of Trent believed that they were pursuing the course followed by the [Church] Fathers to its logical conclusions. Even in the period since Trent, however, a number of Roman Catholics have continued to show unwillingness to grant the Apocrypha full canonical status. And with reason.”⁷⁶

Later, Wenham states:

“It is hard to escape the conclusion that the Tridentine [i.e., Council of Trent] definition is arbitrary. The Council of Trent unfortunately seems to have had no Hebraists and few good Greek scholars, with the result that the [Catholic] church appears to have been saddled with the task of defending books which are scarcely defensible.”⁷⁷

In regard to Trent’s admission of books into its deuterocanon being

arbitrary, on what grounds did they *not* admit the three books of the Apocrypha into the canon that they rejected: 1 Esdras, 2 Esdras, and The Prayer of Manasseh? They simply passed over these books, making no judgment at all as to their canonical status. Catholic apologist Gary Michuta notes, “Those who claim ... that Trent ‘rejected’ [1] Esdras are mistaken. It did not. In fact, any rejection or affirmation was purposefully withheld. ... The question of [1] Esdras’ canonical status was left theoretically open.”⁷⁸

Regarding the dogmatic pronouncement on the deuterocanonical books made at the Catholic Council of Trent, Geisler and MacKenzie remind us that:

“Adding [the books of the deuterocanon/the Apocrypha] to the Bible with an infallible decree at the Council of Trent has all the markings of a dogmatic and polemical pronouncement, geared by Roman Catholicism to bolster support for doctrines for which they cannot find clear support in any of the sixty-six canonical books.”⁷⁹

And apologists John Ankerberg and John Weldon observe, “For more than a millennium, then, Catholics had not been required to accept these books as Scripture.”⁸⁰

FACTUAL AND DOCTRINAL ERRORS OF THE APOCRYPHA

A second factor that militates against accepting the Apocrypha as the Word of God is also stated by Ankerberg and Weldon:

“[T]he Apocrypha contains many factual errors. ... Can the Apocrypha be considered God’s Word when everyone, Protestant and Catholic, cannot logically deny that it contains demonstrable historical and geographical errors? This destroys the crucial doctrine of divine inspiration, not to mention impugning God’s character. To our way of thinking, this single fact alone disqualifies the Apocrypha from canonical status.”⁸¹

The Catholic Church is aware that there are inaccuracies in the Apocrypha. The books of Tobit and Judith are well-known for containing factual errors. For instance, concerning the book of Judith, Roman Catholic author Daniel Harrington states:

“[M]uch of what is presented as historical data [in Judith] is incorrect or confused. For example, Nebuchadnezzar ruled over the Babylonian empire, not the Assyrian empire and not in the Assyrian capital of Nineveh (which was already destroyed). At several points (see [Judith] 4:3; 5:18-19) the exile and the return are said to have already occurred. And there is no record of a city named Bethulia, of anything like the crisis described in the book, or of a woman named Judith who saved her people. The book is best understood as historical fiction, a work of literary imagination based on biblical precedents.”⁸²

Likewise, in regard to the Apocryphal book of Baruch, Harrington states:

“According to the [biblical] book of Jeremiah, Baruch the son of Neriah served as scribe and secretary to the prophet Jeremiah (see Jer. 36:27-32; see 45:1-5). It is unlikely that this Baruch was the author of the book. There is no evidence that Baruch was ever in Babylon; there are many historical inaccuracies in the narrative framework; and ... [some] parts [of this book] depend on biblical texts that were not yet written in Baruch’s own time. Therefore, like the other books ascribed to Baruch, this book should be understood as having been composed under Baruch’s name (as pseudonymous).”⁸³

The book of Ecclesiasticus (or Sirach) has been of interest to both Christians and Jews, and some of it seems to contain valuable wisdom; although it is clearly not God’s Word, as is evidenced, for example, in some of its very human and culturally-conditioned views about women.

Consider these three examples:⁸⁴

“It is a disgrace to be the father of an undisciplined son, and the birth of a daughter is a loss” (Sirach 22:3).

“From a woman sin had its beginning, and because of her we all die” (Sirach 25:24).

“Better is the wickedness of a man than a woman who does good; and it is a woman who brings shame and disgrace” (Sirach 42:14).

Sirach 42:1, 5 (RSV) counsels the reader not to be ashamed “of whipping a wicked servant severely.” According to a RSV text note, the Greek text reads, “making the side of a wicked servant bleed.”

Some of the book of Sirach actually contradicts Scriptural teaching. Consider these two examples:

First, “A good man will be surety for his neighbor” (Sirach 29:14). Contrast this instruction with the biblical book of Proverbs, which repeatedly warns *against* becoming surety for a neighbor. For example: “Do not be one of those who shakes hands in a pledge, one of those who is surety for debts. If you have nothing with which to pay, why should he take away your bed from under you?” (Proverbs 22:26-27; for additional biblical warnings against becoming surety, see Proverbs 6:1-5; 11:15; 17:18; 20:16).

