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Purpose:

The *Emmanuel Baptist Theological Journal (EBTJ)* is the educational and research arm of the Emmanuel Baptist Theological Seminary, a ministry of Emmanuel Baptist Church.

The purpose of the *EBTJ* is to offer biblical exegesis of the Scriptures and focus articles about Baptist history, interpretations, and biographies to pastors, missionaries, and other servants of the Lord. *EBTJ* is part of the writing ministry of the EBTS faculty, seminarians and guest contributors to encourage and edify other of the Lord's candlesticks. It is not the purpose of *EBTJ* to dictate doctrinal beliefs or practices to any other church.

Staff

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Dean and Editor:	Dr. Thomas M. Strouse
Assistant Editor:	Dr. W. Aaron Strouse
Assistant Professors:	Mr. Casey Fitzgerald
	Mr. Joel Grassi
	Mr. Gary Pierpont

Correspondence

Please submit all correspondence to the following:

Emmanuel Baptist Theological Journal
296 New Britain Avenue
Newington, Connecticut 06111
(860) 667-6208

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INTRODUCTION

There is a great need for theological articles that defend important doctrines and explain key issues from a strong Baptist, local-church position. These articles need to be presented without resorting to questioning of the words of God's preserved Word. For this purpose, *The Emmanuel Baptist Theological Journal* has been published.

Since the fall of 2000, Emmanuel Baptist Theological Seminary has been dedicated to teaching God's Words to young men who are training for the Gospel ministry in Baptist churches. The seminary is a local church ministry – a truth that is not only consistent with the Scriptures but also with the long-standing convictions of this church.

The articles the readers will be able to examine in this magazine will have theological accuracy as their foundation and practical application as their goal. Emmanuel Baptist Theological Seminary endeavors to be Biblical, academic, and practical. It is hoped that these articles will be consistent with that goal.

May the Lord Jesus Christ be honored and may the integrity of His Word be upheld through the ministry of *The Emmanuel Baptist Theological Journal*.

Dr. J. Michael Bates
Senior Pastor, Emmanuel Baptist Church



AN EXAMINATION OF MODERN MISSIONS

Todd D. Sawtelle, Assistant Pastor

Introduction

All power is given unto me in heaven and earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

These words are engraved on a plate that is attached to a stone outside of the old home of Adoniram Judson, “the father of American Missions.” These words, termed the *Great Commission*, have been the marching orders of many missionaries. Within these words is found the nature of New Testament missions. The New Testament also provides the careful student with principles for fulfilling the Great Commission.

The local church that God blesses is clearly a missions-minded church as exemplified by the Philippian church [Phil. 2:15; 4:15]. Several unfortunate characteristics are evident in churches where there is no missions-mindedness:

1. The Scriptures are not translated in the language of the people.

2. The church loses the sense of the saving grace of Christ.
3. The lives of the believers are lacking in spiritual power.
4. The church abandons its missionary spirit.
5. The church ceases to move forward on the indigenous principle.¹

Clearly, a God-pleasing local church is going to have a missions heartbeat. However, as in any other practice and ministry of the local New Testament church, the Word of God needs to be the Authority for faith and practice. The Bible-based nature of missions ought to be studied and the Bible-founded principles of missions work ought to be the foundation of every local church's missions program.

Webster defines nature as “the essential character of a thing.” The essential character of missions is found in Matthew 28:18-20. The nature of missions could be summarized as evangelizing and then church planting. First, the “Good News” must be presented [Mark 1:1,4; Mark 16:15; Romans 3:25]. “Every New Testament Local Church needs to know that the message of the mission is more important than the mission itself.”² This is not to be confused with the Social Gospel of the liberal or neo-evangelical missionaries. The Social Gospel has been found to lead to “more social service and less gospel.”³ While a cold cup of water may open a door to present the Gospel, fundamental Baptists have agreed that genuine heart change starts with the Gospel being received by faith. Matthew 28:19 contains one verb, *teach*,

¹ Reginald Matthews, *Missionary Administration in the Local Church* (Des Plaines, IL: Regular Baptist Press, 1970) p. 105.

² Suhento Liauw, *Theology of Local Church Missions* (Jakarta, Indonesia: GRAPHE, 1995) p. 20.

³ Harold Lindsell, “Faith Missions – Their Growth and Outreach,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 115, no. 458, (April, 1958) p.145.

(μαθητεύσατε – aorist imperative), which means *to make a disciple*. With this one verb there are three participles attached. *Go*, found at the beginning of verse 19 is an aorist participle (πορευθέντες), which indicates action antecedent to the main verb. Two present tense participles are included: *baptizing* (βαπτίζοντες; meaning immersion⁴) and *teaching* (διδάσκοντες). The ongoing teaching must endeavor to involve “*all things whatsoever I have commanded you*” also known as “*all the counsel of God*” [Acts 20:27]. Christ had earlier stated that man needs “*every word*” [Matthew 4:4]. These present participles in Matthew 29:19 and 20 indicate ongoing concurrent action at the time of the main verb.

Thus, not only is the Gospel the character of New Testament missions, but local church planting is at the heart of God’s Purpose. Evidence that the nature of New Testament missions is local church planting is found in the book of Acts. Acts 2 tells us that after Peter preached the Gospel, souls were saved and then baptized into the already existing Jerusalem Church.

The Modern Fundamentalist Model Questioned

Most fundamental, independent Baptists would agree with the writer to this point. However, the missions model that many fundamental Baptists have been following for some time now, while pragmatic, is not truly a New Testament model. As a counselor to this writer stated, the fundamentalist model has resulted in “missionless churches and churchless missionaries.”⁵ Consider the following

⁴ Baptism, in order to be Biblical, must be immersion. Immersion is the means of entrance into the local church [Acts 2:41].

⁵ The writer seeks to give credit to Johnny Pike of Kinston, North Carolina, who has authored material titled *Welcome to Local Church Missions* with the goal of challenging fundamental pastors and churches to re-evaluate their missions program and philosophy and encourage conformity with the New Testament model. This writer met Mr. Pike while on a mission trip to Athens, Greece in the

scenario: a local independent Baptist church supports 55 missionaries for 2% of their support level. If one of a church's supported missionaries and his family walked in a door of the church sanctuary on Sunday morning service unannounced, how much of the church membership would know who they were and that they were missionaries supported by the church? Would they know the field on which they were serving? Would the pastoral staff even know and recognize the missionary? Would the pastor remember his latest prayer letter and the needs listed? Would he know the children's names or even the wife's name? Unless the church being visited was the sending church, there would be unfamiliarity in this relationship. Look at this same scenario from the missionary's perspective: If every church gave him 2% of his support, then he would need to report to 50 churches every time he returned from the field on furlough. What does this missionary have to go through to schedule a service in each of his 50 supporting churches? How much will it cost him financially to travel to each one of these churches? Will the missionary have to travel alone so that the wife can properly home school the children?

The truth is many fundamental Baptist churches do not support missionaries for 2% of their support, but for much less than that amount; and missionaries on furlough do not necessarily visit all of their supporting churches. This writer has read a number of letters sent by furloughing missionaries to his pastor asking if the supporting church could "let them off the hook" from making a support visit because the demand is too great for the missionary to be in all of his supporting churches as well as take care of all his personal and family needs during that furlough. It is likely that the missionary will need to schedule and visit new churches to make up a financial deficit due to attrition or inflation. Since

summer of 2004. He has since met with him to discuss further the theology of local church missions. Mr. Pike has been a godly, Biblical counselor relative to missions.

statistics bear out that a missionary will need to visit six churches in order to gain one supporting church, add this into the already demanding schedule. In fact, this would have to take priority over visiting supporting churches, if the missionary is in dire need of support. Years and years can go by without a supported missionary ever reporting to some of his supporting churches. This writer is in his tenth year of ministry in his church and has yet to see personally several of the missionaries physically report to his church during that time. This is not necessarily the fault of the missionary as there is only so much that an individual can do given the system with which he has to work. However, an impersonal, distant, financial partnership is the result of this system. In most cases, the pastor and church take solace in the notion that the mission board is going to keep the missionary accountable in his doctrine and practice, and the mission board director will make sure that the missionary's real needs will be met. Fundamental local churches have entrusted the mission board with administrating the Great Commission.

Even in a church where a missions committee is constantly reviewing prayer letters and working to keep the congregation informed, the congregation is still distanced from the missionary's burden. Is there not a better way? The answer has to be yes, but let us not make the mistake of seeking a purely pragmatic, extra-Biblical solution. Instead, let us re-examine the New Testament doctrine of ecclesiology and the Great Commission and we will begin to find the solution. We need to put off the pragmatic model, renew our minds with the New Testament teaching, and put on the New Testament model.

This writer would like to narrow this study for the sake of this article by provoking the reader to finding Biblical answers to two questions: (1) To whom was the Great Commission given: individual church members or the local church? (2) To whom was the Great Commission given: parachurch

organizations or the local church? Practical conclusions must be drawn from our Bible study.

Individual Church Members or the Local Church?

The Great Commission is not given to individual believers, but is given to local churches. It was to the disciples who formed the Jerusalem assembly that Jesus spoke in Matthew 28. His commission was directed to an assembly. The verb $\mu\alpha\theta\eta\tau\epsilon\acute{\upsilon}\sigma\alpha\tau\epsilon$ translated *teach* is a second person plural aorist active imperative verb. Clearly the command is addressed to a group. Again in Mark 16:14-18, the context demands that Christ gave this commission to a group. Yet again, in Acts 1:4-8 the Jerusalem assembly was present to receive this commission. One cannot help but see that the Great Commission was given to a local assembly. Then as that assembly would later be scattered by persecution [Acts 8:4], an assembly would be formed in Antioch. From this Antioch assembly, obviously under the burden of fulfilling the Great Commission, was sent a missionary team lead by Paul and Barnabas, which God used to plant more New Testament churches [Acts 13 ff].

