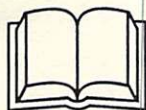


"Holding fast the Faithful Word . . ."



The *Word and Work*



"Holding forth the Word of Life."

April 2006

The Da Vinci Code, The Gospel of Judas, and the REAL CHRIST

The Da Vinci Code is full of half-truths and untruths which it claims are true. It is a masterpiece of deception. Yet, listen to this challenge to us from Hank Hanegraaff:

"Fiction—such as the notion that Jesus was married and fathered a child—is being cleverly peddled as fact, while fact—such as the deity of Christ—is being capriciously passed off as fiction. Yet in spite of all this, *The Da Vinci Code* will provide an unusual opportunity for Bible-believing Christians.

"Now is the time to prepare our response to the powerful delusion that [is grasping] the attention of millions in our culture, and transform it into an opportunity to share God's ever more powerful truth. Handled with gentleness and respect, the questions this film raises can become an open door for you and me to explain our faith to the world."

--Hank Hanegraaff, author and radio teacher

59th Annual Kentucky / Indiana Fellowship

August 7th - 10th, 2006

Theme: Reconciliation, Encouragement And Exhortation

Monday Evening, August 7

6:50 - 7:20 pm Woodland Bible Camp Singers Concert
7:30 pm Challenges of Ministering to 21st Century Cultures Julius Hovan

Tuesday, August 8 Theme: A Day of RECONCILIATION

9:00 Prayer Time
9:20 Biblical Forgiveness and Reconciliation Harry Coultas
10:20 Church Leaders, Be Reconciled with the Members James Girdley
11:20 Exposition: Philippians Bob Yarbrough
1:15 Church Members, Be Reconciled with the Leader Frank Preston
7:30 Christians, Be Reconciled with Other Christians Darren Johnson

Wednesday, August 9 Theme: A Day of ENCOURAGEMENT

9:00 Prayer Time
9:20 Encouraging the Minister Darren Johnson
10:20 Encouraging the Support Staff Mike Abbott, Dale Offut
11:20 Exposition: Philippians Bob Yarbrough
1:15 Encouraging the Congregation Victor Knowles
7:30 Go Into the World with Vision, Calling and Partnership Victor Knowles

Thursday, August 10 Theme: A Day of EXHORTATION

9:00 Prayer Time
9:20 Cooperation, Fellowship and Partnership Victor Knowles
10:20 Shepherding with Grace and Mercy A. J. Istre
11:20 Exposition: Philippians Bob Yarbrough
1:15 Ministering with Compassion, Not Condemnation Bill Carpenter
7:30 Opportunities of Ministering in 21st Century Cultures Alex Wilson

Children's Classes: grades K-2, 3-4, 5-6 nightly, 8:00-8:45.

Sonny Childs will teach grades 7-12 nightly, 8:00-8:45.

There will be a missions offering Wed. night; make checks to Ky/Ind Christian Fellowship.

Housing Committee: J. R. Satterfield, (812) 949-1959; Clint Dorman (812) 246-2600

DAY SESSIONS: Portland Church of Christ,
2500 Portland Ave., Louisville, KY

NIGHT SESSIONS: Sellersburg Church of Christ,
211 South New Albany St., Sellersburg IN 47172

For audio cassettes of the messages, contact Don Stump: (502) 477-2252.

THE WORD AND WORK

"Declare the whole counsel of God"

Alex V. Wilson, Editor

Dennis L. Allen, Missions

Bennie Hill, News & Notes

The Word and Work is published monthly except December by Portland Ave. Church of Christ, Inc., 2500 Portland Ave. Louisville, Ky. 40212. Subscription: \$14.00 per year; bundles of 10 or more to one address = \$13.00 per subscription. Address correspondence to Word and Work, 2518 Portland Avenue, Louisville, KY 40212.

Periodicals Postage Paid at Louisville, Ky. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: Word and Work, 2518 Portland Ave., Louisville, KY 40212.

Vol. C

April, 2006

No. 4

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The Da Vinci Code, etc. etc.

Alex V. Wilson

As of the end of March, *The Da Vinci Code* had sold more than 40 million copies—including 12 million hardcovers in the U.S.—since its release in March 2003. Then it came out in paperback in the U.S. early this month, quickly selling more than 500,000 more copies. An initial print run of 5 million has already been raised to 6 million. AND—all this has occurred *before* the release of a film version starring Tom Hanks, to be aired starting May 19. In addition, to launch a two-prong attack on us who have “such a simple faith,” on April 6 some scholars unveiled *The Gospel of Judas* (see below).