Second, “If you will, you can keep the commandments, and to act faithfully is a matter of your own choice” (Sirach 15:15). This is contrary to many biblical passages, and sounds remarkably like the empty boast by the rich young ruler to Jesus (Mark 10:17-22). By contrast, consider for example, Romans 3:9-20; 7:1-8:4; Galatians 2:16-21; 3:10-14, 21-26; and 5:1-6. Historically, the teaching that one has the ability in oneself to be righteous reflects the early Christian heresy of Pelagianism.⁸⁵

Other books of the Apocrypha also contain doctrinal errors. The Apocryphal book, Wisdom of Solomon (also known simply as “Wisdom”) seems to teach the pre-existence of the soul⁸⁶

and also contradicts the biblical doctrine of human depravity (e.g., Romans 3:9-12; Mark 10:18; Matthew 7:11) when it says:

“As a child I was by nature well endowed, and a good soul fell to my lot; or rather, being good, I entered an undefiled body” (Wisdom of Solomon 8:19-20).

It also seems to teach pantheism when it says, “thy immortal spirit is in all things” (Wisdom of Solomon 12:1).

And in addition to the above examples, chapters 16-19 of Wisdom of Solomon contain ridiculous and unjustified elaborations and interpretations of certain biblical events.

Although there are additional errors contained in the books of the Apocrypha, space prohibits a detailed list. Ankerberg and Weldon also address the matter:

“Summing up, biblical scholar Dr. René Pache comments, ‘Except for certain interesting historical information (especially in 1 Maccabees) and a few beautiful moral thoughts (e.g., Wisdom of Solomon), these books contain absurd legends and platitudes, and historical, geographical and chronological errors, as well as manifestly heretical doctrines; they even recommend immoral acts (Judith 9:10, 13).’”⁸⁷

And they add, “What proves the claim to the Apocrypha’s divine inspiration false is the presence of all the errors.”⁸⁸ This fact would seem to be an irrefutable argument against the Apocrypha being the Word of God, because God cannot err.

THE APOCRYPHA: AN EVALUATION

The Apocrypha serves as a bridge between the Old and New Testaments, giving a window into the development of Jewish thought and theology during that time. Additionally, the history of 1 Maccabees is very helpful in understanding certain things that happened to the Jewish people during a portion of that period, shedding welcome light on cer-

tain historical events, especially concerning the rule and career of Antiochus Epiphanes, about whom Daniel prophesied in Daniel 8 and 11.

Luther commented that 1 Maccabees was “a very necessary and useful book for the understanding of the eleventh chapter of the prophet Daniel.”⁸⁹ It is interesting to compare 1 Maccabees 1:1-9 with Daniel 8:1-8, 20-22 and 11:3-20; and also to compare 1 Maccabees 1:10-6:16 (which describes the career of Antiochus Epiphanes and his persecution of the Jewish people) with the biblical prophecies regarding him in Daniel 8:9-14, 23-26 and 11:21-35. Furthermore, regarding “the abomination of desolation” mentioned in Daniel 11:31 and 12:11 (cf. Daniel 9:27), and referenced by the Lord Jesus in Matthew 24:15 and Mark 13:14, it is interesting to note that 1 Maccabees mentions that, during his reign, Antiochus Epiphanes’ supporters “erected a desolating sacrilege upon the altar of burnt offering” (1 Maccabees 1:54, RSV) in the temple in Jerusalem. In a study note on Daniel 11:31, one study Bible states that the “abomination that causes desolation” mentioned in that verse in Daniel was, “the altar to the pagan god Zeus Olympius, set up in 168 B.C. by Antiochus Epiphanes and prefiguring a similar abomination that Jesus predicted would be erected.”⁹⁰

The Apocrypha is also fascinating as literature. Numerous works of art, music, and literature owe a debt to the influence of the Apocrypha.⁹¹ Metzger also notes that a passage in the normal Apocrypha, 2 Esdras 6:42, influenced Christopher Columbus in his decision to set sail, resulting in his discovery of the New World.⁹² And a passage from the Apocrypha, Ecclesiasticus (or Sirach) 2:10, brought John Bunyan, author of *Pilgrim’s Progress*, encouragement and hope during a period of deep despondency in his life and also afterward.⁹³

The Apocrypha does contain nuggets of wisdom, inspiring passages, and interesting moral lessons from which the discerning reader can learn, and perhaps be inspired. Metzger relates:

“In reply to those who urged the discontinuance of reading Lessons from the Apocrypha, as being inconsistent with the sufficiency of Scripture, the bishops at the [Anglican] Savoy Conference, held in 1661, replied that the same objection could be raised against the preaching of sermons, and that it were much to be desired that all sermons should give as useful instruction as did the chapters selected from the Apocrypha.”⁹⁴

So while the Apocrypha, by its historical, geographical, chronological — and more importantly — doctrinal errors, proves itself *not* to be the inspired Word of God, parts of it can provide useful instruction and fascinating reading. It gives us a window into development of Jewish thought and theology between the Old and New Testaments and, in the case of 1 Maccabees, at least, it provides us with some inspiring and informative history that also shows us how some of the prophecies of Daniel were historically fulfilled, especially in the person and career of Antiochus Epiphanes.

