

POSTMASTER: Please send address changes to:
THE BAPTIST HERITAGE, 2200 West Michigan Avenue, Pensacola, FL 32526-2379

THE BAPTIST HERITAGE
2200 West Michigan Avenue
Pensacola, Florida 32526-2379

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

PERIODICALS
POSTAGE
PAID AT
PENSACOLA,
FLORIDA

*a good place to visit
is
a better place to belong*

THE BAPTIST HERITAGE

VOLUME XXV ISSUE 11

NOVEMBER 20, 2001

The Unknown Unknowable

Milton's Forgotten Work: "Truth Lost"

John Milton stood before the English Parliament of 1644 to protest a law designed to prevent the printing of material deemed unacceptable by the government, delivering a dramatic dissent against a controlled press, which he titled, "Areopagitica: A Speech For The Liberty Of Unlicensed Printing To The Parliament Of England."

The speech is a forceful argument against governmental exercise of censorship of the religious press by demanding of a pre-publishing license of approval. While I am unable to agree with every tenet of his argument, his speech provides a compelling insight into the hardship undertaken whenever the "accepted view" of dominant persons and of entrenched interests is challenged. Since many of my readers may not have easy access to this work, I share a portion of that which became a spur to me as I read his challenge to Parliament.

Well knows he who uses to consider, that our faith and knowledge thrives by exercise, as well as our limbs and complexion. Truth is compared in Scripture to a streaming fountain; if her waters flow not in a perpetual progression, they sicken into a muddy pool of conformity and tradition. A man may be a here-

(Continued on page 3)



this and that

Editor and Staff

Jerald L. Manley

Gary Roland

Dorothy Gundersen

Jody Wolf

I wrote this article through a desire to motivate my readers to give serious consideration to, what I believe, is a simple question. Some readers may not see this as such a simple issue and some may not agree with my implied answer. I accept that as a legitimate possibility and am not attempting to stir a quarrel with anyone. A sincere, honest question can not engender strife with a sincere, honest listener. I will gladly, honestly, and thankfully consider all sincere efforts to show me any error in the structure of my question. Faithful are the wounds of a friend. I try to write each article as a friend and am grateful for friends who so often respond.

Through his classical works Paradise Lost and Paradise Re-

This publication is mailed to you on purpose. Someone who knows you believed that you would profit by receiving and reading it. If you do not agree, we will remove your name from the next possible mailing. We have no desire to intrude or offend.

gained, John Milton, the English poet, implanted particular concepts of Paradise, Satan, sin, salvation, Heaven, and Hell that retain strong influence on the doctrinal perspective of much of Christianity to the present hour. Likely (and sadly), multitudes of followers of Christianity have a much more Miltonian interpretation of biblical truth than an actual biblical understanding of those very truths. Whether the doctrinal interpretation that he conveyed was uniquely his or actually reflected the views of others who influenced him to hold those distortions is really immaterial, John Mil-

(Continued on page 19)



this and that

(Continued from page 2)

ton's writings became the primary conduit to convey them to all English speaking Christians.

Recent reading led me to a somewhat lesser known work of Milton that, I discovered, many secular scholars consider as, perhaps, being the supreme argument for a free press. As I read Areopagitica, I was greatly stirred with what he wrote, and then intrigued with his central argument—though in a somewhat different context than that of governmental censorship. I began wondering as I read as to the extent that this particular writing of Milton may also have influenced the thinking of English speaking Christians ever since regarding the essence of the Scriptures themselves. Is it possible that he has as great an effect on how Christians view Scripture as, by his other works, he has as to how so many Christians view basic doctrine? Those thoughts led me to a question in response to his speech; therefore, I pose that question to you as it burned into my mind as I read Areopagitica: *“Do we have and hold, or must we search and hope?”*

It is amazing that any writing as wearisome to read as is his could gain such powerful influence as it did and continues to have. (That fact is also encouraging, perhaps there is also hope for my efforts.)