An additional point to consider is that the commission is given to an entity that has the authority to baptize. No individual carries the authority to exercise this ordinance. The assembly is responsible to administrate and witness the baptism of a new believer. While a church-appointed officer does the baptizing, it must be done under the authority of the local church. According to Acts 2:41, immersion was necessary to the three thousand souls being added to the Jerusalem church. Without baptism a person can be saved and in the Kingdom of God, but without baptism one cannot be a member of a New Testament church, which is also termed the body of Christ⁶ [1 Corinthians 12:27]. To be

⁶ The New Testament usage of the “body of Christ” in context is always a

clear, no individual Christian carries the authority to baptize, because it rests with the New Testament assembly. Missionaries sent out under the authority of a local church have the privilege of baptizing believing converts.⁷ It is understood that no parachurch mission board has the Scriptural authority to baptize. This has been a distinction of immersionist assemblies since the first century. Only since the time of the Protestant Reformation has this doctrine been clouded by the influence of a Platonic, Roman Catholic-based notion of a universal, invisible assembly.

This writer then concludes that the Great Commission was given to local churches to carry out and not to individual Christians. This writer does not deny the truth that God works in individual church member's hearts by burdening

reference to a local church. The word "church" always refers to a visible assembly. The Protestant doctrine of ecclesiology, which holds that the body of Christ is an invisible assembly of all regenerated New Testament believers, while popular, is not the teaching of the New Testament, nor is it a Baptist doctrine. The term "Kingdom of God" is the biblical term that refers an invisible group of all New Testament believers who are regenerated. It is this group that is promised to be raptured before the Tribulation. Resulting from this rapture, there will no longer be any true New Testament churches meeting on the earth, and the local church age will be over. Perhaps some unregenerate members will drive to church the Sunday following the Rapture, only to be greeted by a nearly empty building. [As an aside, the notion of a "Baptist-only Bride" is not supported by Scripture. In fact, the popular term "rapture of the church" is not truly Biblical either.] This writer believes strongly that the term "church" in the Bible is never an invisible assembly, but is always a local visible assembly. Therefore, the terms *body of Christ* and *local church* are interchangeable and synonymous. Paul tells the assembly of Corinthians, "Ye are the body of Christ and members in particular" [1 Corinthians 12:27]. One purpose of 1 Corinthians 12 is to teach a visible assembly that each member has been directed to the assembly by the Holy Spirit's guidance, and each member has been given a spiritual gift to be used in concert with the other members of that church. When all the members of the body work together, there is unity and God's work is accomplished. This interpretation of this passage exalts the purpose of the local church rather than the "universal body of Christ" interpretation, which minimizes the importance and role of the local church and subjects it to a parachurch, invisible body of Christ mentality.

⁷ A favorite question of many is under what authority Philip baptized the Ethiopian eunuch. A consistent Biblical answer would be that Philip was sent out under the authority of the Jerusalem assembly and thus had that assembly's permission to baptize. Consider the following verses: Acts 8:4-12; 8:26-40.

them to take on missions projects or witnessing opportunities, but it is imperative that the church member fulfills his responsibility in concert with his assembly and not exclusive of his assembly. For example, a believer's financial giving for missions should be through his local church, rather than by taking on particular missionaries that are personal favorites. All missions endeavors should be undertaken with the blessing of the local church and with the goal of bringing the new convert into a local church where he can be discipled.

Parachurch Organizations or the Local Church?

One's ecclesiological view will affect his practice of the Great Commission. While this article does not attempt to thoroughly explain and defend the writer's ecclesiology, it will become apparent to the reader that the writer's ecclesiological stand is different from that of modern Fundamentalism. It should be stated that this writer was taught the popular view that the local church and the Body of Christ are two different entities; one being localized and visible while the other is an invisible union of all New Testament believers. As stated before, this is a thoroughly Protestant view of ecclesiology. Within the last few years, though not without much internal wrestling, this writer's view has changed from a Protestant view to a New Testament view. It is difficult to loosen one's grip on a doctrine that he has held confidently for some time. This is especially true because this Protestant view is the basis for all parachurch organizations, as they exist to aid local churches and build the universal "Body of Christ." Only with this view of ecclesiology is it acceptable for a person to build a camp, academic institution, or missions agency outside of the direct authority of a New Testament assembly. Personally, this writer has been helped spiritually by such parachurch organizations, yet pragmatism is not a defense for a position that has no Biblical support. Well-meaning servants of the Lord are doing good things for Christians in parachurch ministries; but if the Scripture teaches that all

Great Commission work should be done under the authority of a local church, should we not be certain to follow this pattern? Obedience to God's plan always results in God's glory and our good. All believers ought to be ready to change in order that they might be transformed each day, and all churches ought to be willing to do the same. If one discovers an unbiblical practice or philosophy in his life or ministry, he needs to be humbly willing to be transformed by the Holy Spirit. God will not leave him in his false belief but seeks to change him. This writer believes that if the parachurch model of fundamentalism is to change, it will only happen as humble believers study the Scriptures and then bring themselves into submission with what they find in the New Testament. This article does not necessarily have the goal of changing the reader's mind, but rather provoking honest and humble study of the doctrine of ecclesiology and then modeling our ministries accordingly.

For a normative view of local church missions, one ought to turn to Acts 13 and 14. The local church at Antioch, being international in nature already [Acts 13:1] and being in one of the largest cities of its day, evidenced the New Testament nature of church-planting missions. The Holy Spirit led this church to ordain Paul and Barnabas. This leading of the Holy Ghost came after the fasting and prayer of the church members at Antioch. Both Paul and Barnabas were commissioned from this local church. Both of these missionaries had already proven themselves by ministering in the local church there at Antioch [Acts 11]. In summary, Paul and Barnabas were members of the church at Antioch, proven by the church at Antioch, commissioned by the church at Antioch, and sent out by the church at Antioch [Acts 13:3]. Paul and Barnabas lived by faith, relative to their support. Some believe that Paul's first journey was fully financed by the local church at Antioch.⁸ Paul apparently at

⁸ Liauw, p. 81.

least partially supported himself and his team by means of his tentmaking. Perhaps, at times, they relied on Barnabas' personal wealth [Acts 4:36]. On the second journey, Paul was eventually partially supported by the church at Philippi [Phil. 4:15]. Nevertheless, while relying on God to meet their needs, Paul and Barnabas purposed to plant local churches as they traveled to major cities in Asia Minor. They faced opposition along the way, but remained faithful. At the end of the journey, they returned to their sending church in Antioch and reported on that first journey [Acts 14:27, 28]. Mysteriously absent was the intervention of a parachurch mission board. Consider also the following passages which further indicate the relationship of the missionary Paul and the church at Antioch: Acts 15:3; 18:21, 22.

If a proper understanding of New Testament ecclesiology leads the local church away from parachurch missions, where did parachurch missions boards and societies find their roots? The answer is man's pragmatism. The first mission board was Episcopalian, therefore rooted organically in the Roman Catholic Church. This first mission board was founded on July 27, 1649 and was called "A Corporation for the promoting and propagating the Gospel of Jesus Christ in New England."⁹ In 1701, the second board was founded also in the Church of England. The third board was founded in Denmark and no denominational basis was mentioned. The fourth mission board was founded by the Moravians at Hernhutt and was based on the Episcopalian government.¹⁰ Finally, the Baptists made their presence felt with William Carey's board being founded in 1792; but this board was not truly a local church agency. Carey's agency followed the Episcopalian parachurch pattern. The mission board idea is actually, though indirectly, rooted in the Roman Catholic Church. "Christ's churches did their work from the

⁹ M.L. Moser and J.A. Scarboro, *The Bible, the Baptists, and the Board System* (Little Rock, AR: The Challenge Press, 1975), p. 11.

¹⁰ Moser and Scarboro, p. 11.

establishment of Christianity until 1649 without a mission society or board outside of local churches.”¹¹ The parachurch mission board pattern is not found in the New Testament. In fact, a student of the Scripture would be hard pressed to find any New Testament-ordained ministry outside of the authority of a particular local assembly. Again, all Great Commission work should be done under the umbrella of a local church. This applies not only to mission boards, but also to academic institutions on all levels, publishing ministries, Bible translation work, camps, hospitals, to name a few. Again, this writer acknowledges that the well-intentioned efforts of many Christians have led to the formation of parachurch ministries. In some cases, the apathy of local churches caused the founders of these ministries to “take matters into their own hands,” as was the case with the great Baptist missionary William Carey. It is the belief of this writer that faulty Protestant ecclesiology is the sandy foundation of these ministries. Understandably, if we are all members of a universal Body of Christ, then our gifts exist to fulfill the Great Commission within that Body; but the truth that many have to come to grips with is that we cannot have it both ways. Either the body is universal, or it is local; but it cannot be both. This writer stands with the cloud of Baptist brethren who understood and practiced the New Testament teaching that the local assembly is the body of Christ.

Practical Conclusions

What can a parachurch mission board or agency accomplish for missions that a local church cannot? Before 1649, churches did the work of missions. Pragmatism, apathy, hyper-Calvinism, and Protestant ecclesiology led to the founding of missions agencies that were not under the authority of local churches. While these factors give us an answer as to *why* missions agencies arose, it does not justify

¹¹ Moser and Scarboro, p. 13.

their existence Biblically.

The nature of New Testament missions includes Gospel Preaching and Church Planting. To accomplish this task the New Testament provides the local church with principles to guide its missions ministry. These principles can be categorized as pertaining to the following: the missionary, the sending church and pastor, and financial support.

The missionary ought to be governed by principles of the New Testament. He needs to be called by the Holy Ghost [Acts 16:10]. He ought to be ordained and made a part of the sending church's pastoral staff, perhaps, as an evangelist [Eph. 4:11; Acts 13:1, 2]. He needs to fulfill the qualifications of a pastor, if he is to be qualified to plant, oversee, and shepherd a local church [1 Tim. 3]. His duty is to go where his local church sends him under the direction of the Holy Ghost, evangelize, plant churches, and return to his sending church to report and then be reassigned [Acts 14:27,28].