Wenham provides a good evaluation of the Apocrypha, when he states:

“We conclude, then, that orthodox Jewry, Jerome, the Reformers and the founders of the great Bible Societies were right in their view of the Old Testament Canon, and that the attempt by either Rome or liberalism to put the Jewish Canon and the Apocrypha on [an equal] level is misguided. Since the Apocrypha cannot be brought up to the level of the Old Testament, it tends to bring the authority of the Old Testament down to the level of the Apocrypha. The books of the Apocrypha are valuable, and should be given a leading place in anthologies of the intertestamental period. We should not tie ourselves to some artificial rule that forbids their public reading, but they are not Scripture, and (however venerable the practice) it is seriously misleading to have

them bound with the Scriptures in a single volume.”⁹⁵

And as Geisler and MacKenzie state, “[I]t is a very serious error to admit nonrevelational material into the written Word of God, since it corrupts the revelation of God and thereby undermines the divine authority of Scripture.”⁹⁶

Endnotes:

1. In the movie, the word “now” is missing from the speaker’s quotation of the verse. The NRSV translates it, “Let us now sing the praises of famous men, our ancestors in their generations.”
2. See J.D. Douglas, Merrill C. Tenney, editors, revised by Moisés Silva, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Dictionary*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2011, “Septuagint,” pp. 1312-1313.
3. The terms “Torah,” “Pentateuch,” and “the five books of Moses” are all synonyms for the first five books of the Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, that were written by Moses.
4. *Ibid.*, pg. 1313.
5. Bruce M. Metzger, *The Bible in Translation*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2001, pg. 15.
6. David Noel Freedman, editor-in-chief, *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*. New York: Doubleday, 1992, “Septuagint,” Vol. 5, pg. 1093.
7. Robert P. Lightner, *A Biblical Case for Total Inerrancy: How Jesus Viewed the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Kregel Publications, 1998, pg. 13.
8. *The American Heritage Dictionary*. New York: Bantam Dell, 2001, “apocryphal,” pg. 40.
9. Bruce M. Metzger, *An Introduction to the Apocrypha*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1957, pg. 5, italics in original.
10. *Ibid.*, pg. 3.
11. At least one of the books considered Apocrypha is 2 Esdras (called 4 Esdras by Roman Catholics); portions of it appear to have been written as late as the third century A.D. However, this may be the only exception to the “extreme limits” statement in the citation by Lightner.
12. *A Biblical Case for Total Inerrancy*, op. cit., pg. 12.
13. Bruce M. Metzger, editor, *The Oxford Annotated Apocrypha, Revised Standard Version*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1977, Introduction, pg. xii.
14. Norman L. Geisler and Ralph E. MacKenzie, *Roman Catholics and Evangelicals: Agreements and Differences*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1995, pg. 161.
15. John Wenham, *Christ and the Bible*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1994, pp. 148, 149.
16. An exception to the books having been