I’m not afraid that any W&W readers will lose their faith due to these books or the movie. But I fear that at least some of us won’t know how to answer the questions and attacks of unbelievers inspired by Dan Brown and other such teachers. And how to help young disciples of Jesus who may find the attacks totally unnerving.

We who have experienced God working in our lives should have a strong faith even if we can’t answer all the intricate questions and claims of unbelievers. Yet we also should “always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience” (1 Pet. 3:15-16). True, Peter didn’t say we should be able to answer all their criticisms and arguments, but rather to answer them when they ask *why we have hope* in a world and age of no-hope. But to the best of our ability we should also try to learn some of the weaknesses of unbelievers’ wild claims, and to show them the error of their ways – yet gently rather than arrogantly. (Be sure to read the wise advice in the next article.)

James has a good word for us. “My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins. (James 5:19-20.)

[By the way, we hope to resume the series of studies in the Sermon on the Mount next month.]

Our Strategy and Attitude in Refuting Brown (and “Judas”), and Defending Scripture:

Dr. Robert Newman of Biblical Seminary makes a prudent suggestion to those of us who seek to refute attacks on Biblical Christianity, such as those found in *The Da Vinci Code*:

“Before launching into a response [to its errors], it is usually best to ask the person some questions to see where he or she is coming from. Have they read the book [or seen the movie]? Or have they merely heard about it? What did they think about it? Which claims of the book [or movie] seem most important to them? What sort of evidence was given that they thought was impressive? Have they read anything in response to *The Da Vinci Code*? These questions give us information that will help guide us in focusing our response.

“I would not recommend getting into an involved discussion on Leonardo Da Vinci, his beliefs and paintings, as much of this material is speculative. Deciphering symbolism in art is a tricky business without explicit information from the original artist. It should be noted that the current “Last Supper” is a restoration [of the original painting. Before its restoration there was much damage, thus it was impossible to fully restore the details]. In any case, what Leonardo may have believed about Jesus does not really tell us much about what really happened when Jesus was on earth. Leonardo, after all, was nearly 1500 years from the events, and he had far less access to ancient manuscripts and archeology than we do.”

A Synopsis of The Da Vinci Code (TDVC)

Just in case you are the one out of 100 people who hasn't heard this already, **TDVC** says that Jesus and Mary Magdalene married and had children, and in fact their descendents have survived through the centuries and are still on earth today. Also the early Church enjoyed sexual ceremonies in celebration of Mary Magdalene's femininity and divinity. Jesus chose her to lead the Church after His death, but the apostle Peter staged a coup and took over instead.

Almost 300 years later, the Roman Empire became Christianized under Emperor Constantine. But the combined church-and-state ruthlessly suppressed all the “facts” in the preceding paragraph. 1st they persecuted Christians who wouldn't go along with all these schemes. 2nd the state-church connived to control which New Testament

books were accepted into the Bible. Constantine chose to deify Jesus and demote Magdalene -- and *that's* why Christians since then have believed in the deity of Jesus but also have put down women. (Now you know.)

Over 1000 years later Da Vinci's code, hidden in his paintings, guarded those secrets, along with the genealogy of Jesus and Mary. *Skip another 500 years:* in our present time the book's main characters are running for their lives from people who want to prevent their exposing all these crucial facts to the world.

Critic Greg Hartman says that author Dan Brown's plot "boils down to two accusations: That the books in the Bible were chosen by those in power to suit their own ends, and that the Gospels aren't historically accurate." It's interesting that Dan Brown's web site admits he really believes the claims his novel makes:

"I chose this topic for personal reasons—primarily as an exploration of my own faith and my own ideas about religion. . . . The information is anything but new. My sincere hope is that The Da Vinci Code, in addition to entertaining people, will serve as an open door for readers to begin their own explorations."