—Pastor Manley

THE BAPTIST HERITAGE

(428-290)

is published monthly by
THE HERITAGE BAPTIST CHURCH
of PENSACOLA,

2200 West Michigan Avenue,
Pensacola, Florida 32526-2379.

PERIODICALS POSTAGE PAID
AT PENSACOLA, FLORIDA.

THE BAPTIST HERITAGE is sent without charge to the members of the church and, by request, to interested friends of this church.

There are no subscription charges and no paid advertisements are accepted.

This is VOLUME XXV and
ISSUE NUMBER 11 for NOVEMBER 20, 2001.

THE UNKNOWN UNKNOWABLE

(Continued from page 17)

liver to me, crumb by crumb, the bread of life that falls from the table of my Heavenly Father? Must I, or they, need continually to search ancient libraries to find and to rescue still older copies, sparing surviving fragments of truth the fire? Should they, or I, be forever sifting the shifting sands of Egyptian deserts or take apart the Judean tells, longing for one more fragment of parchment with which to authenticate a word or to alter a verse so I might be nearer restoring truth? Should you and I be roaming the hills and valleys by the Dead Sea's shore, casting rocks into caves, hoping, as we listen, for sounds of breaking pottery, wherein lie deteriorating parchment scrolls, hoping they have not crumbled beyond recognition and might shed new light on darkened truth? Dare we conclude that the worst mistakes survived the ravages of time and man while the correct best was destined for destruction or dust? Was the word faithfully transmitted or was the word, ravaged and savaged, preserved in some Miltonian burial plot, awaiting disinterment and a "coming together" as did Ezekiel's field of bones? Are we forever destined vainly to strive to reassemble recovered portions of dismembered truth? Do we have and hold, or must we search and hope?

Are we, as were the errant knights of old and famed John Milton, destined to continue a never-ending quest for lost truth, searching for the unknowable unknown? In spite of the unimpeachable authority of the undeniable assurance of the LORD Jesus, has jot and tittle indeed "passed away"? Interesting is it not, that the heaven and the earth, despoiled by sin and contaminated by man, shall "pass away" and are destined for a purging with fire to purify and to cleanse and then to be brought forth again, restored in newness; but the word of God shall never pass away. Is it written so, because the word has no need of purification and cleansing to bring forth a restoration of newness?

Do we have and hold, or must we search and hope?

Ah, my friend, what answer must we give?

--Pastor Manley

Reprint permission always granted;
acknowledgment appreciated.

THE UNKNOWN UNKNOWABLE

(Continued from page 1)

tic in the truth; and if he believe things only because his pastor says so, or the Assembly so determines, without knowing other reason, though his belief be true, yet the very truth he holds becomes his heresy.

There is not any burden that some would gladlier post off to another than the charge and care of their religion. There be--who knows not that there be?--of Protestants and professors who live and die in as arrant an implicit faith as any lay Papist of Loretto. A wealthy man, addicted to his pleasure and to his profits, finds religion to be a traffic so entangled, and of so many piddling accounts, that of all mysteries he cannot skill to keep a stock going upon that trade. What should he do? fain he would have the name to be religious, fain he would bear up with his neighbours in that. What does he therefore, but resolves to give over toiling, and to find himself out some factor, to whose care and credit he may commit the whole managing of his religious affairs; some divine of note and estimation that must be. To him he adheres, resigns the whole warehouse of his religion, with all the locks and keys, into his custody; and indeed makes the very person of that man his religion; esteems his associating with him a sufficient evidence and commendatory of his own piety. So that a man may say his religion is now no more within himself, but is become a dividual movable, and goes and comes near him, according as that good man frequents the house.

There be who perpetually complain of schisms and sects, and make it such a calamity that any man dissents from their maxims. 'Tis their own pride and ignorance which causes the disturbing, who neither will hear with meekness, nor can convince; yet all must be suppressed which is not found in their Syntagma.