- written by Jews is that the first two chapters and the last two chapters of the book of 2 Esdras (which Roman Catholics call 4 Esdras) seem to have been later additions to the book that were made by Christians. However, the main body of the book seems to have been written by a Jew.
17. *The Oxford Annotated Apocrypha, Revised Standard Version*, op. cit., pg. xi.
 18. *Ibid.*, pp. xi-xii.
 19. *Ibid.*, pg. xii. (See also pg. ix.)
 20. *Ibid.*, pg. ix.
 21. *Roman Catholics and Evangelicals: Agreements and Differences*, op. cit., pg. 158.
 22. Peter M.J. Stravinskias, editor, *Catholic Dictionary*. Huntington, Ind.: Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Division, 2002, "Deuterocanonical Books," pg. 257.
 23. *The Oxford Annotated Apocrypha, Revised Standard Version*, op. cit., pp. xii-xiii.
 24. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland E. Murphy, editors, *The New Jerusalem Bible Commentary*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1990, "Apocrypha; Dead Sea Scrolls; Other Jewish Literature," pg. 1056.
 25. *Ibid.*, "Apocrypha of the Old Testament," pg. xxxii.
 26. *Ibid.*
 27. Bruce M. Metzger, "To the Reader," in Michael D. Coogan, editor, *The New Oxford Annotated Apocrypha (NRSV)*. New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2007, pg. xvii.
 28. *Ibid.*
 29. Carol A. Newsom, "Introduction to the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books," in *ibid.*, pg. 4 (chart). "Esdras" is the Greek form of the word "Ezra." 2 Esdras claims to be written by "the prophet Ezra," supposedly (but not in actuality) the same Ezra the scribe who is a prominent figure in the biblical books of Ezra and Nehemiah.
 30. Daniel J. Harrington, *Invitation to the Apocrypha*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999, pg. 2.
 31. David A. deSilva, *Introducing the Apocrypha*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2002, pg. 29.
 32. *The Oxford Annotated Apocrypha, Revised Standard Version*, op. cit., pp. xiii-xiv.
 33. *Ibid.*, pg. 294.
 34. *Ibid.*, pg. 1.
 35. *An Introduction to the Apocrypha*, op. cit., pg. 80.
 36. *Ibid.*, pg. 77.
 37. *Ibid.*
 38. Metzger explains, "The name 'Epiphanes' means 'manifest' and was chosen by Antiochus because he regarded himself as a god manifest in human flesh. His enemies, however, dubbed him Antiochus Epimanes, meaning Antiochus the madman" (*ibid.*, pg. 132).
 39. See 1 Maccabees 8 and annotations on the entire chapter in *ibid.* (pp. 239-241) for examples of the author's positive, and sometimes inaccurate, bias toward the Romans.
 40. *Ibid.*, pg. 139.
 41. *Ibid.*
 42. *Ibid.*, pg. 158.
 43. *Introducing the Apocrypha*, op. cit., pg. 21.
 44. *Ibid.*, pg. 34.
 45. *Ibid.*
 46. *Ibid.*
 47. *Ibid.*, pg. 27.
 48. *Ibid.*, pp. 36-37.
 49. *The Oxford Annotated Apocrypha, Revised Standard Version*, op. cit., pg. xii.
 50. *An Introduction to the Apocrypha*, op. cit., pg. 179.
 51. Also the local councils of Rome (A.D. 382) and Hippo (A.D. 393) accepted the books of the Apocrypha as canonical. See *Roman Catholics and Evangelicals: Agreements and Differences*, op. cit., pp. 160, 162.
 52. *Introducing the Apocrypha*, op. cit., pp. 37-38.
 53. Gary G. Michuta, *Why Catholic Bibles Are Bigger*. Port Huron, Mich.: The Grotto Press, 2007, pp. 220-223. In Catholic usage, an "ecumenical Council" doesn't refer to a council of churches of all Christian denominations, as one might assume. Rather it means a council, convened by the pope, of the Catholic bishops worldwide.
 54. *An Introduction to the Apocrypha*, op. cit., pg. 180.
 55. *Ibid.*, pg. 181.
 56. *Ibid.*, pg. 183.
 57. *Ibid.*
 58. *Ibid.*, capitalization in the original.
 59. *The Oxford Annotated Apocrypha, Revised Standard Version*, op. cit., pg. xvi.
 60. *Ibid.*
 61. While, according to biblical usage, the word *anathema* means "accursed," (see 1 Corinthians 16:22; Galatians 1:8, 9), in Catholic usage the word means, "The excommunication of a person, usually for apostasy" (*Catholic Dictionary*, op. cit., "Anathema," pg. 62). Obviously, an anathema pronounced by the Catholic church would only apply to Catholics!
 62. *An Introduction to the Apocrypha*, op. cit., pg. 189.
 63. *Why Catholic Bibles Are Bigger*, op. cit., pg. 243.
 64. *Ibid.*, pg. 244, footnote #627.
 65. Karlstadt (sometimes spelled "Carlstadt") was another Protestant Reformer.
 66. *Introducing the Apocrypha*, op. cit., pg. 38.
 67. *Ibid.*, pg. 39.
 68. *An Introduction to the Apocrypha*, op. cit., pg. 188.
 69. *Ibid.*, pg. 197.
 70. *Ibid.*, pg. 198.
 71. *Ibid.*, pg. 202.
 72. *Ibid.*
 73. *Ibid.*, pg. 203.
 74. *Introducing the Apocrypha*, op. cit., pg. 39.
 75. R.T. Beckwith in Philip Wesley Comfort, editor, *The Origin of the Bible*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2003, pg. 52.
 76. *Christ and the Bible*, op. cit., pg. 150.
 77. *Ibid.*, pg. 151.
 78. *Why Catholic Bibles Are Bigger*, op. cit., pg. 241.
 79. *Roman Catholics and Evangelicals: Agreements and Differences*, op. cit., pg. 175.
 80. John Ankerberg and John Weldon, *Fast Facts on Roman Catholicism*. Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House Publishers, 2004, pg. 110.
 81. *Ibid.*
 82. *Invitation to the Apocrypha*, op. cit., pp. 28-29.
 83. *Ibid.*, pg. 93.
 84. For the examples in this section, all quotations from the Apocrypha and from the Bible are from the Revised Standard Version (RSV).
 85. Pelagianism is defined thus: "The theology stemming from the thought of Pelagius [ca. 360-420], which emphasizes human ability and free will rather than depravity and sinfulness. In the view of most Pelagians, it is possible to live without sin. The effect of Adam's sin upon his descendants was simply that of a bad example." (Millard J. Erickson, *The Concise Dictionary of Christian Theology*. Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 2001, "Pelagianism," pg. 150.)
 86. *The Oxford Annotated Apocrypha, Revised Standard Version*, op. cit., study note on Wisdom of Solomon 8:19-20, pg. 111.
 87. René Pache, *The Inspiration and Authority of Scripture*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1969, pg. 172, cited in *Fast Facts on Roman Catholicism*, op. cit., pg. 111.
 88. *Ibid.*, pg. 112.
 89. *An Introduction to the Apocrypha*, op. cit., pg. 136. Metzger is here quoting from Luther's "Preface to the First Book of the Maccabees," in Luther's 1534 edition of the Bible.
 90. Kenneth L. Barker, general editor, *Zondervan NIV Study Bible*, 2008 Update, study note on Daniel 11:31, pg. 1331.
 91. Metzger devotes an entire lengthy chapter in his book to elaborating on the influence of the Apocrypha in history, particularly in the arts, music, and literature. See *An Introduction to the Apocrypha*, op. cit., pp. 205-238.
 92. *An Introduction to the Apocrypha*, op. cit., pp. 232-234.
 93. *Ibid.*, pp. 199-200. Metzger notes that Bunyan relates this incident in his (Bunyan's) autobiography, entitled, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, section 62ff.
 94. *Ibid.*, pg. 198.
 95. *Christ and the Bible*, op. cit., pp. 152-153.
 96. *Roman Catholics and Evangelicals: Agreements and Differences*, op. cit., pg. 175.