—www.danbrown.com

REFUTING Some LIES and FABRICATIONS of TDVC:

1. "The book implies that the Council of Nicea (325 A.D.) voted on the deity of Christ which narrowly passed. In reality the vote was 300 to 2. Hardly a close vote! But historical accuracy is hardly the novel's strong point." —Dr. Ed Hindson

2. A number of liberal extremists accuse Biblical Christianity of being extremely anti-women. Yet many of those same critics also support the Gnostic "gospels" (not included in the Bible). The Gospel of Thomas is a favorite with many of them, yet its final three sentences are: "Simon Peter said to them, 'Let Mary leave us, because women are not worthy of life.' Jesus said, 'Behold, I shall guide her so as to make her male, that she too may become a living spirit like you men. For every woman who makes herself male will enter the kingdom of heaven.'" Amazing! Contrast that anti-feminist statement with Gal. 3:28, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

3. Jesus got married? Here is an easy refutation of that: "Paul, in 1 Corinthians 9, argues for his right to take a wife by mentioning Peter and other apostles as married men. He would surely have cited Jesus' marriage had it been known to him and his contemporaries."
-Dr. Hans Rollmann

4. TDVC alleges "that Constantine put together the Bible by suppressing those gospels that pictured a purely human Jesus, and by canonizing the Gospels that picture Jesus as more than human." But on the contrary, "from the letters, sermons, debates and other writings of the early Christian leaders, it is clear that our 4 canonical Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) were already accepted by Christians all over the Mediterranean world by about AD 150, a century and a half before Constantine came on the scene. What about those 'other' Gospels? All the ones that figure in TDVC and in the canonical debate (Gospels of Hebrews, Thomas, Philip, Mary) are Gnostic Gospels. They come from groups that are anti-Semitic and reject the Old Testament as Scripture. These will hardly do to advance Brown's thesis that Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene in order to produce an heir that would combine the royal lines of Judah and Benjamin. The Gnostics had no interest in such earthly things."
-Dr. Robert Newman

5. One character in TDVC tells another that until the Council of Nicea (325 A.D.) "Jesus was viewed by His followers as a mortal prophet....a great and powerful man, but a *man* nonetheless." The 2nd character is shocked: "Not the Son of God?" Reply: "Jesus' establishment as 'the Son of God' was officially proposed and voted on by the Council of Nicea....Because Constantine upgraded Jesus' status almost four centuries *after* Jesus' death, thousands of documents already existed chronicling His life as a *mortal* man." That is humbug. Yes, of course He is portrayed as a mortal man, because that is what He was—a real man who died (and rose again—I wonder why they omitted that?) But the NT documents (and OT prophecies) clearly present Him as a man who is God, or better—as God-who-became-man. As for the dating of the NT documents, see the diagram below.

6. TDVC clearly claims that the Gnostic "gospels" are more valid than the ones in our Bible. But the Gnostic Gospels "are much later than the canonical Gospels. In all probability none of them were written before AD 140, a generation after the death of the last apostle John, and most of them were written far later. By contrast, the canonical Gospels were all written before John died (about AD 100, most of them far earlier)." -Dr. Robert Newman.

Dan Brown Calls into Question the Bible's Historical Accuracy

Historians evaluate the historicity of ancient documents (copied by hand, of course) by two main criteria:

(1) *How many manuscripts exist?* The more copies there are, the more opportunity exists to weed out mistakes by comparing them.

(2) *How many years separate the oldest manuscript from the original?* i.e., how much time passed between the writing of the original document and the writing of the copy(ies) we now have? The longer that period is, the more chance that mistakes (either accidental or intentional) were made in copying it.

Greg Hartman presents very helpful information in this chart regarding a few of the world's best-documented works of ancient history:

AUTHOR	LIVED BETWEEN	EARLIEST MANUSCRIPT	GAP	NUMBER OF MANUSCRIPTS
Caesar	100-44 B.C.	A.D. 900	1000 years	10
Aristotle	384-322 B.C.	A.D. 1100	1400 years	49
Aristophanes	450-385 B.C.	A.D. 900	1200 years	10

“Many of these are critically important to historians. Caesar’s *Gallic Wars*, for instance, is the only source for much of what we know about ancient Rome. The world’s *second*-best documented ancient book is Homer’s *The Iliad*. It was written about 900 B.C.; the oldest manuscript is dated about 500 B.C., separating it from the original by 400 years, and we have 643 manuscripts.