The sending local church and pastor play a key role in New Testament missions. The mission agency and board are not found in the New Testament; but the sending local church and pastor certainly are found in the Scripture. Again, the role of the Holy Spirit becomes evident. The Holy Spirit has been termed "the Superintendent of New Testament missions."¹² Since the time of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit has been the Director of the local church, while Christ has been the Head. The decisions of the local church and pastor must be guided by the Holy Ghost [Acts 16:6, 7; Gal. 1:15, 16; Acts 9:22; Col. 3:15; Gal. 5:22]. The local church must be sensitive to this leading [Acts 16:10]. The pastor plays a vital role as the overseer [1 Peter 5:2]. He must take the lead in carrying the missions burden for his local church.¹³ Missions

¹² Matthews, p. 20.

¹³ In his material, Johnny Pike outlines the following strategy principles.

ought to saturate the entire church ministry and ought to occupy the greatest portion of our church's budget – far greater than debt for facilities. Local church missionaries ought to be held accountable by their sending church and pastor rather than by a parachurch missions director. The local church's responsibility can be summarized with the following duties: intercession [Mt. 9:38; Jn. 15:5]; information, that is informing the local church about the needs of its missionaries [Jn. 4:35]; instruction [Mt. 9:36-38];

This writer has listed Pike's principles with some of his own summary explanation.

1. Adopt a Biblical-based philosophy of the Great Commission.
2. A pro-active approach vs. a re-active approach: Rather than re-acting to the letters of missionaries and their presentations and then deciding who to support, pray as a church as to what specific regions or places your church ought to be reaching with the Gospel. Look for missionaries that are going to specific fields that God has burdened your church to reach. Follow the Antioch pattern.
3. Significant support vs. Token support: Instead of supporting missionaries for one or two percent, support fewer missionaries for 25, 50, or even 100% of their need. The issue is quality rather than quantity. This will really personalize missions in your local church. You will certainly support fewer missionaries, but will have a far greater contact with the work of your missionaries. Your church people will get to know your missionaries very closely. Furlough trips will be shortened and spent with the supporting church or churches. A yearlong furlough will not be necessary, unless the sending church decided that it would be. As an example, if a missionary has four supporting churches each giving him 25%, he would spend the same percentage of time on furlough with his supporting churches. Therefore, if he had taken a two-month furlough, he would be with his supporting churches for two weeks each.
4. Strategic vs. Random Placement: The local church ought to adopt a focused strategy for reaching "unreached people groups" of the world and direct its missionaries to those fields. When selecting a missionary for support be highly selective and only select a missionary that fits into the planned strategy that the local church has adopted. The notion of "look at how many missionaries we support" is pride-based. Many times the church knows very little to nothing about most of these missionaries.
5. Sending vs. Supporting Agency: Rather than being primarily a funding agency, the local church ought to be the sending authority. Missionaries ought to be staff members. There ought to be regular contact and regular assistance. A close personal relationship is the result.

participation; representation, that is sending one's own missionaries; and investment [Mt. 6:21; Phil. 4:15, 19].¹⁴

Finally, principles for the supporting of New Testament missionaries ought to be set down. What are the Biblical options? Faith ought to be the basis. Tentmaking or personal employment seemed, at least at some times, to be Paul's means [1 Thess. 2:9; Acts 18]. The local church should practice faith-giving [Phil. 4:15, 19; 1 Cor. 9; 2 Cor. 9]. Personal wealth or savings could be a means of support for some. The missionary may consider taking on secular employment for a time [Titus 3:14]. Instead of the popular practice of supporting missionaries for a fraction of their support, a more Biblical means of supporting local church missions would be to support missionaries sent from one's own local church for most if not all of their support. Understandably, this would result in radical change in many a local church's missions program and would need to be carefully, prayerfully implemented. A wise, careful, missionary-friendly transition is in order. It is important to the writer of this article that the reader understand that it is vital that the missionary not be hurt or hindered as the local church makes a transition. A newly planted church can establish effective missions practices from the start; however, an established church must carefully and gradually implement such changes. Perhaps another article could be written to suggest possible transition strategies. In any case, each autonomous church will have to make such decisions.

Missions is not *a* work of the local church; it is *the* work of the local church. It is what we are all about. Every facet of our church ministry ought to be for the purpose of fulfilling the Great Commission. If we are involved in anything that does not work to accomplish this goal, we ought to scrap it and make appropriate changes. A burden for missions ought

¹⁴Matthews, pages 54-56.

to permeate our local churches. It ought to be what we are all about. Yet, are we as independent, fundamental Baptists getting the job done? The percentage of Christian college graduates entering the mission field has declined, while the need for missionaries is seemingly insatiable.¹⁵ “*The fields are white already to harvest.*” While no one can change the mistakes of the past, we need not repeat them. This writer seeks to raise the following question among fundamental churches: how much more could be accomplished for Christ if missions is put solely under the authority of burdened New Testament churches rather than under the administration of parachurch agencies? Every Bible-loving local church must embrace a sense of urgency. The local church that heeds and follows the nature and principles of New Testament missions will witness the following results: the Word will be multiplied [Acts 6:7], disciples will be multiplied [Acts 6:1], and churches will be planted [Acts 16:5].¹⁶ May God’s churches awake and work to this end.

¹⁵ Woodrow Kroll, *The Vanishing Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publ., 1991) p. 54.

¹⁶ Matthews, p. 19.



THE LOCAL CHURCH, ANOTHER CHURCH, AND THE PARACHURCH

An examination of the nature and purpose of the New Testament Church

Gary Pierpont, Associate Professor

Introduction

The mention of the word “church” triggers many different thoughts and concepts. To the average person in the pew, that word can mean the building he worships in or the group of people who meet in that building. To a theologian the word carries with it deep biblical meaning whether he sees it as a local institution, a denominational label or a worldwide or universal concept. Indeed many see all three of these ideas as different aspects of the “church.” However well-meaning these ideas may be, they must be examined in the light of the Scriptures. If the final authority for faith and practice is the Bible, then one’s ecclesiology, especially as it relates to the nature and purpose of the church, must conform to the teachings of the Word of God.¹ If a man finds his view of the church does not conform to the Scriptures, then he must either change his belief or be in

¹ Theological positions are often argued from sources other than the Bible. This causes a problem with final authority. If one’s theology is molded by any extra-Biblical source and that position is contrary to the Bible, that position is in error no matter how well intentioned or sincere that individual is.

opposition to the Bible.

Ecclesia

Of the 115 times the word *ἐκκλησία* appears in the *Textus Receptus*, 35 of those appearances are in the plural. This is significant in that it shows that the Holy Spirit made a difference between one local assembly and several local assemblies. Nowhere is this clearer than Acts 9:31. “*Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria and were edified and walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.*” It is not surprising that this particular verse is the target of revision in the Alexandrian texts. The plural *ἐκκλησίαι* is replaced with the singular *ἐκκλησία*. From the days of Ignatius, who first used the term *catholic church*, until the present hour, an attempt has been made to show that the church has a universal aspect. This is no doubt the reason for the change from plural to singular in this passage. If it can be shown that *ἐκκλησία* is always a visible local assembly then the whole idea of a universal invisible church is destroyed.

The Greek word *ἐκκλησία* is most often translated as church. It is known that the basis for understanding this term is found in Acts 19:32-41. Here the word is translated “assembly” which is its classical sense. It indicates a lawful gathering composed of those who were called out for a particular purpose. This clearly was a visible local gathering not a mystical, unseen group of people. However, this has not prevented many from making the leap from a local visible assembly as was understood by the Greek-speaking world of the first century to Platonistic, invisible, universal group that has yet to assemble. The obvious reason for doing so is to satisfy a theological idea that cannot be supported by a careful exegesis of the Bible. All references to *ἐκκλησία*, which are translated as *church*, could be

understood in the classical sense of assembly without doing harm to the passage in which they are found. There is no passage where the classical meaning of ἐκκλησία should not be applied. There is no contextual reason for understanding any use of this word as anything more than a local visible assembly.

It should be noted that the term ἐκκλησία can be said at times to be used in a generic sense. That is it may be used in a general sense to describe the normal local assembly without necessarily meaning any one assembly in particular. For example, one may speak of the American family. Obviously, it does not refer to an invisible family that one day may meet. Nor does it refer to all American families put together. Rather it is a reference to a typical family. So it is with some New Testament references to the church.

Some may argue that Ephesians 1:22-23 must be a reference to a universal church since the church is referred to as his body. Surely, someone would say that a head might not have more than one body. However if it is understood that each local church is the body of Christ in a particular location and since Jesus Christ is omnipresent, He can indeed be the head of each and every local New Testament church. This understanding would be consistent throughout the book of Ephesians. For example in Eph. 3:21 the local church is given as the place in which glory will be given to God the Father through Christ Jesus through out all ages. Of interest here is the word translated ages- γενεάς. Literally, this means each generation. The teaching here is that there will be a local church (assembly) in every generation. It is not teaching a universal invisible church. Nor is it teaching there will only be one church in each generation; simply that the local church will be in existence in each generation.

In Eph. 5:22-33, the Holy Spirit compares the relation

between a husband and wife to the relation between Christ and His church. While it is understood that there is discussion as to whether or not the church is the bride of Christ, that discussion is a topic for another study. The important thing to note here is that as a husband has a visible wife in a specific location, so Christ has a visible church in a specific location. If this is teaching a universal church, it is a poor analogy to use, since those who hold to a universal church must allow that the universal church, not only has not met in a single location, it cannot be said to be complete yet. A local church is complete, although it may grow or shrink, and it fits the analogy used here.²

The Origin of the Church

One of the most misunderstood aspects of the Local New Testament Church is its origin. One of the contributing factors to this error was the *Scotfield Reference Bible* and the *New Scotfield Reference Bible*. In the footnote for Acts 2:1, the reader is told:

*A new age was announced by our Lord Jesus Christ in Mt. 12:47-13:52. The church was clearly prophesied by Him in Mt. 16:18 (cp. Mt. 18:15-19), purchased by the shedding of His blood on Calvary (Rom. 3:24-25; I Cor. 6:20; I Pet. 1:18-19), and constituted as The Church after His resurrection and ascension at Pentecost ...*³

As generations of Christian read his notes, Scotfield's views, both correct and incorrect, became the standard for

² The burden of proof actually belongs on the shoulders of those who hold to a universal church position. It is necessary for them to show a clear teaching of a universal ἐκκλησία in the New Testament if it can be found.