religious and non-religious. His command to His disciples was “go into the all the world,” not “go hide from the world.”

3. They taught that because the cities were Christianized it must mean that Satan and demons had been pushed out to the deserts. To fully engage Satan and demons they must involve themselves in spiritual warfare in the wilderness. To believe Satan and demons were pushed out of a city is a delusion. The Apostle Paul went everywhere, especially in major cities, to preach the Gospel and break Satan’s hold on people’s lives.

4. They began to believe and teach Greek Dualism; that is, that the body was unimportant and could be ignored, beaten, scourged, and subject to a host of other indignities. One Macarius went naked to a bog and endured mosquito bites for six months. He was so swollen and disfigured that on return to the monastery he was only recognizable by voice. They had missed the fact that Paul wrote that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). Add to that the fact that many desert monks were Monophysites. This is the belief that Jesus had only one nature: divine. Somehow the divine nature had swallowed up His human nature. This led to an ignoring of the body and thinking it was unimportant. They did not understand the impact of redemption and resurrection for the body.

5. They thought that somehow they could attain to Adam’s position before the fall, ignoring the fact that Adam lived in a garden, not a desert waste. They could only pretend to be like the pre-fallen Adam; that was simply a wishing away of the fall of man. The true reversal of the fall will only occur when Jesus returns.

6. While some had been driven to the wilderness by persecution, others did so to escape taxation. It was a perfect cover for those seeking to flee from the realities and demands of life.

7. Another justification was the claim that angelic visions and even angelic appearances confirmed their lifestyle. Pachomius claimed that he was given a “Tablet of Rules” for desert monks to follow. This sounds a bit like Joseph Smith’s gold plates story — just 1500 years earlier. Whether by deceit or delusion, many accepted this.

8. They appealed to Abraham, who was told to leave where he was and go somewhere else. Abraham was told many other things like sacrifice his son and go to Canaan — not the wilderness of Sinai or Egypt. He would also become the father of the Jewish nation.

The tragedy is that many of the desert monks became the spiritual superstars and heroes of their day. Many from the cities went out to see their lifestyle and applaud them. Before circus “freak shows,” before reality television, people made their way out to see the new celebrities and be entertained by the spiritual giants.

They thought perhaps there could be — by osmosis — a spiritual benefit by connecting with them.

We shouldn’t think that groups of people who misunderstood Scripture and who misused it should be emulated. We shouldn’t think that isolation from the world and not infiltration of the world is something to aspire. These cave-dwellers have nothing to offer and Evangelicals have no business considering an escape to the desert as a spiritual alternative. First Timothy 4:1-6 condemns this kind of extreme asceticism, as does Colossians 2:20-23.

If we want to go back we need to go back to the Old Book; a book that is old but ever new and ever relevant. Many hammers have been worn out on the anvil of God’s Word. Let’s seek the pious examples found in the Bible and not the misguided enthusiasts who are found throughout the Church’s history.