“The *best-documented* ancient book of them all, though, is the New Testament. We have more than 24,000 manuscripts of the New Testament; the oldest, part of the Gospel of John, is conservatively dated at A.D. 125 — only 35 years after the original. As history, it’s not overstating matters at all to say that the Gospels are in a class by themselves. As many historians have pointed out, *if we call the Gospels into question, we must also reject the vast majority of what we teach as history.*”

What Saith Some of those “Other Gospels”? – Some Examples

Excerpts from The Gospel of Thomas ;

Prologue

These are the secret sayings that the living Jesus spoke and Judas Thomas the Twin recorded.

Saying 1

He said, “Whoever finds the interpretation of these sayings will not taste death.”

Saying 2

Jesus said, “Let one who seeks not stop seeking until one finds. When one finds, one will be disturbed. When one is disturbed, one will be amazed, and will reign over all.”

Saying 3

Jesus said, “If your leaders say to you, ‘Behold, the kingdom is in the sky,’ then the birds in the sky will get there before you. If they say to you, ‘It is in the sea,’ then the fish will get there before you.

“Rather, the kingdom is inside you and outside you. When you know yourselves, then you will be known, and will understand that you are children of the living Father. But if you do not know yourselves, then you live in poverty, and embody poverty”....

Saying 7

Jesus said, “Blessed is the lion that the human eats, so that the lion becomes human. Cursed is the human that the lion eats, so that the lion becomes human.”

Saying 8

He said, “A person is like a wise fisher who cast a net into the sea, and drew it up from the sea full of little fish. Among them the wise fisher discovered a fine big fish. So the fisher threw all the little fish back into the sea, and with no hesitation kept the big fish. Whoever has ears to hear ought to listen.” [Compare Matt. 13:47-50. There are differences. Then Saying 9 is very similar to Jesus’ parable of the 4 soils, but omits His explanation of it. A few later sayings are also direct quotes, or nearly so, of verses from the N.T. gospels. But here is another instance (out of many) of one which totally differs.]

Saying 13

Jesus said to his disciples, "Compare me with someone, and tell me whom I am like."

Simon Peter said to him, "You are like a just angel." Matthew said to him, "you are like a wise philosopher." Thomas said to him, "Teacher, my mouth is utterly unable to say whom you are like."

Jesus said, "I am not your teacher. You have become intoxicated because you have drunk from the bubbling spring that I have tended." And he took Thomas and withdrew, and told him three things.

When Thomas came back to his friends, they asked him, "What did Jesus tell you?"

Thomas said to them, "If I tell you even one of the things he told me, you will pick up rocks and stone me. Then fire will come forth from the rocks and devour you."

[On it goes, but perhaps you are weary of this. Here are the final two.]

Saying 112

His disciples said to him, "When will the kingdom come?" "It will not come by looking for it. Nor will it do to say, 'Behold, over here!' or 'Behold, over there!' Rather, the kingdom of the Father is spread out on the earth, but people do not see it."

Saying 113

Simon Peter said to them, "Let Mary leave us, because women are not worthy of life."

Jesus said, "Behold, I shall guide her so as to make her male, that she too may become a living spirit like you men. For every woman who makes herself male will enter the kingdom of heaven."

* * *

Well, that's it, folks. The final saying is interesting, but do you want to entrust your life and eternity to the teachings of that "gospel"?

Rubel Shelly in *Christian Standard*, June 12, 2005

....Having already tipped my hand to my negative opinion of *The Da Vinci Code*, I should address the book's wonderful opportunity for teaching. If I were teaching a beginning class in either Christian apologetics or historical backgrounds to the New Testament anytime soon, I would seriously consider using it as a required text. In spite of a claim to convey factual information about the "documents" and "rituals" of Christianity, it contains very little reliable data. Yet it is a good stimulus to study, and most Christians need a good "shaking up" to study Scripture seriously.

Furthermore, *The Da Vinci Code's* bad information is so skillfully woven into the text that tracking down the spurious and misrepresented facts could be an engaging way to keep students digging deeper. The danger arises when there is nobody in the room who has done that research. Then nobody knows what to believe. The better told story is likely the more believable story to the typical reader.

[avw now: So we're back to where we started. Re-read Hank Hanegraaff's words on our front cover, and prepare yourself to take advantage of opportunities this film and book present to us.]

"The Gospel of Judas"

A.V.W.

On April 6 of this year, scholars unveiled a document called *The Gospel of Judas*. They claim it had surfaced after 1,700 years. The significance of this document is that it fits in with some major ideas found in *The Da Vinci Code*. Both are related to the ancient belief of Gnosticism. But before we get to that, let's learn more about the so-called Good News According to Judas.