Yet that which is above all this, the favour and the love of Heaven, we have great argument to think in a peculiar manner propitious and propending towards us. Why else was this nation chosen before any other, that out of her, as out of Sion, should be proclaimed and sounded forth the first tidings and trumpet of Reformation to all Europe? And had it not been the obstinate perverseness of our prelates against the divine and

(Continued on page 4)

THE UNKNOWN UNKNOWNABLE

(Continued from page 3)

admirable spirit of Wickliff, to suppress him as a schismatic and innovator, perhaps neither the Bohemian Huns and Jerome, no nor the name of Luther or of Calvin, had been ever known: the glory of reforming all our neighbours had been completely ours. But now, as our obdurate clergy have with violence demeaned the matter, we are become hitherto the latest and the backwardest scholars, of whom God offered to have made us the teachers.

When a man hath been labouring the hardest labour in the deep mines of knowledge, hath furnished out his findings in all their equipage: drawn forth his reasons as it were a battle ranged: scattered and defeated all objections in his way; calls out his adversary into the plain, offers him the advantage of wind and sun, if he please, only that he may try the matter by dint of argument: for his opponents then to skulk, to lay ambushments, to keep a narrow bridge of licensing where the challenger should pass, though it be valour enough in soldiership, is but weakness and cowardice in the wars of Truth.

Not that I can think well of every light separation, or that all in a Church is to be expected gold and silver and precious stones: it is not possible for man to sever the wheat from the tares, the good fish from the other fry; that must be the Angels' ministry at the end of mortal things. Yet if all cannot be of one mind--as who looks they should be?--this doubtless is more wholesome, more prudent, and more Christian, that many be tolerated, rather than all compelled. I mean not tolerated popery, and open superstition, which, as it extirpates all religions and civil supremacies, so itself should be extirpate, provided first that all charitable and compassionate means be used to win and regain the weak and the misled: that also which is impious or evil absolutely either against faith or manners no law can possibly permit, that intends not to unlay itself: but those neighbouring differences, or rather indifferences, are what I speak of, whether in some point of doctrine or of discipline, which, though they may be many, yet need not interrupt THE UNITY OF SPIRIT, if we could but find among us THE BOND OF PEACE.

In the meanwhile if any one would write, and bring his helpful hand to the slow-moving Reformation which we labour un-

(Continued on page 5)

THE UNKNOWN UNKNOWNABLE

(Continued from page 16)

marked tomb? Do I have and hold, or must I search and hope? Again, consider only the Book of the Law, that book of Moses, the man used by God. The book that Moses himself penned is admittedly un-retrievable today; but is the book that Moses himself wrote also missing and in need of retrieval? The question, and the only question worthy of consideration, is "Do I possess in my hand, as did Joshua, Ezra, and even the scribes in the days of the LORD Jesus Christ, and Timothy in distant foreign Asia Minor have in their hands, an authentic, faithful, accurate, reliable, trustworthy, reflective transmission of that very book, which Moses wrote, and may I read for myself, as did they for themselves, that very same book as Timothy did?" In shorter form, "Do I have what Moses wrote?" Does the book remain intact, alive, and well, or has its lovely form been mangled, sliced to bits, and scattered to those four winds of Milton to be lost to me? Do I have and hold as did Timothy, or must I search and hope as John Milton did?

May I, by myself, read and understand, with neither sacred interpreters nor secular authorities standing between, the writings of Moses for myself as the LORD Jesus Christ instructed the scribes to do? May I, as Timothy, hold, read, and learn the Sacred Book, which is able to make me wise unto salvation? May I, as David charged, hide the very words of the word in my heart that I might not sin against JEHOVAH? Do I have and hold, or must I search and hope?

Am I, in truth, a Baptist, joined to the honored, blood-stained, ancient name borne by those noble souls who lived and died for the principle of soul-liberty, the priesthood of the believer--the right to have and to hold the word of God in one's own hand and to interpret the Scriptures in one's own heart for one's own self--or, must I scrape and cringe and bow, waiting for some priest of special office, holding higher rank, or with more noble learning than God has granted me, to dole to me, through his mediatorship, access to the altar? Do I have and hold, or must I search and hope?