—GRF

NEWS UPDATES

(continued from page 3)

obscene comments taking aim at homosexuality, feminism, and other aspects of male and female sexuality. In one January 2001 post, Driscoll provided a litany of “Wallacisms” — new words which he made up and many of which were crude and sexually oriented. Last summer, many of those old posts “resurfaced” and were again “circulated.” As a result, Driscoll once again found himself apologizing. Earlier, in his 2006 book, *Confessions of a Reformation Rev*, Driscoll acknowledged his wrongdoing, saying that the Midrash website “was being inundated with postings by emerging-church-type feminists and liberals.” He writes that, “It got insane, and thousands of posts were being made each day until it was discovered that it was me raging like a madman under the guise of a movie character.”

Beyond his inflammatory and vulgar online rants, *The New York Times* report cites additional grounds for the “implosion” of Driscoll and his empire. “He has been accused of creating a culture of fear at the church, of plagiarizing, of inappropriately using church funds and of consolidating power to such a degree that it has become difficult for anyone to challenge or even question him,” the newspaper said.

On Sunday, August 3, a group of about 65 people — including many former members — staged a protest outside the church calling attention to Driscoll’s spiritual abuse. A former Mars Hill deacon created “Dear Pastor Mark & Mars Hill: We Are Not Anonymous,” a Facebook group said to respond to Driscoll’s charge that he is unable to reconcile with offended people because they are “anonymous.” The Facebook group claims to have nearly 600 members.

In the mid-1990s, Driscoll founded Mars Hill Church in Seattle, which grew to megachurch status and which claimed 15,000 members in five states and more than a dozen church locations. Two years later, in 1998, he co-founded the Acts 29 Network, an organization with the goal of establishing new local congregations.

The board of the Acts 29 Church Planting Network published in a online blog dated August 8 that, "It is with deep sorrow that the Acts 29 Network announces its decision to remove Mark Driscoll and Mars Hill Church from membership in the network. Mark and the Elders of Mars Hill have been informed of the decision, along with the reasons for removal. It is our conviction that the nature of the accusations against Mark, most of which have been confirmed by him, make it untenable and unhelpful to keep Mark and Mars Hill in our network."

A few weeks prior to the expulsion of Driscoll and Mars Hill Church from the Acts 29 Network, two significant members of Mars Hill's own Board of Advisors and Accountability called it quits. Pastors, authors, and biblical counselors Paul Tripp and James MacDonald resigned from the board. Tripp resigned in June and MacDonald in July. Both Tripp and MacDonald are prominent teachers within the nouthetic counseling movement. MacDonald said his resignation was "not because [he was] unhappy with Mark's response to board accountability." Tripp, however, was not as charitable, saying that the church's accountability model "will never be able to do what it was designed to do."

In stepping down from his role as pastor of Mars Hill Church, Driscoll first said the move would be temporary. During an August 24 worship service, he told his congregation, "I have requested a break for processing, healing, and growth for a minimum of six weeks while [Mars Hill leaders] conduct a thorough examination of accusations against me. I believe that review can best be performed without me being in the pulpit or in the office." In October, the temporary became permanent when Driscoll submitted a formal letter of resignation. A few weeks later it was announced that Mars Hill would be dissolving and its local branches becoming independent churches.

LifeWay Christian Resources, the bookstore chain of the Southern Baptist Convention, has stopped selling Driscoll's books at its 180 stores and on its website. *Christianity Today* reported that the bookseller told them, "LifeWay Stores and Lifeway.com are not selling Mark Driscoll's books while we assess the situation regarding his ministry." In 2009, a motion that Driscoll's books be removed from LifeWay stores was made at the SBC's annual meeting. That motion failed to pass. Family Christian Stores, the largest chain of Christian booksellers with nearly 300 locations, continues to sell Driscoll's books and resources.

Other church endeavors have also been affected. The 2014 Resurgence Conference, which was to be held last October 28-29, was canceled. The annual event was sponsored and hosted by Mars Hill Church. Two of the

speakers scheduled for the 2014 assembly were to be Tripp and MacDonald. Other speakers included J.I. Packer (who was to present his session via video), Greg Laurie, and Driscoll. In calling off the event, the church said, "Unfortunately, we have decided to cancel this year's conference due to unforeseen changes to our speaker line-up and other challenges we believe would make it difficult to provide the quality of conference people have come to expect from Resurgence."

In the 1990s, Driscoll was a celebrated spokesman for the emerging church movement traveling throughout the United States, teaching and promoting the emergent culture. He claims to have eventually distanced himself from the emerging church movement and its philosophy because other leaders, like Brian McLaren and Rob Bell, began fostering aberrant and unorthodox theologies.