According to an article from the New York Times, here are the facts about the claims made for this document: "The Gospel of Judas portrays Judas Iscariot not as a betrayer of Jesus but as his most favored disciple and willing collaborator.... In this version, Jesus asked Judas, as a close friend, to sell him out to the authorities, telling Judas he will 'exceed' the other disciples by doing so....

"The 26-page Judas text is said to be a copy in Coptic, made around A.D. 300, of the original Gospel of Judas, which was written in Greek the century before. [It] is only one of many texts discovered in the last 65 years, including the gospels of Thomas, Mary Magdalene and Philip, believed to be written by Gnostics. The Gnos-

tics' beliefs were often viewed by bishops and early church leaders as unorthodox, and they were frequently denounced as heretics....

"The most revealing passage in the Judas manuscript begins, 'The secret account of the revelation that Jesus spoke in conversation with Judas Iscariot during a week, three days before he celebrated Passover.' The account goes on to relate that Jesus refers to the other disciples, telling Judas 'you will exceed all of them. For you will sacrifice the man that clothes me.' By that [last statement], scholars familiar with Gnostic thinking said, Jesus meant that by helping him get rid of his physical flesh, Judas will act to liberate the true spiritual self or divine being within Jesus.

"Unlike the accounts in the New Testament Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, the anonymous author of the Gospel of Judas believed that Judas Iscariot alone among the 12 disciples understood the meaning of Jesus' teachings and acceded to his will. In the diversity of early Christian thought, a group known as Gnostics believed in a secret knowledge of how people could escape the prisons of their material bodies and return to the spiritual realm from which they came." [End of quotes from article.]

What is This All About?

"Gnosticism" comes from the Greek word *gnosis* (the g is silent), which means "knowledge." Compare our word prognosis; also the word agnostic: a in Greek means "without," so an agnostic is one who admits "I don't know--I lack knowledge" of whether there is a god (as theists believe) or if there is no god (as a-theists believe).

Well, what was it that the long-ago Gnostics thought they had knowledge of? As mentioned in the quotes above, they "knew" that spirit is good but matter is evil. Though this philosophy didn't fully bloom till after Jesus lived on earth, some of its ideas were starting to circulate when the apostles wrote. Thus John's gospel and first two letters and also Paul's letter to the Colossians refute some early Gnostic ideas

This explains a couple of verses which may confuse some Christians:

1 John 4:2-3, This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, 3 but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God.

2 John 7, Many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist.

Today we test Bible teachers by whether they believe or deny Jesus' deity. But the major issue disturbing the churches to whom John wrote was His humanity. The Gnostics said that God would never become a material being, so if Jesus was divine he just *appeared* to be human—but he didn't really have a physical body. If all this is new to you, re-read the last two sentences of the 4^m paragraph of this article, and it will have more meaning. In that version He did have a real body after all, but desperately wanted to be freed from it.

Ironically, the Sunday before this document was presented to the public my sermon was on Judas! Not being psychic, I knew nothing about his gospel. But I did mention a theory that a few real Christians have held. Some have wondered if Judas excused himself for betraying Jesus, by saying, "He's the Messiah, but He's not taking the throne. He's just preaching and healing, instead of zapping the Romans and setting up his Kingdom—restoring the Kingdom to Israel, *us!* So I'll *force* Him to do that! I'll get Him in trouble with the rulers so He will have to defend himself by using his supernatural force and then go on to seize the throne by using those miraculous powers of His." Interesting theory, but can neither be proved nor disproved.

But as for the *Gospel of Judas*, it not only lacks evidence for it but also there is much evidence against it. John 12 tells us that he was "a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it." Of course those who deny the Bible's validity won't accept that fact if it goes against their theory. But they are blind leading the blind.

GracEmail by Edward Fudge:

GOSPEL of JUDAS -- UPDATE

Since writing the previous gracEmail on the "Gospel of Judas" [which W&W has omitted due to the article we'd already prepared—aww], I have viewed the two-hour television special aired on Sunday night, April 9, 2006 on the National Geographic Channel and have read the actual translation of this apocryphal Gospel at www.nytimes.com/packages/pdf/national/judastxt.pdf. (Thanks to my friend and gracEmail subscriber Dr. Hans Rollmann, Professor of Religious Studies at Memorial University of Newfoundland, for the URL site. I do not know how long the text will be available here.) Having now seen the program and having read the "Gospel of Judas" itself, both of which confirmed the previous gracEmail, I add the following observations in this quick update.