Am I destined forever to be at the mercy of gracious, benevolent, wise textual experts and be forced to stand as a humble, hungry supplicant before their imposingly degreed doorstep, with crumpled hat in hand, begging for them to de-

(Continued on page 18)

THE UNKNOWN UNKNOWABLE

(Continued from page 15)

was still known and used in the days of the kings (2 Chronicles 34:14, note the marginal note; 35:6). This is the last record in Scripture of the original "manuscript," the autographa, of Moses. However, Ezra (6:18, Nehemiah 8:1) still had access to the book of Moses. Most importantly, The LORD Jesus confirmed that the book was available in His days on this earth (Mark 12:26). Paul acknowledged that even Timothy in Lystra had in his possession and read the book.

I do not have, and cannot ever have, in my possession the actual document that Moses wrote and which is called the "Law." I do not own the Gospel of Matthew in the handwriting of Matthew, known also as Levi, the former tax collector. I have none of the Psalms penned by David, shepherd, soldier, king, and prophet, that bears his signature. Paul's large handwriting does not appear at the close of any of the books that I own bearing his name. That these men wrote or signed each original manuscript (and for all that I know, multiple copies of each) I will unhesitatingly affirm under oath. Actually, I have gone much farther than that in saying so; I have based my eternal hope upon the validity of that assertion. Each holy man of old was moved and each then wrote. All that was written was transmitted to another generation of believers—some received the truth by having and holding the very original while others received that same truth by reading or hearing a reliable, trustworthy copy that accurately reflected the original. One day, each of these original, authentic documents, individually and personally, was written by a human hand. One later day, these "first-edition" documents, each and all, finally disappeared from human view and human hands. Whether these documents were individually buried in respect due to the fragility of age, were burned in anger, were disintegrated by repetitive use, or were hidden in protective caves, is of no consequence: the fact stands, irrefutable and immutable, that they have all disappeared from human view and touch. They are gone. Neither you nor I have seen, or will ever see, much less handle, those handwritten works in this world. They are lost to us. None can deny that they vanished. In the loss of these handwritten originals, what exactly have I lost? Is the word of the eternal God, unknown, lying somewhere in an un-

(Continued on page 17)

THE UNKNOWN UNKNOWABLE

(Continued from page 4)

der, if Truth have spoken to him before others, or but seemed at least to speak, who hath so bejesuited us that we should trouble that man with asking license to do so worthy a deed? and not consider this, that if it come to prohibiting, there is not aught more likely to be prohibit-ed than truth itself; whose first appearance to our eyes, bleared and dimmed with prejudice and custom, is more unsightly and unplausible than many errors, even as the person is of many a great man slight and contemptuous to see to. And what do they tell us vainly of new opinions, when this very opinion of theirs, that none must be heard but whom they like, is the worst and newest opinion of all others; and is the chief cause why sects and schisms do so much abound, and true knowledge is kept at distance from us; besides yet a greater danger which is in it.

His audience, I hope, surely was not as slow of wit and dull of mind as am I; if so, Milton spoke yards above their heads. His prose compels such careful attention that I required several readings to understand his syntax. It helped to have it before me; I am not at all certain that I could follow the verbal delivery of the speech. Perhaps, you also may find that a single reading is insufficient to "translate" his English into yours. Nonetheless, that effort, once successful, is well rewarded with an exposure to some masterful logic. The following passage, which magnificently describes his perception of the imperative for an unfettered, unlicensed press, was especially impressive. In persuasive terms, he eloquently pleads for the need of a perpetual, unceasing search for the "Truth," even while he concedes the task itself to be beyond any possible final, conclusive, absolute. Truth will, in his conjecture, always be only partially recoverable, for it must be always incomplete in some fashion, either form or substance, until the "Master's second coming." As I say, the reasoning of his argument in the following passage with his unusually vivid illustration transfixed my attention. I found myself rereading the paragraph without realizing a conscious decision to do

(Continued on page 6)

THE UNKNOWN UNKNOWABLE

(Continued from page 5)

SO.