³ C. I. Scotfield, *The New Scotfield Reference Bible*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967) p.1162.

accepted theology in fundamental circles. The Scriptures do not teach that the church began at Pentecost. Scofield refers to Matthew 16:18 as prophecy. This verse does not teach the future beginning of His church, but rather the continuous building of an organization that was already in existence.

It is important to notice that the Lord did not say, "I will start," "I will beget," "I will originate," "I will create," or "I will cause to become." He does say "I will build," using the root oikidomein (to edify). This verb is used at least 20 times in numerous passages indicating the edification of believers and churches. For instance, Luke says in Acts 9:31, "the churches...were edified," Paul says in I Cor. 14:4, "he that prophesieth edifieth the church," and again in Eph. 4:12, "for the edifying of the body of Christ." Both the etymology and the usage of oikodomein indicate that this word means "to edify," "to strengthen," or "to build up," and that is precisely how Christ used it in His classic statement; "I will edify my church."⁴

The Savior called this assembly "my church." This would distinguish it from other assemblies while at the same time using a term that was familiar.

Matthew 18:17 gives further evidence that the church was already in existence. Talking with His disciples about forgiveness and discipline, Jesus stated that if a trespassing brother fails to respond to attempts to make things right with an offended brother, then he is to be brought before the church. There is no indication that Christ was speaking of a future time. He was giving instruction to his disciples

⁴ Thomas M Strouse, *I Will Build My Church*, (Emmanuel Baptist Theological Press: Newington, CT, 2001) p. 29.

concerning an assembly which was already in existence and to which they belonged.

Further evidence of a church before Pentecost is found in Hebrews 2:12. Here the Apostle Paul is showing a fulfillment of Psalm 22:22. *“Saying I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.”* The only recorded time the Saviour sang is found in Matt. 26:30. *“And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.”* This took place after the Last Supper, where the Lord’s Supper was instituted.

Some may contend that the church could not exist during the lifetime of the Messiah because that which determines church membership could not have been present. It must be realized that there is a sense in which there was transitional period. However, it can be demonstrated that the same requirements for membership in a local church today can be found in the Gospels concerning Christ’s *“my church.”*

There were several requirements for each member of the messianic community, according to the Gospel accounts. 1) The disciples needed to recognize Jesus of Nazareth as “the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world” (Jn.1:29). 2) The disciples needed to identify with Jesus as the Messiah by submitting to John’s baptism (Mt. 3:1-11; cf. Jn 1:33-37). 3) The disciples needed to obey Christ’s commandments (Jn. 15:10; cf. Jn, 6:66). One may conclude from these truths that the messianic community was comprised of immersed believers who were obedient to ongoing truth. The messianic community then, was identical with the ekklesia which received the Great Commission—immersed disciples obedient to Christ’s teaching (Mt. 28:19-

20).⁵

Thus the church, that is the local assembly, was begun by Christ Himself before His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension. It was then as it is now: a visible congregation of saved, immersed believers whose purpose is to carry out the Great Commission.

The Local Church and the Great Commission

Matthew 28:19-20 is well known as the Great Commission. Of major importance is the question, to whom was the Great Commission given? If it can be demonstrated that it was given to the local New Testament church then it is the responsibility of the local church and only the local church to see to the fulfillment of the Great Commission. The context of the passage indicates that the eleven disciples were the ones who were present (verse 16.) The parallel passage in Mark 16:14 ff. indicates the same group attended. As has been already demonstrated, this was the ἐκκλησία which Christ had organized and was in fact the first local New Testament Church. Some may argue that this group did not constitute a church because they did not always meet in the same location. It should be noted that the church is not bound to meet in the same place all the time. Throughout history, churches have been forced to meet in secret and in different locations in order to worship safely, especially during times of intense persecution. The church is not the location but the members assembled for a particular purpose. What is important here is the fact that this small assembly of baptized believers was meeting together to receive instruction from their Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ.

As demonstrated by the use of the second person plural, the

⁵ Strouse, p. 39.

instructions were given to all of the members of the assembly or church. They were to go and teach or make disciples in all nations, baptize them and to teach them to observe all things commanded them by the Lord Jesus Christ. Obviously, this entails witnessing and evangelizing as well as instruction about baptism and church membership. The teaching “*to observe all things*” which Christ commanded is a very critical part of this commission.

It is not possible for one to obey all the spoken words of Christ, since they are not all recorded in Scripture. Therefore the reference to all things is a reference to all the inscripturated words of the Lord. In John 17:8, Jesus said to His Father, “*For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me, and they have received them...*” These are the “*all things*” which Jesus told his disciples they were to teach others to observe.⁶ The Greek word translated “*observe*” is of particular interest. It comes from τηρέω, which is translated elsewhere in the New Testament with the words “*keep*” or “*guard*.” In his address to the seven churches in Asia, the Lord uses the same word four times in Rev. 3. The first time is found in verse 3 when He warned the church at Sardis “Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard and hold fast (τήρει).” They were to observe, keep, guard, the words they had received. In verses 8 and 10, He commended the church at Philadelphia because they kept (ἐτήρησάς) His word and therefore, He would keep (τηρήσω) them from the hour of temptation.

In Rev. 12:17 and 14:12, the same word is used in reference to members of the nation of Israel who have kept the commandments of God. It is also used again by the Lord Jesus Christ in Rev. 22:9 in His final message to the

⁶ Of interest here is that Jesus speaking to His Father said “I have given them the **words**..”(ῥήματα, the very words). This indicates that the “all things” are not only the teachings of Jesus, but they are the commandments of the Father.

churches when He said “*Behold I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.*”

The last time it is used in Revelation, it is spoken by an angel when he says to John: “*I am thy fellow servant and of them which keep the sayings of this book.*” It is demonstrated in these verses that keeping, guarding, observing, and holding fast are important in relation to the words of the Bible. It can therefore be stated that part of the Great Commission, given to the local church is to keep, or guard, the words of the Bible. There are many men and institutions that have taken on the task of preserving, keeping, guarding, or explaining where and what the Word of God is; however, since this command is directed to the local church as part of its commission, then it does not belong to any other group or organization.

The Local Church and Another Church

If the local church is composed of individuals who are saved and scripturally baptized and are to obey the Great Commission, then what should be said of organizations which call themselves churches, but do not meet the Scriptural qualifications of one? Paul, writing to the Corinthians said “*For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him*” (II Cor. 11:4). Writing to the Galatians, he said: “*I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ*” (Gal. 1:6-7). Those who teach or preach another Jesus and those who believe another gospel or receive another spirit cannot belong to Christ’s ἐκκλησία and must therefore belong to another church.

John, in his first epistle warns: “*Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world*” (I John 4:1). The apostle’s warning indicates that there is the Spirit of God and the spirit of antichrist. (vs. 3) If these false spirits are teaching about a false Christ, then certainly there is reason to think that they would also teach about a false church and there is evidence within the scriptures that some churches had already begun to turn from a true church to another church.

In His address to the church in Ephesus in Rev. 3:5, Jesus Christ warned them to repent or else he would remove their candlestick. Eventually, something did happen to that church in that it does not exist today. However, it did not disappear overnight. History shows that there was an organization there for hundreds of years. However, was that organization always a New Testament Church? Clearly, it went along with the false notion of a universal or catholic church. When that church lost its candlestick, it ceased being the Lord’s church and became another church. Sadly it probably never realized that the Lord had left them, much like Samson who “*wist not that the Lord was departed from him*” (Judges 16:20).

From a historical perspective, the church that began in the city of Rome gained such prominence that it was finally able to claim leadership of all similar churches not only in Rome but also throughout the empire. By the time that church had begun to exert authority over other churches and perhaps at some point before then it had ceased being one of the Lord’s candlesticks and has never regained that position. Because of the position the Roman Catholic Church has on ecclesiology and its hierarchical system, it is to be expected that those who have attempted to reform it or have broken from it would have brought some of the Roman Catholic teaching with them. That is what happened with most if

not all groups which have come out of the Roman Catholic Church. Most if not all have some sort of hierarchy which attempts to control local churches, rather than allowing them to be autonomous as the Scriptures teach.

Some would suggest that the Jerusalem council in Acts 15 was an example of one church exercising authority over another. In this passage, Paul and Barnabas disputed with men who came from Judea teaching the necessity of circumcision in order to be saved. The decision was made for Paul and Barnabas to go to Jerusalem to ascertain the position of the apostles on this doctrinal issue. It may be that Paul and Barnabas, as well as the members of the church at Antioch, decided the place to bring these Judaizers was to their home church where they would be taught the proper doctrine regarding salvation. The result was a letter, which stated that the Judaizers were not given a commandment to teach their false doctrine. At no time was the church in Antioch ordered or commanded by the church in Jerusalem to do certain things or teach certain doctrines other than those things (which as apostles who knew the word of God) they reminded the church was already given them. It is true that Paul and Barnabas along with Silas and Judas told the church in Antioch the position of the church in Jerusalem and that advice was followed. However, that is very different from being ordered or forced to accept a position.

The response of the church in Antioch was; “*they rejoiced for the consolation.*” The Greek word for consolation is παρακλήσει the noun form of which is used of the Holy Spirit, in John 14:16 where He is called the Comforter, one who is called along side of another as a comfort or encouragement. So it was with the counsel of the Jerusalem church to the Antioch church, it was a source of comfort or encouragement, not a mandate.

The Roman Catholic Church and those which came out of her, do not dispense advice as encouragement or comfort, rather they dictate to control the local congregations, clearly an unbiblical position. However, since most of these churches have membership based on infant baptism, which is clearly unscriptural, and salvation is not a requirement of membership, they are not New Testament churches and are not among those to whom the Great Commission was given. They are simply another church.

The Local Church and the Parachurch

A parachurch is an organization that is established to go beyond or in place of a local church; as though the church, which is the pillar and ground of the truth, is not sufficient to meet the needs of its members or carry out the Great Commission. Quite often the intent is to help the local church in some manner, whether it be to help educate or prepare preachers and teachers, or to aid in the field of missions or provide for the needs of individuals in the community. If any organization which does these things also includes any part of the Great Commission as part of their purpose and that organization is not a ministry of a local New Testament church, that organization is unscriptural. There are many well-meaning individuals who support such organizations or who work for them and who agree that the local New Testament church is God's plan for this age. However, when it comes to the practicality of supporting a local church as opposed to the parachurch, they lose sight of the importance given to the local church. Perhaps this is due to a lack of understanding of the purpose of the church, or a failure to study the issue from the Scripture, or perhaps because "it's the way things have always been done." Whatever the reason, it is time for today's local churches to reexamine this issue and make some hard decisions.