—MKG

FIVE IN U.S. MAKE RICHEST PASTORS LIST

Nehanda Radio, a news and Internet radio station located in the African country of Zimbabwe, has compiled a list of the 10 richest pastors in the world. Five of them are based in the United States and are readily known in Christian circles. Four of the five have their roots in charismatic or pentecostal camps.

Topping the list is Dallas-based T.D. Jakes. The report describes Jakes as "a writer, preacher and movie producer." It states that Jakes lives in a \$1.7 million mansion and that "This man of God has been endowed with a \$150 million net worth."

Other U.S. pastors on the list include Benny Hinn at number four, Creflo Dollar number six, and Kenneth Copeland number seven. Hinn, the article says, "Has an estimated net worth of \$42 million." Dollar is said to have an estimated net worth of \$27 million. A net worth for Copeland and his ministry was not given, but assets mentioned in the report included a \$17.5 million jet and a \$6 million church-owned lakefront mansion.

The only non-Pentecostal from the U.S. to make the list was evangelist Billy Graham. Graham, a Southern Baptist, is said to have a net worth of \$25 million.

Not making the top ten, but deserving of honorable mention, is U.S. televangelist and author Joyce Meyer. The article said Meyer is "another rich female preacher who lives like a rock star. She employs her family members in the ministry and owns a fabulous mansion."

Of those outside the U.S., Bishop David Oyedepo, a Nigerian pastor and author, ranked a close second behind Jakes. Oyedepo is "hailed as the wealthiest preacher in Nigeria with a total net worth of \$150 million and properties like four private jets and homes in the United States and England."

Another Nigerian pastor, T.B. Joshua, rounded off the list at number 10 with an estimated net worth of \$15 million. Joshua is said to be “Nigeria’s most controversial clergyman,” and he has been the subject of a deluge of criticism. Joshua, who is also a self-proclaimed prophet and faith healer, claims to be able to raise the dead and heal those afflicted with HIV/AIDS and terminal illnesses. Last September, at least 80 people died when a multistory guest house owned by his church collapsed in Lagos, Nigeria. In May 2013, four people were killed and more than 30 were injured in a stampede at his church when thousands stormed the altar to receive free holy water, which his ministry usually sells.

—MKG

MORE SEXUAL ABUSE CHARGES HAUNT WATCHTOWER

Jehovah’s Witnesses, like the Roman Catholic Church, continue to be haunted by the ghosts of child sex abuse allegedly perpetrated by its ministers decades ago.

In the early 2000s, charges of child molestation against Jehovah’s Witness elders repeatedly surfaced and gained national attention through numerous news reports, including some on NBC’s *Dateline*. There also were complaints that the leadership of the Watchtower Society had conspired to ignore and bury the allegations and even punish those bringing the charges.

Last fall, another ghost of sexual abuse past visited the Watchtower. According to *Vermont Public Radio*, “Two sisters raised in Vermont filed lawsuits [on Sept. 30, 2014] against the Bellows Falls congregation of Jehovah’s Witnesses, alleging that an ordained minister of the church sexually abused them as children.”

Miranda Lewis, 23, says that at about four years of age she was abused by Norton True, a ministerial servant in the Jehovah’s Witness organization. Her older sister, Annessa Lewis, also alleges that True sexually molested her while he was babysitting her on his property. The abuse of the two girls is said to have occurred on “multiple occasions.”

The mother of the sisters, Marina Mauvoleon-Folsom, claims that the Watchtower leadership responded to her reports of abuse with silence. “They wanted me to be quiet about what had happened. Because they were not willing to do anything in the congregation, they allowed us to move to another congregation. It was very strange. It was a very strange thing. There was almost no support for myself or my family, or any understanding at all,” she said in the news report.

The sisters’ pending lawsuits seek unspecified damages with a trial by jury. The news article also disclosed that

the lawyer for the Lewises, Irwin Zalkin, has been involved in more than 20 other such cases in the United States against Jehovah’s Witness elders, six of which have been settled out of court for “substantial” amounts.

The charges by the Lewis sisters are not the only ghosts haunting the Jehovah’s Witness organization. Currently, four others have filed lawsuits against the Watchtower and the East Spanish Congregation of Jehovah’s Witnesses in New Haven, Connecticut. The plaintiffs charge that as children, Orlando Afanador, a ministerial servant at East Spanish, repeatedly abused them beginning in 1988. According to *The Connecticut Law Tribune*, “The four lawsuits were filed by siblings Sybelle Almodovar, Evelyn Selimaj and Ferdinand Almodovar, and another woman, Bianca Martinez. The suits trace Afanador’s ascension in the church, detail the Witnesses’ internal hierarchy, and describe practices the plaintiffs say prevented followers from going outside the church to report abuse and that allegedly allowed Afanador’s actions to go unchecked for years. (In 2010, Afanador was criminally convicted of sexually assaulting a Nebraska boy.)”