Truth indeed came once into the world with her divine Master, and was a perfect shape most glorious to look on: but when he ascended, and his Apostles after him were laid asleep, then straight arose a wicked race of deceivers, who, as that story goes of the Egyptian Typhon with his conspirators, how they dealt with the good Osiris, took the virgin Truth, hewed her lovely form into a thousand pieces, and scattered them to the four winds. From that time ever since, the sad friends of Truth, such as durst appear, imitating the careful search that Isis made for the mangled body of Osiris, went up and down gathering up limb by limb, still as they could find them. We have not yet found them all, Lords and Commons, nor ever shall do, till her Master's second coming; he shall bring together every joint and member, and shall mould them into an immortal feature of loveliness and perfection. Suffer not these licensing prohibitions to stand at every place of opportunity, forbidding and disturbing them that continue seeking, that continue to do our obsequies to the torn body of our martyred saint.

Milton described the continuation of the free press as necessary so that the unrelenting searching for "Truth" may continue unabated by the resistance of conventional, established wisdom. This search is not a systematic exploration to discover Truth as something unknown heretofore; instead, it is a careful, devoted, scientific effort entirely directed at the re-discovery, re-gathering, and re-establishment of Truth, which previously had been revealed as whole, complete and entire, but presently is dismembered, disassembled, and dispersed. Milton accedes that Truth was given to humanity but asserts that deceivers, through deliberate efforts of mutilation and by purposeful acts of destruction, had stolen Truth from the possession of that same humanity

(Continued on page 7)

THE UNKNOWN UNKNOWABLE

(Continued from page 14)

The same conclusion stands regarding the books proposing to reveal "hidden codes," to expose the "hidden book in the bible," or to uncover "secret messages" smuggled in the Psalms. All such writings are foolishness and only the foolish find fulfillment following folly.

The Scriptures consist of the sixty-six books (and only those sixty-six) that divide into the thirty-nine comprising the Old Testament and the twenty-seven completing the New Testament. When a believer speaks of the word of God, he has reference to those books or to a portion thereof and to nothing else.

"Thy word is truth." That is the unqualified testimony of the Son of God. Of course, one may argue that He only had reference to the Old Testament; however, an argument, as strong and as solid, may be offered that He was speaking of the whole of the word of God and, therefore, included the then unwritten New Testament. Whether only the Old or whether both Old and New, the word of God is truth. Who among true believers would challenge that statement? "Thy word is truth." That statement is an absolute. It, therefore, must be either accepted or rejected as it stands, for an absolute cannot be qualified by equivocation.

To be truth, the word cannot have untruth within. It is truth, not an admixture (to use an old theological term) of truth and error. Focus with me on a single writer used by God to record His word, the man Moses. It is illogical to hold that God gave His word as truth to Moses and allowed Moses to record that word with errors. God spoke the word, telling Moses to write it in a book. Moses did that (Exodus 34:21, Deuteronomy 31:24). Moses gave the book to others (Deuteronomy 31: 9). Joshua had access to that book (Joshua 8:31-32) and left it with the people when he died (Joshua 23:6). That handwritten book of Moses (and multiplied copies)

(Continued on page 16)

THE UNKNOWN UNKNOWABLE

(Continued from page 13)

advise her that I found the Gospel of Thomas largely drivel and the balance twaddle. I frankly found no more spiritual insight within that pseudo-Gospel than I did in Pearl of Great Price or Key to Science and Health. A wearisome, dreary evening wasted in mourning with Wagner is more "uplifting and enlightening" than a lifetime given to any of those three "inspired" works, since occasionally, Wagner did manage to find the right notes. Removing all their plagiarisms, which would comprise two sizeable volumes alone, Joseph Smith and Mary Baker (Glover Patterson Fry) Eddy do demonstrate a better imagination than did whoever the phony Thomas was.