It is easy to see where organizations such as the YMCA or Salvation Army have erred. It is easy to understand that the positions of groups such as Promise Keepers or Campus Crusade for Christ are clearly neo-evangelical and should be avoided. It is much more difficult to make right decisions regarding Bible Colleges and mission boards, which are not ministries of the local church, yet are engaged in doing that which is truly within the Scripturally mandated commission of the local church. Because of friendships and loyalties to such institutions, or people within them, little if nothing is said about the unscriptural decision to support these so-called ministries. Those who do stand up and take a stand are labeled as divisive, contentious, and unloving.

It should be noted that most colleges which were started to train preachers and were not ministries of local churches have tended to move their original positions away from the Bible. Schools such as Harvard and Yale, which were begun with the best of intentions for the purpose of training pastors, have turned against the truths of the Word of God and today produce men and women from their divinity schools who deny the inspiration of the Scriptures, salvation by grace and every sound doctrine in the Bible. Other schools, such as Moody Bible Institute and Wheaton College have also begun the downward spiral towards apostasy. Other institutions, which started out with good intentions, are now closely aligned with neo-evangelicalism and are following in this well-worn path.

At the same time, it is understood that many local churches that once were the Lord's candlesticks, have long since ceased in that position. This often occurred because of joining a denominational type group that claimed authority over a local church or pastor. It is also understood that many local churches, which were strong in separation and autonomy, have fallen away from many scriptural positions. Some of those instances are due to having men who were

taught their theology in an organization that was not a ministry of a local New Testament Church and were not Biblically trained in areas such as separation and ecclesiology.

Some might ask what is to be done in order to avoid having to use parachurch organizations to accomplish the task of the Great Commission. For example, in the area of missions, where mission boards are often used to help cut through the red tape that is often present on various fields around the world, how is a man who is called by the Lord and sent by a local church supposed to wade through the bureaucracies which he encounters without a mission board to help? The answer to such a question is not easy, especially in the time we are now living. Perhaps it will sound like a cliché, but it is true that the Lord is still capable of providing solutions to problems that arise with His calling.

One of the most dangerous parachurch organizations is the Bible College, which is not under the authority of a local church. The reason is rather simple. Any organization which is not subject to the authority of the pillar and ground of the truth will eventually hire some professor who has an aberrant view in one or more areas of theology which will be taught to a generation of preachers who will influence many local churches. This has been repeated in this country many times in colleges that started with the best of intentions. When a Bible college is a ministry of a local church, the pastor, deacons, and church members will be able to examine what is being taught and if necessary put out those who are teaching error or heresy.

Conclusion

The responsibility of the Christian and the New Testament church is obedience to the teachings of Scripture whether or

not it is popular. In every generation since the Lord began the first New Testament church, there have been strong local churches. The labels are not always the same, but the beliefs and practices are in line with the teachings in the New Testament. They have practiced the Great Commission by making disciples, baptizing them, and teaching them to obey, guard and keep the very words of the Scriptures and passing them down to the next generation. Many of them have done so at the cost of their own lives. It is in their footsteps that the present generation must endeavor to follow.



SCHOLARLY MYTHS PERPETUATED ON REJECTING THE MASORETIC TEXT OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

Dr. Thomas M. Strouse, Dean

Introduction

Paul warned Timothy about promoting fables (i.e., myths [*muthoi*]) in the Ephesian church. He stated “*Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do*” (I Tim. 1:4). Biblical critics have rejected the Hebrew Masoretic text of the OT and perpetuated historical myths about the language and text of the OT. Several fallacious corollaries stem from these diabolical myths.

The popular expression of the mythical views of the language and text of the OT follows these fallacious assumptions:

- 1) *The language God gave Adam in the garden is unknown. No one knows what the divinely given “mother tongue” was.*

2) *The Hebrew language, in consonantal form only, evolved from the Canaanite language around 1200 BC.*¹

3) *Through Alexander the Great Greek culture and language permeated the Mediterranean Basin resulting in the wide spread usage of the Greek OT (LXX). Christ and the early Christians used the LXX for evangelistic purposes.*²

4) *The LXX flourished between 200 BC and AD100 in the Near East. After this period the Hebrew language came back in vogue among the Jews.*³

5) *Somewhere between AD 600-1000, the Masoretic scribes invented a vowel pointing system for the consonantal Hebrew text,⁴ resulting in the inaccurately transliterated name “Jehovah” among other infelicities.*⁵

6) *The Reformers used the inferior Masoretic text for their translations of the OT.*

7) *Critical Biblical scholarship (19th century) realized the MT was inferior and began to correct it with the Greek OT translation (LXX), the Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS), and other ancient authorities. Critical scholars are still tweaking the Hebrew text in order to*

¹Christo H. J. van der Merwe, Jackie A. Naude and Jan H. Kroeze, *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), pp. 15-17.

²Merrill F. Unger, *Archaeology and the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publ. House, 1979), pp. 38-39.

³David Ewert, *From Ancient Tablets to Modern Translations* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publ. House, 1983), pp. 105-107.

⁴Kyle M. Yates, *The Essentials of Biblical Hebrew* (NY: Harper and Row, Publ. 1938), p. 1.

⁵Francis Brown, S. R. Driver and Charles A. Briggs, *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1979), p. 218.

give some assurance to Christians of what God has said in the OT.⁶

8) Christians should thank God for textual critics who have restored the OT and NT texts to such an advanced degree of certainty and authority.

9) Furthermore, since Christ and the Apostles used the loose and poor LXX as their translation, Christians then have the precedence to use a similar quality of translation today, especially as found in the modern translations.

These historical myths and supporting corollaries diametrically oppose the reception of the Masoretic text as the Hebrew text behind the Authorized Version. The perpetuation of these deceptive propositions seriously weakens confidence in the Authorized Version. Yet if these are truly myths then why do Bible scholars of all stripes, including fundamentalists, perpetuate them? The writer's purpose for this brief essay is to expose the non-biblical nature of these scholarly lies and repudiate them with Scripture. Several of the aforementioned fallacious and presumptuous corollaries will be scrutinized with Scripture and Biblically repudiated:

1) The original language of Adam in the Garden and the mother tongue until the Tower of Babel is unknown.

2) Biblical Hebrew evolved out of the Canaanite language as a consonantal text only.

3) Christ and the Apostles used the LXX to evangelize the Gentiles.

4) The Masoretic scribes invented vowel points for

⁶Gary D. Pratico and Miles V. Van Pelt, *Basics of Biblical Hebrew Grammar* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publ. House, 2001), p. 409.

the inspired consonantal Hebrew text.

5) *Christians should thank textual critics for restoring the original texts of Scripture that God chose not to preserve.*

Myth Number 1: The Original Language the Lord gave to Adam is unknown.

The Lord God created Adam and gave him a working vocabulary and capability for language. This divinely originated language was perfectly suited for Adam to think concepts and enunciate words for clear expression and communication. The first recorded human words were Adam's response to God's creation of Eve. Adam said, "*This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man*" (Gen. 2:23). Adam's first recorded statement has a significant element in it called the *paronomasia* or word pun. He punned on the name "man" (*ish*) with the word "woman" (*ishshah*) which means "from the man." Gill argues that this pun is not found in other ancient versions:

This paronomasia does not appear in the Syriac version, nor in the Chaldee paraphrases of Onkelos and Jonathan. The Syriac uses Gabra for a man, but never Gabretha for a woman, not even in places where men and women are spoken of together...The Syriac or Chaldee language will not admit such an allusion as is in the text. Just a Gabra is used for a man, and not Gabretha for a woman, so Itta, and Ittetha, and Intetha or Antetha, are used for a woman, but never Itt for a man...this seems to prove that the language Adam spoke to his wife must have been the Hebrew language, and consequently is the

*primitive one.*⁷

Hebrew students recognize that there are numerous other puns in the Hebrew language, many of which are not translatable in any language, even the English of the KJV, in Gen. 1-11.⁸ Gen. 11:1 is pivotal because Moses states “*And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech.*” Prior to the tower of Babel there was one mother tongue created by God.⁹ Jehovah divided this original language into many to disunite man’s rebellion (Gen. 11:6-9). Zephaniah the prophet predicted for the Millennial reign of Christ there would be the restoration of the original tongue, stating “*For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent*” (Zeph. 3:9). What would this language be for the people to call upon Jehovah, the God of Shem (Gen. 9:26)? Would it be Akkadian, German, or English? It would be the language of the Shemites or the Jews, who trace their lineage back to Shem (cf. Gen. 10:21-31; 11:10-32). In fact, the Scripture calls Abram “the Hebrew” (*‘eber*) because he was a descendent of Eber, in whose generation the mother tongue (Hebrew) was last universally spoken before the tower of Babel (cf. Gen. 14:13; 10:21).¹⁰

Whatever the mother tongue of humanity was, it should have many descendants in the present languages and

⁷John Gill, *A Dissertation Concerning the Antiquity of the Hebrew Language, Letters, Vowel Points, and Accents* (London: G. Keith, 1767), p. 11.

⁸John H. Sailhamer, *Genesis, The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, Vol. 2* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publ. House, 1990), p. 106.

⁹If this God-given mother tongue were Hebrew, those who are anti-Semitic might oppose this interpretation and create other linguistic alternatives. This anti-Semitism is pronounced in the Hebrew lexicons edited by rationalistic German linguists, who promote the evolution of the Hebrew language in the Akkadian—Canaanite—Hebrew lineage.