—MKG

BOOKS IN REVIEW

(continued from page 24)

- A summary and clarification of how God works in history and, more specifically, in the life of a believer. Here Archer surveys and defines providence, concurrence, and the miraculous. We are told, “These are God’s tools for working in God’s world” (pg. 107) and thereby knowing them, “When bad things happen, our confidence can be unshakeable” (pg. 104).

The final chapter targeting homosexuality is more a call to an attitude of compassion for the homosexual, and stressing the Gospel of grace and forgiveness, rather than a detailed study of what the Bible says regarding this sin. “We’re either so politically correct that we’re afraid of calling homosexuality a sin, or we’re so venomous in our disdain for the gay lifestyle that there’s no sign of grace,” Yawn writes (pg. 194). While this may be a false dichotomy or overstatement, nonetheless the call to a balance of grace and truth is commendable.

Each chapter concludes with “insights from the past.” These are quotations from theologians and creeds relative to the subject. These include bygone theologians such as Martin Luther, Jonathan Edwards, and John Calvin as well as modern theologians such as Mark Dever and John Piper.

This book is true to its description and is a worthwhile collection of essays on key issues discussed in the Church. It is a beneficial volume for the Christian’s library.

—MKG



Books in Review

THINGS THAT GO BUMP IN THE CHURCH

by Mike Abendroth, Clint Archer & Byron Yawn
Harvest House Publishers, 205 pages, \$14.99

This book's back cover says, "Some teachings in the Bible make things go bump in the church — usually because they stir a lot of questions or uncertainty or strong feelings." In its Foreword, the authors write, "When a doctrine goes bump in the church, our instinct might be to play intellectual possum and hope the mystery solves itself and the relevant Bible verses retreat peacefully back into obscurity. But a faithful student of Scripture is willing to face the mysterious and grapple with it" (pg. 12). This volume takes on more than a dozen of those "hard teachings in the Bible."

All three of the authors have, as their common denominator, a degree (or degrees) earned at The Master's Seminary. And all three are currently pastors; Abendroth in Massachusetts, Yawn in Tennessee, and Archer in South Africa.

The volume is a great discussion of a variety of beliefs which are debated within various theological circles. Some of these beliefs have been argued for centuries, while others are of more recent heritage. However, most likely not every reader will see every entry as a hard or debatable teaching. For example, the chapter on eternal punishment, "Hell: Grim, But Not a Fairy Tale," will probably not meet much antagonism among conservative evangelical readers. Yet it is a good primer for dialogue with those swayed by conditionalists, Jehovah's Witnesses, or Seventh-day Adventists.

On the contrary, other chapters will be "things that go bump" with many of the book's readers. These include the chapters on unconditional election, freedom of the will, and grace. But for those who disavow a Reformed theology, don't despair. There's much to be gained from the whole of this book.

Some of the chapters dealing with more contemporary issues include the ones on demons and discerning the voice of God. The analysis of demons and spiritual warfare is spot-on and gets to the heart of the issue by

correctly explaining, "Any reading you do on the subject soon demonstrates that the [spiritual warfare] pundits cite experience as their primary source of information, and those experiences vary greatly" (pg. 87). And those who appeal to Scripture to advocate their exorcistic practices also build on an unstable foundation. Archer informs, "There is one interpretative principle that is most helpful to keep in your hermeneutic tool belt: that of recognizing the difference between *descriptive* accounts and *prescriptive* instructions" (pg. 89, italics in original).

The chapter on demons is one of two that target the specific teachings of authors prevalent in the Christian marketplace. Here Archer cites the writings of Neil Anderson and Fred Dickason. (The only other chapter that negatively cites an author is the opening chapter on grace, which quotes the late theologian Clark Pinnock.) It would have been helpful for the authors to name more names. The chapter on mysticism and discerning God's voice could have been reinforced by noting and quoting mystical patrons like Sarah Young, Henry Blackaby, Beth Moore, and others.

Other issues discussed in the book include:

- Whether a Christian should be a member of a local church or if membership is intrusive, restrictive, and not commanded in Scripture. Archer is unapologetic in answering in the affirmative, writing, "The fear of committing to a local church is an indicator of spiritual immaturity" (pg. 145). He effectively argues his case by presenting biblical reasons and word pictures for church membership.

- Whether church discipline is a biblical practice necessary for a local church. Abendroth writes, "Church membership has its privileges in the person and work of Jesus Christ. It also has its expectations and demands, including personal holiness" (pg. 165). Here again, the argument is in the affirmative and the four steps of Matthew 18 are presented. Further, seven points to help take the sting out of church discipline, along with a handful of practical help statements, are given.

- An exposition of the make-up of the leadership of a local church. While the title of this chapter is "Elder Rule," it is more an essay on church leaders and their qualifications rather than a debate over elder rule vs. congregation rule methods of church government. This section also includes a discussion of disqualified elders and the hows and whys of discharging an elder.

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