Those volumes containing the alleged "Lost Books of the Bible," "Hidden Scrolls," and "Books of Eden" produce amusing entertainment and provide an insight into the mindset of charlatans and false prophets, but they generate no depreciation for the sixty-six books of settled Scriptures. Josephus writes with as much authority as is found in the works of the Apocrypha and the pseudo-gospels; and as any reader of Josephus knows, his reliability is about average for a traitor turned historian seeking to please his powerful conqueror. Certainly, all of these productions may have a few grains of historical, social, cultural salt mixed within their containers of silt and sand, but the sifting is a tiring, tedious work to glean insignificant results. One thing is certain sure, there are no nuggets, nor even a flake, of gold waiting to be panned in such fouled, polluted streams as the "Gospel of Thomas" and other counterfeits devised by human or devil. Five minutes of reading any random selection of these collections of human effort would provide overwhelming evidence to one accustomed to reading Scripture of their inferiority to the word of God and ensure their consignment to the trash to await suitable disposal by burial or burning.

(Continued on page 15)

THE UNKNOWN UNKNOWABLE

(Continued from page 6)

entrusted with Truth, "hewed her lovely form into a thousand pieces, and scattered them to the four winds." For Milton, the quest to rescue, to recover, and to reassemble Truth was the *raison d'être*, the *magna opus*, not only of his life, but of life itself. To Milton, that lovely form of once delivered Truth still existed, but only in severed members and limbs existing as fragments and pieces secreted in random, unmarked, diversely scattered locations of internment. In his mind, the pursuit to retrieve and regain Truth was, in every sense, the grand, noble "Search for the Lost Unknown Unknowable."

Much as a crusading Knight errant from the Round Table, Milton sees himself (and others likeminded) as pursuing a "Holy Grail," which, surely existing once, must certainly exist still, but exists only as a disjointed body, violated, mutilated, dissected, and strewn about waiting for a forensic team to reconstruct the original form. Truth, to Milton, no longer lived as a healthy whole. Whatever mangled form of Truth survived subsisted with the severe handicap of lacking portions, which may or may not be vital or even essential to its existence. Truth could, at best, be no more than a partially re-gathered collection of the lovely form it once had. He was grateful for whatever particular particles he might possess, but he yearned for enactment of reattachment. Even as he so yearned, he knows and acknowledges that his desire is unattainable. The mangled form of Truth exists, but the "some-places" its many, now isolated, lonely components might be concealed are unknown, indeed shall remain unknowable, until the Master himself returns to bring together Truth from its burial sites and reconstructs the original in loveliness and perfection.

As for that legendary "Holy Grail", that so many ear-

(Continued on page 8)

THE UNKNOWN UNKNOWNABLE*(Continued from page 7)*

nest, sincere knights of old did seek to recover, unquestionably, it is evident that the LORD Jesus actually did use a drinking utensil at the meal, called by many, the Last Supper. While we do not know the incontestable composition of that "cup" [whether it was clay (unlikely), or silver (possible), or gold (improbable)], a utensil that contained the fruit of the vine was held in the physical hand of the LORD Jesus Himself. That item, which in "Christian Mythology" (What an impossibility!) has become enlarged, expanded, and enshrined as "the Holy Grail," in spite of the superstition and mysticism was real and it was used. Its final disposition is unknown and, this side of eternity, unknowable. Yet, for that elusive instrument, fortunes were exhausted in useless searches, and men themselves were expended on unsuccessful quests. For a thousand years and more, the lure of the elusive "Holy Gail" has produced only tragedy. Wars, with all their horror and havoc, have been savagely fought over the alleged possession of that alluring cup. Men have forfeited home, wealth, reputation, comfort, and even their lives to find the "Holy Grail." The concept has been a popular theme for sensationalist writers and other profiteers. In this new century, a visit to a larger bookstore will provide a half dozen or more works postulating on the present location of that mystical, and in that context, mythological cup.