¹⁰Asshur was the father of the Assyrians who spoke Assyrian (Num. 24:23-24).

therefore traceable for modern linguists. Modern linguists, holding to the evolution of language, dismiss the possibility that Hebrew could have been Adam's language. They would rather hold that language evolved from a series of grunts into highly sophisticated languages, including the lately developed Hebrew. Not only is this approach unbiblical but it is refuted by languages which trace their roots back to Hebrew. In a significant and enlightening new work, Isaac Mozeson demonstrates beyond any "coincidence" that over 22,000 English words trace their roots back to Hebrew. He states,

Don't worry if you've never read anything on language, or if you've never heard a Hebrew word. You will soon know that you've never heard a word that wasn't Hebrew...Hebrew vocabulary has as much affinity with English as it has with Arabic. More English words can be clearly linked to Biblical Hebrew than to Latin, Greek or French. Most known English words or roots are treated in this book...The last group of Westerners to take up the lost paradise of Hebrew included 17th-century Englishmen like John Milton and his Puritan counterparts in colonial America...The curriculum of Harvard was full of Hebrew, and an early graduate theses at Harvard concerned Hebrew as the Mother tongue. Noah Webster's etymologies (discredited for 200 years now) were full of English words traced to "Shemitic" sources. Most significant of all, if a vote in the Continental Congress had gone the other way, America, and much of today's world, would now be speaking Hebrew.¹¹

Darwin's book *The Origin of Species: the Preservation of*

¹¹Isaac E. Mozeson, *The Word: The Dictionary that Reveals the Hebrew Source of English* (NY: SPI Books, 2000), pp. 1-2.

Favored Races in the Struggle for Life (1859) dethroned from its rightful reign the position that the Hebrew language was the original language God gave Adam in the Garden of Eden. This very title bespeaks of the impact evolution would have on all academic disciplines, including not only sociology but also linguistics. Bible commentators prior to this publication embraced the views of a recent creation of the universe and of Hebrew as the original tongue. Davis affirms the history of this latter point in the following:

That all men were of one language and dialect should not be surprising since they were fundamentally united in the sons of Noah. Research in the area of comparative grammar has demonstrated that known languages are related and could have descended from one language. Of course it is unknown whether that language resembles any modern language, but until the nineteenth century the theory that the original language was Hebrew was practically unquestioned.¹²

The Scripture demands that the original language of Adam was Hebrew. That this is the case is based on the puns Moses used in Gen. 1-11 that have not been duplicated in ancient versions. Furthermore, Zephaniah's prophecy concerning the restoration of the original language to praise Jehovah, and the designation of Abram the Hebrew requires the aforementioned premise that Hebrew was the mother tongue. Extra-biblical arguments such as linguistic studies tying English with Hebrew and the contrived schemes of evolutionists powerfully corroborate the truth that Adam spoke Hebrew.

¹²John J. Davis, *Paradise to Prison: Studies in Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1975), p. 144.

Myth Number 2: Biblical Hebrew, as a consonantal text only, evolved from the Canaanite language.

This myth has two components, namely that the consonants only were originally inspired and this Hebrew consonantal text evolved from the Canaanite¹³ language. Since the theory or implementation of evolution is not an option for the Bible believing Christian, the latter component cannot be affirmed. This view denies the perfect preservation of God's Words and therefore must assume the evolution of the Hebrew language. Those who are so enamored with the scholarship that assumes evolutionary principles are legitimate within Biblical criticism¹⁴ would accept, without Biblical authority, that all languages including Hebrew evolved. Old Testament scholars and Hebrew grammarians constantly claim that Hebrew is a derived language. For example Unger states:

Necessary to the formation of the canon was a suitable language to serve as a medium for the reception and recording of the inspired message. Such a vehicle was providentially provided for the Hebrew people in the development of a simple alphabetic script rather than an unwieldy and cumbersome language like Akkadian...From the testimony of the Pentateuch and the witness of archeology there is every reason to

¹³The descendants of Canaan were cursed by the Lord (Gen. 9:25). Biblically it is impossible to reconcile how God could use the cursed Canaanites to produce a language from which the blessed Shemites and their language would come (Gen. 9:26).

¹⁴The OT textual critic Wurthwein exemplifies unbelieving critical scholarship as he states: "The available witnesses to the text must first be examined in order to reconstruct a single form of the text which we can assert with confidence to be as close to the form of the autographs as scientific principles can lead us, if not (ideally) identical with them." Ernst Wurthwein, *The Text of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1981), p. xviii.

believe that Hebrew was already in spoken and written use by Moses and the Israelites who came out of Egypt about 1440 BC.¹⁵

Payne advocates this derived approach to the theology and language of the Jews stating,

It is our historical knowledge of the religions of the pagans who surrounded Israel that serves to explain certain terms or forms that God chose to use in His own true religion. The very names of God in Biblical Hebrew, which is a Canaanitish language, illustrate this point.¹⁶

Archer treats Hebrew as a branch of West Semitic in the development of language, stating,

The traditional classification of the various Semitic languages divides them, according to the geographical location of the nations speaking them, into north, south, east, and west... West Semitic (often classed with Aramaic in what is called Northwest Semitic by modern scholars) comprises Ugaritic, Phoenician, and Canaanite (of which Hebrew and Moabite are dialects).¹⁷

Post-Darwinian Hebrew grammarians have continually maintained that Hebrew is merely a derived language in the long history of the evolution of the languages. For instance, H. F. W. Gesenius states:

¹⁵Merrill F. Unger, *Introductory Guide to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publ. House, 1951), p. 51.

¹⁶J. Barton Payne, *The Theology of the Older Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publ. House, 1962), p. 20.

¹⁷Gleason L. Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), p. 20.

*The Hebrew language is one branch of a great family of languages in Western Asia...The better known Semitic languages may be subdivided as follows:--The Middle Semitic or Canaanitish branch. To this belongs the Hebrew of the Old Testament with its descendants, the New Hebrew, as found especially in the Mishna, and Rabbinic...*¹⁸

The former component that assumes that the inspired Hebrew text contained only the consonants and that the vowels (and consequently the pronunciations) were passed on through oral tradition is unbiblical and wrongheaded.¹⁹ This view maintains an insufficient position on the perfect preservation of the Hebrew text. The Bible is replete with divine promises of the preservation of the Lord's Words (e.g., Pss. 12:6-7, 119:111, 152, 160; Mt. 4:4, 5:18, 24:35, etc.). Consonants are not words. Words include consonants and vowels. The Bible declares that "every word of God is pure" (Prov. 30:5-6) and these pure Words are complete Words with consonants and vowels. When the Lord God spoke the heavens and earth into existence, He used Words (Gen. 1:3). When the Lord gave His commandments to Moses He wrote Words on the tablets (Ex. 34:1; cf. 20:1 ff.; Dt. 10:2). When the prophets, such as Amos, saw God's revelation, they wrote Words (cf. Amos 1:1; Obad. 1:1; Hab. 1:1). None of these examples, as well as scores of others, allows that God's revelation was in the form of consonants only.

The denial of the perfect preservation of the Hebrew OT

¹⁸E. Kautzsch and A. E. Cowley, editors, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar* (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1970), pp. 1-2.

¹⁹Waltke represents some who seemly suggest that there was a "proto-Masoretic" text which is superior to the current Masoretic text and must eventually be recovered through textual criticism. Bruce Waltke, "The Textual Criticism of the Old Testament," *The Gaebelein Bible Commentary*, Vol. I, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publ. House, 1987), p. 223.

text carries with it several specific ramifications. One such ramification will be explored. Since God has not preserved His OT Hebrew text, the argument goes, the current MT is an inferior Hebrew text to the supposed “proto-Hebrew” text.²⁰ This earlier Hebrew text allegedly utilized a cipher system whereby Hebrew letters were used for Hebrew numbers. This supposed cipher system then allows for “scribal errors” in the numbers of various Biblical texts because the scribes misread the letters depicting the numbers. In attempting to explain how numerical errors entered into the Sacred Text of the OT, Kaiser states the following:

*In the Old Testament documents now available to us, all the numbers are spelled out phonetically. This is not so say, however, that a more direct numeral system or cipher notation was not also in use originally for at least some of these numbers. While no Biblical texts with such a system have been found, mason’s marks and examples of what may well be simple tallies have been attested in excavations in Israel.*²¹

Although in the preserved Masoretic Text there are no examples whereby a Hebrew letter represents a number, and every number is a written word, Bible critics nevertheless assume, with no evidence, a cipher system existed in a

²⁰Contradicting the clear promises of the Lord Jesus Christ, Bible critic Beacham fallaciously affirms that “God nowhere in Scripture assures us that the Jewish scholars of the first century AD produced a corpus of Scripture that perfectly mirrored the originals. Thus, the Masoretic text should not be considered a flawless reproduction of the autographs. Rather, the Masoretic text evolved from a late, standardized recension of variant, imperfect, and updated copies made by imperfect men.” Roy Beacham and Kevin Bauder, *One Bible Only?* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publ., 2001), p. 63.

²¹Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., Peter H. Davids, F. F. Bruce, and Manfred T. Baruch, *Hard Sayings of the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), p. 51.

“proto-Masoretic” text. Davis quotes Merrill Unger who asserts:

*But, though, on the one hand it is certain that in all existing manuscripts of the Hebrew text of the Old Testament the numerical expressions are written at length, yet, on the other, the variations between themselves and from the Hebrew text, added to the evident inconsistencies in numerical statements, between certain passages of that text itself, seem to prove that some shorter mode of writing was originally in vogue, liable to be misunderstood by copyists and translators. These variations appear to have proceeded from the alphabetic method of writing numbers.*²²

The Lord Jesus Christ put His full approval on the Hebrew text He had preserved unto Himself (Mt. 4:4). Since evolution is not true and there was no consequent proto-Masoretic Hebrew text from which the current one evolved, there is no cipher system for the numbers of the OT and no excuse to argue for misread letters to allow “scribal errors” for the apparent numerical conflicts in the OT.²³

Myth Number 3: Christ and the Apostles used the *LXX* to evangelize the Gentiles.

In attempting to refute the charge that Christ and the Apostles’ inexact use of the *LXX* argues for errancy in the

²²John J. Davis, *Biblical Numerology: A Basic Study of the Use of Numbers in the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House), p. 35.