Milton asserts that Truth accompanied the LORD Jesus, but Milton believed that, through the malicious, calculated mischief of a few deceivers, Truth is lost and must be found. Truth, to him, was a possession seen once upon a time by man, once known to man, and once handled long ago; but, alas, Truth was wrested and stolen from man. Milton acknowledges, however, that, while the quest must go on, the effort itself will never succeed. Indeed, that accomplishment shall forever remain as an im-

*(Continued on page 9)***THE UNKNOWN UNKNOWNABLE***(Continued from page 12)*

ing delivered from the mouth of God to the ears of man. Some scholars delight in searching for "original sources" and a few have become most inventive in that pursuit. I found that the hypothetical proposition of an "ur-gospel" or some fantasized "Q" document is not worth the time required for the examination of the conjecture. The speculative existence of these "original sources for the Gospels" lack any substance or necessity other than scholar's intellectual biased rejection of the possibility of apostolic writers, penning their works under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. My confessed bias rejects such an unconfessed biased rejection as theirs. I am predisposed to accept the unified and consistent testimony of Christian history and to believe the unqualified assertions of Scripture. The original Source is the Triune God.

Since the LORD Jesus Christ Himself testified that Moses wrote the books attributed to him and believed the book of the prophet Isaiah was the work of Isaiah from first to last, so do I. His word cannot be abrogated by the witness of any scholar or any collection of linguistic experts. The word of the Saviour is sufficient; I neither seek nor need any other witness. When an "authority" dismisses the testimony of the Son of God in any area, I choose to ignore that "authority" in every area. If the LORD Jesus "accommodated" Jewish superstition as to Scripture, how may we trust Him in any other area? Perjury in one statement invalidates the entire testimony of the witness. Jesus of Nazareth is not a perjurer; for Him to lie would make Him a follower of the father of lies, that old dragon, the deceiver, the devil, Satan, the old red serpent. Be gone with such talk; be done with such thought. Tis naught but blasphemy.

Despite the emotional testimony to its "wonderful expansion of truth" and "many special insights" by the wife of a legendary Baptist preacher, when she asked, I had to

(Continued on page 14)

THE UNKNOWN UNKNOWNABLE

(Continued from page 11)

ter-arguments from those with far more education (or book-learning as Dad called it) than she, have done nothing to induce reconsideration. The issue is most simple to this simplistic preacher. If Moses did not write the five books, the book of the Law, as attributed to him, then who did write them? Whoever did so surely claimed to be Moses; thereby, making the books to be works of fiction if Moses wrote them not. The books are either genuine or they are frauds. The penman was either Moses or he was an impostor, a charlatan, a liar, and a forger. This same fact, as undeniable as it is unavoidable, is true of every book in the Bible. They were written by "holy men" or they were composed in the minds of unholy men.

Liars, claiming to be one of the prophets or one of the apostles, would not, indeed verily could not, have written truth. Either scripture is the word of God, or it is the fabricated falsehoods of fictionalized characters. Neither Peter nor Mother nor I have followed cunningly devised fables. If any of such conjecture is true—even to the extent of one sentence—then indeed, we desperately stand in need of such a group as "the Jesus seminar" to separate the genuine words from the imitation babble. I stand without hesitation or apology upon the affirmation that Moses wrote the five books (and one Psalm and perhaps others) ascribed to him, and I have no uncertainties or reservations as to the authorship or the legitimacy of any other book in the Bible. While I confess I do not understand all that the Bible includes, I have no misunderstanding as to what the Bible does include.

I do not question the origin of the Bible. The Bible originated in the heart, the mind, the very being of God and was revealed and spoken to humanity. God is described as speaking to humanity in an audible voice in the beginning of Genesis and in the closing of The Revelation; thus, essentially, the Bible may be described as be-

(Continued on page 13)

THE UNKNOWN UNKNOWNABLE

(Continued from page 8)

possibility until the return of the "Master." The search is glorious. The hunt is worthy of all the effort and all the expense; but it shall never be successful. All attempts are destined to fail; but the expedition itself is magnificent. An Englishman, a century or so later, would have said, "the chase is worth the candle." The result, since completion or perfection is unattainable, is not found in any measure of achievement. The value of the enterprise lies fully in the effort itself, because that effort progresses us ever closer to the unreachable goal.

Having read his paragraph, I began to ponder (a wonderful old word my Kentucky grandmother used so very often) his reasoning. As I did so, a weighty progression of thought generated within me. I will endeavor to share it with you, though I doubt that I shall find the words to express my meditation nearly as well, certainly not as concisely or as cogently, as did Milton.