²³For a complete refutation of the alleged cipher numbering position, see the doctoral dissertation by Chester Kulus, *I Heard the Number of Them: General Principles for Handling Apparent Biblical Contradictions with Specific Applications of the Principles to the Alleged Numeric Contradictions in I Samuel or II Chronicles* (Newington, CT: Emmanuel Baptist Theological Press, 2003), pp. 128-138.

originals, Archer and Chirichigno argue vociferously that the aforementioned preachers used the *LXX* to evangelize Gentiles. Their argument follows this line of thought:

*The very reason for using the LXX was rooted in the missionary outreach of the evangelists and apostles of the early church...It was virtually the only form of the OT in the hands of Jewish believers outside Palestine, and it was certainly the only available form for Gentile converts to the Jewish or Christian faiths.*²⁴

Others dogmatically maintain, albeit recognizing the questionable history and character of the *LXX*, that this version was readily available to the early first century evangelists and apostles. For instance, Waltke asserts the following:

*Although many details of the story are fictitious, it is widely accepted that the translation of the Law was made in the time of Philadelphus. Contrary to the story, however, it is concluded that LXX arose out of the needs of the Alexandrian Jews and was done by various literary Greeks at Alexandria on a text type already present in Egypt...Scholars agree that a complete version of the Bible existed at least at the beginning of the first century A.D.*²⁵

Accordingly, the consensus of most scholarship assumes that the *LXX* was available to and had the veritable character for the first century Christians to use as their OT Scriptures. This consensus is faulty because of two important Bible truths. First of all, the Bible plainly demonstrates that the Lord Jesus Christ used the Hebrew OT for His Scripture

²⁴Gleason L. Archer and Gregory Chirichigno, *Old Testament Quotations in the New Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983), p. ix.

²⁵Waltke, p. 220.

and that He never used the *LXX*. Secondly, the Lord and His apostles did not need to utilize the *LXX* for evangelism of the Jews and Gentiles and consequently did not do so.

First, the Bible clearly shows that the Lord Jesus Christ used the Hebrew text as His Scriptures. When Satan tempted Him, the Lord submitted Himself to the written Words of God²⁶ by stating, *“It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God”* (Mt. 4:4). The expression *“It is written”* (*gregraptai*) is in the perfect tense indicating past action with continuing results. In effect the Lord said this Hebrew verse to which He alluded (Dt. 8:3), and obviously the Hebrew Book of Deuteronomy and consequently the Hebrew Pentateuch, had been written (by Moses the Hebrew) and was still written to His very day. The Lord Jesus Christ had the preserved Words of the Hebrew OT available to Him just as He had promised (cf. Dt. 4:2; 12:32; 17:18-20; 29:1, 29; 30:11-14 [*vide* Rom. 10:6-8]; 31:9-13, 24-27; Josh. 1:7-8; Ps. 12:6-7; 119:111, 152, 160).

The Lord taught that the jots and tittles²⁷ of the Hebrew OT would be preserved, stating, *“For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled”* (Mt. 5:18). He believed that the very consonants and the very vowels of the OT Hebrew words of prophecies (and of course all the other words of Scripture) were preserved perfectly intact in His day and would continue until final fulfillment (cf. Jn. 12:48).²⁸ Since the Greek OT (*LXX*) does not have jots and

²⁶This action harmonizes with Ps. 138:2, which states, “I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.”

²⁷[L]it. ‘horn’; projection, hook as part of a letter, a serif (of letters...of accents and breathings...” Walter Bauer, William Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 429.

²⁸The prophecies could not be perfectly fulfilled if the prophecies

tittles He was not referring to this inferior translation which has a historical background and time table that are very suspect.

Again the Lord Jesus alluded to the three-fold division of the Hebrew OT, which division the *LXX* does not follow, when He affirmed, “*These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me*” (Lk. 24:44; cf. v. 27; also Acts 26:22). The law (*torah*), the prophets (*nebiim*), and the writings (*kethubim* [of which Psalms was first]) made up the Hebrew OT and is called the *Tanak*.²⁹ He elaborated on His use of the Hebrew OT when the Lord identified the Pharisees’ persecution of the prophets with their murderous Jewish ancestors, stating, “*From the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, It shall be required of this generation*” (Lk. 11:51). He surveyed the whole scope of the Hebrew OT, using the examples of the murder of the righteous Abel from the first book (Genesis 4:8) to the murder of the righteous Zacharias from the last book (II Chronicles 24:20-22).

The Biblical truths that the Lord Jesus always used the Hebrew text for His Scriptures includes His reference to the perfectly preserved Hebrew text, His reference to the perfect preservation of the smallest components of Hebrew words, and His reference to the three-fold division of the Hebrew OT are indisputable. The NT does not countenance the assumed position that Christ used the *LXX* because it clearly contradicts this false assumption. The Lord consistently alluded to the Hebrew OT. Since the nature and character

themselves were not perfectly preserved for one to match the minute details of the prophecy with the minute details of the fulfillment (cf. Isa. 34:16).

²⁹This is an acrostic for the letters “T” (*Torah*), “N” (*Nebiim*) and “K” (*Kethubim*) and Jews use this designation even today for their Scripture.

of the *LXX* are extremely questionable, the alleged argument that the NT quotes the *LXX* must be rejected. The supposed NT quotes of the *LXX* must be understood in another way. The simple fact of the matter is that the *LXX* was in part or whole post-first century and never used by Christ or the Apostles.

Second, the Lord and the Apostles did not need to implement the use of the *LXX* in their evangelistic endeavors. The initial ministry of Christ was to the Jews in Galilee and Judaea (Jn. 1:19-4:3). He sent His Jewish apostles to the Jews to declare to them that their Jewish King was on hand (Mt. 10:2-6). When He ministered to the Jews there is no exegetical necessity that He had to use the *LXX*. The Lord ministered to the Syrophenician Greek woman, no doubt speaking to her in Greek (Mk. 7:26-30). But He did not need to use the *LXX* since He gave her His inspired Greek Words.³⁰ There is positively no indication in Scripture that the Lord Jesus Christ had the necessity to use or in fact did use the *LXX* to evangelize Jews and Gentiles.

Furthermore, there is no indication that the Apostles had the necessity to use the *LXX*. On the day of Pentecost, Peter preached to the Jews citing the OT book of Joel, but not using the *LXX* (Acts 2:14-36).³¹ The Lord eliminated the necessity for Peter using the *LXX* for the Gentiles present that day by the supernatural occurrence of tongues. The Apostles taught the early church members, both Jews and Gentiles, “*the apostles doctrine*,” presumably in Greek (Acts

³⁰There is no question that Christ and the Apostles, as well as many in the ancient Near East, were multilingual, as the message over the cross in various languages suggests (Jn. 19:19-20). Jesus of Nazareth read the preserved Hebrew OT in the synagogue (Lk. 4:16 ff.), spoke Aramaic on several occasions (i.e., Mt. 27:46; Mk. 7:34), and had a brother who wrote elegant Greek (cf. the Book of James).

³¹A careful examination of the Greek NT demonstrates that Peter did not quote Joel 2:28-32 from the *LXX*.

2:42). When the Apostles and Paul eventually evangelized the Gentiles (e.g., Acts 13-21) they taught them the apostles' doctrine, which eventually was inscripturated as the Greek NT. Where is the alleged need for the *LXX*? No exegesis requires that the Lord and His Apostles had to have used the *LXX* to evangelize the Greek-speaking Jews or Gentiles. This fallacious assumption has not been and cannot be proved and must, therefore, be rejected. Biblically, there is neither need nor exegesis for this ill founded but popular assumption.

Myth Number 4: The Masoretic scribes invented vowel points for the inspired consonantal Hebrew text.

Rejecting the aforementioned Biblical promises for perfect Words preservation, critical scholarship argues that the original Hebrew text was only in consonant form, that the vowels were not inspired,³² and the pronunciations were passed on by oral tradition until the Masoretic scribes invented a vowel pointing system. For instance, van der Merwe affirms,

Originally BH (Biblical Hebrew) text consisted of consonants only. In order to prevent the eventual complete loss of the correct pronunciations, a group of Jewish scholars began to devise a system of signs (from about 600 CE) to record and standardize the received

³²“Yet another argument is advanced by bringing forward the testimony of Elias Levita, who lived in Germany about 1520, and who roundly states that the post-Talmudic Massorettes of Tiberias invented the points, and goes on to attempt to prove it. And why is this testimony considered important? Because Levita says so!” John Owen, *Biblical Theology: The Nature, Origin, Development, and Study of Theological Truth, in Six Books* (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publ., 1996 reprint), p. 522.

*pronunciation (inasmuch as it was known).*³³

Ewert posits the same argument for the Masoretic invention of vowels stating “But they made one very important innovation. They developed a system by which the vowels of the Hebrew words could be indicated in writing.”³⁴

Consonants without vowels are not words. One cannot distinguish between some nouns and verbs, conjugations or stems without vowel pointing. The other ancient languages of the Samaritans, Syrians, Chaldeans, and Arabs had consonants and vowels. The Hebrew vowels must be *ab origine* for several reasons.

Linguistically, the very nature of words requires both consonants and vowels since God and man spoke and wrote words from the beginning. Words need to be precise to convey accuracy and this precision comes only with the vowels. Gill cites several arguments for the divine origin of the vowels. 1) The perfection of language requires vowels. 2) The nature and genius of the Hebrew language require points. 3) The vowel points are necessary and useful to easier learning, reading, and pronouncing of the Hebrew language. 4) The vowel points and accents are useful and necessary. 5) It will be difficult to assert and maintain the clarity of the Scriptures if the vowel points and accents are removed. 6) One would be unable to support the infallibility of the Scripture. 7) The inspiration of Scripture is affected by the points and accents.³⁵

Historically, the main fallacy with positing the invention of the Hebrew vowel points with the Masoretes is the lack of recorded testimony.³⁶ Furthermore, this historical

³³van der Merwe, p. 17.

³⁴Ewert, p. 90.

³⁵Gill, pp. 67-70.

³⁶On the other hand, Gill gives an abundance of historical evidence that

assumption makes the Masoretes the final authority with regard to the Words of Scripture. Moncrief gives a list of five Hebrew words, as select examples, whose meanings vary depending on the vowel pointing.³⁷ The final meaning of a Word of Scripture cannot be dependent on man in light of the promises for the authoritative inspired and preserved Words of Scripture. The preacher of Scripture must declare, “thus saith the Lord,” not “thus saith the Masoretes.”