Once upon a time, the God of Heaven revealed His heart, His mind, and His will to His creation through special, specific, selected individuals. He instructed or otherwise compelled by His Holy Spirit those men to record in written form on parchment (and even stone) those exact, precise, particular words that He selected and revealed. The testimony of these men is definite that they were given the words and were moved to record them. They were not impressed with thoughts, intrigued with concepts, or stirred with ideas. Once upon a time, God spoke and man wrote. Thus saith the LORD; thus, Moses wrote. Holy men of old wrote with their own hands or gave by dictation to an amanuensis ("one employed to write from dictation or to copy a manuscript"—Merriam Webster) what they were moved by the Holy Spirit to place in permanent form. Moses began the record, and the apostle John completed it some fifteen hundred years later with a final "Amen." The first was written

(Continued on page 10)

THE UNKNOWN UNKNOWABLE

(Continued from page 9)

down in the middle of the fifteenth century B.C. and the last word was inscribed on the scroll about 60 years after the Resurrection. Between those writings, the Spirit of God used nearly fifty men (only one Isaiah, but several Psalmists) to commit to writing the voice of the Lord—the very words “that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” Geographically, it was recorded on three continents—touching Ham, Shem, and Japheth. Linguistically, three languages were used: Hebrew, Greek, and a small selection (of mostly official governmental documents) in Chaldean. Arranged by directive or providence in such an unfolding, sequential (as to the teaching, not necessarily the chronology), revelatory order that any other arrangement is unthinkable the sixty-six form one organic whole (as so superbly proven by J. Sidlow Baxter in Strategic Grasp of the Bible).

Moses wrote the five books (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy) titled, in Scripture itself, “the Law,” or simply “the book of Moses.” God next instructed Joshua to record a history and, in the passage of time, others were called to the same task. Later prophets, such as Samuel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Jonah, wrote their books, as did Daniel. Later still, Matthew wrote a book. Then, Luke chronicled two, while Paul dictated and signed a collection of fourteen and Peter gave two; John wrote a total of four, of which the last, The Revelation of the LORD Jesus Christ completed and sealed the revelation from heaven. It is possible, within Scripture, to find where strong evidence supports that someone saw and someone handled each of these autographa, the authenticals, the originals, signed by the holy man God moved to write. That these “first writings” (and all the others unmentioned by me by name found in the listing of the assembled sixty-six) were written, were seen, were handled, and were transmitted from

(Continued on page 11)

THE UNKNOWN UNKNOWABLE

(Continued from page 10)

one generation of believers to another is not debatable to this preacher. It is a fact not questioned by anyone who relies on the testimony within Scripture and who values not the opinions of men (whether Christian or pagan), for Scripture itself validates that exact sequence. If the simple, explicit testimony of Scripture alone, needing neither corroboration of history, substantiation of archeology, nor confirmation by scholarship, is insufficient for any reader of this article, then that reader and I have no further basis of discussion. I reject the traditions of men as an authority because the thoughts, concepts, and ideas of fallen men (even if regenerated) are not inspired, infallible, and inerrant, and trust only the word** of God as the sole and final authority. *Sola scriptura* is more than a slogan; it is a way of life. Isaiah 8:20, “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them,” leaves no alternative.

**I reserve the use of the phrase “Word of God” exclusively for the LORD Jesus Christ and use the phrase “word of God” for Scripture.

Surely, to this point of the article all genuine believers are in general concurrence as to the source of Scripture, the origin of Scripture, and the transmittal of Scripture. We may part company later, but I cannot imagine legitimate disagreement (other than on the implication that Paul indeed is the author of Hebrews) on this matter. The books were written; they were handled; they were passed from one generation to another. Who, with honest scholarship, can dispute those statements?

Personally, I also recognize the traditional titles and time-honored authorships (realizing that the true Author of all sixty-six is the Holy Spirit) of each book of the Bible as legitimate and valid. I accepted, without any hesitation, this precept as a boy at my mother’s knee and these subsequent decades of reading multiple coun-

(Continued on page 12)