Scripturally, Christ recognized the preserved Words of the Hebrew OT (Mt. 4:4) and affirmed the inspiration and preservation of the consonants (*jot*) and vowel points (*keriaia*) in Mt. 5:18. The Gospel writers consistently followed a pattern for the vowel pointings of the proper Hebrew nouns to which they alluded. For example, they recognized the inspired *dagesh forte* (a small dot to indicate doubling) in words like Immanuel (Mt. 1:23; cf. Isa. 7:14), Anna/Hannah (Lk. 2:36; cf. I Sam. 1:2), Abaddon (Rev. 9:11; Ps. 1:6), Armageddon (Rev. 16:16; cf. Zech. 12:11), and Sabbaton (Mt. 12:5; Ex. 20:11). Paul knew the pointing of the inspired Hebrew word behind the inspired Greek *arrabon* (“earnest”) in Eph. 1:14 because he doubled the “r” (*rho*) in his inspired transliterated spelling of the Hebrew word (*`errabon*) from Gen. 38:17. The authority of the inspired NT text demands that the vowel pointings were part of the inspired OT text.

Bible critics assume that man invented the pointing and that consequently the proper pronunciation for the divine name of the *tetragrammaton* JHWH (*hwby*) is unknown. This view alleges that the Jews refused to pronounce the name of the Lord because of a faulty interpretation of Lev. 24:16,

the points were known at least back to 454 BC, and consequently could not have been invented by the Masoretes. Gill, pp. 38-66.

³⁷John Moncrieff, *An Essay on the Antiquity and Utility of the Hebrew Vowel-Points* (Glasgow: John Reid & Co., 1833), pp. 34-35.

which states, “*And he that blasphemeth the name of the LORD, he shall surely be put to death...*”³⁸ After many centuries of not pronouncing the divine name the Jews claimed the proper pronunciation was lost. The Masoretes interjected the so-called *Qere perpetuum* reading into the text and produced the impossible name Jehovah.³⁹ Based on extra-biblical authorities, critics assume the best rendering for the *tetragrammaton* should be Yahweh.⁴⁰

The popular position that the Masoretes invented the vowel pointing of the OT Hebrew text denies the Bible claims of perfect Words preservation. Furthermore, this view posits the inspired source and final authority for the Words of Scripture upon man and not God. Since the Masoretes merely passed on the divine vowel points with the consonants, the falsely assumed Masoretic-invention position must be rejected along with the fallacious tradition that the divine name of the *tetragrammaton* must be pronounced Yahweh. According to the Masoretic Hebrew text behind the KJV the proper pronunciation for the OT name of the LORD is Jehovah.

³⁸The *LXX* incorrectly renders this caveat as “he that names the Lord shall be put to death.” Both the OT saints and sinners named the name of Jehovah without fear of punishment (Moses [Ex. 3:13-14, 4:1]; Pharaoh [Ex. 8:8]; Rahab and Canaanites [Josh. 2:10]).

³⁹Some argue that the *holem* and *waw* must be treated as the *holem waw* vowel and thus the *waw* loses its consonant status giving an impossible Jehoah construction. There are numerous examples, however, of the *holem* vowel with the *waw* consonant construction (e.g., Isa. 47:11; Ezk. 7:26; Lam. 3:25; Pss. 37:9, 88:16; Neh. 6:6; Est. 3:8). Could it be possible that Satan has inspired and promoted through his Bible critics a different name for Jehovah?

⁴⁰Gustave F. Oehler, *Theology of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publ. House, n.d.), pp. 92-93.

Myth Number 5: Christians should thank textual critics for restoring the original texts of Scripture that God chose not to preserve.

Waltke confidently states, “to restore the original text of ancient documents, such as the OT Scriptures, is the task of textual criticism.”⁴¹ Another Bible critic affirms the following role for seminaries such as his:

*Our purpose at Central is “to reconstruct from all the witnesses available to us the text essentially preserved in all, but perfectly preserved in none” [footnote 3, Rene Pache, *The Inspiration and Authority of Scripture* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1969), 197]. It is evident from the historical evidence that God has providentially preserved His Word for the present generation. However, we do not believe that God has preserved His Word perfectly and miraculously in any one manuscript or group of manuscripts, or in all the manuscripts. Therefore, in our study of the text we work with all the manuscripts to compile a text closer to the original than any one manuscript or group of manuscripts.*⁴²

Again, Mark Norton states, “Christians are thus in debt to the textual critics who have worked, and are working, to provide a dependable biblical text.”⁴³ These writers obviously think that the role of Textual Criticism is to restore or reconstruct a Bible text that God apparently chose not to preserve. This view begs the question as to how the

⁴¹Waltke, p. 211.

⁴²Michael A. Grisanti, editor, *The Bible Version Debate: The Perspective of Central Baptist Theological Seminary* (Minneapolis, MN: Central Baptist Theological Seminary, 1997), p. 131.

⁴³Mark Norton, “Manuscripts of the Old Testament,” *The Origin of the Bible*, ed. Phillip Comfort (Cambridge: Tyndale House Publ., 1992), p. 177.

critic will know that the text is restored or reconstructed since the Lord apparently left no exemplar for comparison! The anti-supernatural German rationalistic movement (17th-19th centuries) known as Biblical Criticism spawned several literary-critical fields, one of which was Textual Criticism. The picking and choosing of Bible texts is not Textual Criticism. Textual Criticism is a sophisticated system based on elaborate and evolutionary schemes following human logic to determine the possible origin of variants.⁴⁴ The so-called science of Textual Criticism is only needed when one believes that God has not accomplished His promise to preserve the inspired original Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek Words of the *autographa*.⁴⁵

The Lord Jesus Christ has promised the full preservation of the divinely inspired Words of the OT and NT Scriptures (Ps. 12:6-7; Mt. 4:4, 5:18, 24:35). He has given the responsibility of preserving His Words to His only ecclesiological institution—the local, immersionist assembly (Mt. 28:19-20; I Tim. 3:15). God has given His chosen people (Jews) and His chosen institution (the local immersionist assembly) the responsibility and empowerment to preserve His OT and NT Words, respectively. The Bible nowhere gives credence to the role of the professional “textual critic,” especially outside of the

⁴⁴ Archer lists seven canons for OT Textual Criticism. Gleason Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, pp. 63-66. The Alands give twelve basic rules for NT Textual Criticism. Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, *The Text of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1987), pp. 275-277.

⁴⁵ One does well to consider the negative influence of the textual critics. For example, the Masoretic Hebrew text incorporates the titles of the Psalms in the text. However, textual critics reject the Masoretic text and consequently do not know the background of the titled Psalms. For instance, the “contribution” the textual critics Rogerson and McKay give the Bible-believing Christian is that the Psalm titles “are almost certainly not the work of the authors of the psalms.” J. W. Rogerson and J. W. McKay, *The Cambridge Bible Commentary on the New English Bible, Psalms 1-50* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 3.

immersionist assembly, to restore what He has determined not to preserve. In spite of Biblical evidence, some want to praise textual critics for their role in giving Christians the approximate Words of God. Mark Minnick states:

*For many centuries now God has ensured that there have been qualified textual critics to analyze available manuscripts. In other words, textual criticism is not a new discipline—it is an old one—employed by anyone who has ever compared two or more manuscripts in an effort to reproduce an accurate copy of God’s Word. If our present translations do indeed reproduce the original readings, it is because textual critics did their work well.*⁴⁶

This claim is repudiated by the inspired history of NT immersionist churches recorded in the NT. For instance, the church at Ephesus not only received but also copied perfectly the Book of the Apocalypse from John. The church at Smyrna made a copy and passed it on to the church at Pergamos, and so on, until there were six perfect copies and one original, and all this accomplished by faithful church members (cf. Rev. 22:7,18-19). This inspired scenario was repeated thousands of times through history so that now we have immersionist churches which receive the preserved inspired OT and NT texts and accurate translations of God’s Words through the instrumentality of fallible yet faithful church members. Since the text of Scripture was never lost, the Lord never used textual critics to restore His text. Faithful church members have never had to use the premise or tools (i.e., rules, canons, axioms, etc.) of Textual Criticism since neither are Biblically valid.⁴⁷

⁴⁶James B. Williams, editor, *From the Mind of God to the Mind of Man* (Greenville, SC: Ambassador-Emerald International, 1999), p. 72.

⁴⁷As Paul taught his understudy Timothy, he never gave him any tools for Textual Criticism. He did warn Timothy, nevertheless, stating: “*If any man*

The Lord has always used, whether history can corroborate this or not, faithful church members as He promised (Mt. 28:19-20), not to restore, but to preserve His Received Words (Jn. 17:8).

Conclusion

As Paul warned Timothy (I Tim. 1:4) even so Bible-related myths are a concern today for all Bible believers. Christians have the responsibility and the means whereby to dispel these myths. Those Bible critics and their followers who have rejected the Masoretic Hebrew text behind the King James Version have postulated several myths and fallacious corollaries, and at the same time given no assurance of final Words or absolute authority. The Bible refutes these myths. The Bible teaches that the original language of the Garden of Eden was Hebrew. Therefore, Hebrew did not evolve from the Canaanite language. Christ used the Hebrew text and His NT Words to evangelize Jews and Greeks. The early Christians used the Hebrew and the Apostles' tradition to evangelize Jews and Gentiles. Since the vowel points were part of the original Words God preserved, the Masoretes did not need to invent a pointing system. Since the Masoretes passed on the preserved Words, the name Jehovah for the *tetragrammaton* stands. Bible critics have only questioned the Words and the authority of Scripture, and even the authorship of the Psalms, and have given no valuable contribution. When the preserved Hebrew text represented by the Masoretic text is received by faith, then the scholarly myths are dispelled. Is it not time for Bible-believing, fundamental Baptist church members to stop

teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions, and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself" (I Tim. 6:3-5).

giving “heed to fables” and honor Jehovah God, the Lord Jesus Christ, with faith in His inspired and preserved Words of promise?