National Geographic certainly knows how to tantalize an audience even though its titillation is sometimes misleading. In discussing the "Gospel of Judas" found in an Egyptian cave in the late 1970's,

the TV special teasingly asked whether the manuscript was “real” or “fake,” finally assuring viewers that this “Gospel” had indeed been “authenticated.” Many viewers likely took these proclamations as assurances that the “Gospel of Judas” was written by the Apostle of that name, or even that the Gnostic doctrine this “Gospel” was written to promote was really true. In fact, the “authentication” talked about meant only that radiocarbon dating placed the manuscript’s origin at about A.D. 300, give or take 50 years. In other words, the “Gospel of Judas” is not a *recently*-forged fraud. But that is almost unimportant when we know that it was instead an *ancient* fraud, according to the church father Irenaeus, who wrote about A.D. 180. Unless I blinked and missed it, National Geographic’s television special never even mentioned the fact, also known from Irenaeus, that the “Gospel of Judas” was used by a group known as Cainites who claimed spiritual lineage from Cain, Esau, Korah and the inhabitants of Sodom.

At the surface level, the television special seemed to focus on this apocryphal Gospel’s potential to rehabilitate Judas’ reputation as a Satan-driven scoundrel – a characterization that has indeed been misused by some professing Christians as an excuse for anti-Semitism (which is always inexcusable). In fact, even the New Testament Gospels eschew a one-dimensional view of Judas since they report that he returned the betrayal money to those who had hired him and then committed suicide – two incidents which some Christians have seen as evidence of deep remorse and perhaps even of genuine repentance. Further, Judas inadvertently served the divine purpose according to the apostolic preaching recorded in Acts, even though he remained personally culpable for his actions.

Be that as it may, the presentation of Judas the man is only window-dressing in this newly-discovered “Gospel.” The manuscript’s real point – and the main reason orthodox Christians reject it (aside from the fact that it is a fraudulent work to begin with) – is its promotion of Gnosticism, a worldview contrary to the biblical understanding of reality on almost every fundamental point. This is apparently a minor detail to many postmodern scholars, for whom all ideas are equally valid and all groups claiming to be “Christian” are legitimate spokespersons of Jesus Christ.

Those of us who remain committed to Scripture as divinely-authoritative and who therefore oppose whatever essentially contradicts its core teachings need to realize that we are increasingly out of step with the spirit of the age. It is not unimaginable that the day may come even in America – as it did for the apostolic church of the first three centuries and as it has today in many other parts of the world – when we must choose between personal comfort and security on the one hand and faithfulness to Christ on the other. If that happens, may we – like Irenaeus and Polycarp and John – stand firm whatever the cost.

The CANON of the BIBLE

How Do We Know Which Books Are God's Inspired Word?

"Canon" comes from a Greek word meaning *a measuring rod*; thus, a rule or standard. The canon of Scripture means those books which have been measured, found satisfactory, and thus approved as inspired by God. They are called the "canonical" books.

The Canon of the OLD Testament Scriptures

We do not know the exact time and procedure of fixing the Old Testament's canon. But it is clear that in the time of the Maccabees (160 B.C.) they were aware that the spirit of prophecy had long since departed. 1 Macc. 9:27 says, "And there was a great tribulation in Israel, such as was not *since the day that there was no prophet seen in Israel.*" [Italics added.]

Nevertheless the Jews looked forward to the time when the Lord would again send prophets to declare His word with authority. We read in 1 Macc. 14:41, "The Jews and their priests had consented that [Simon] should be their prince and high priest forever, *till there should arise a faithful prophet.*" It is obvious that the Jews were well able to distinguish between the divine word and the human pronouncements of which there was no lack at that time.

By the start of the Christian era the word 'Scripture' had come to mean a fixed body of divinely inspired writings, the authority of which was fully recognized. When Jesus said, "The scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:34), He expressed not only His viewpoint but the attitude widely accepted among the Jews of that time. By this statement and many other similar ones (Matt. 5:17-18; 22:29-32; Mark 7:8-13; Luke 24:27,44), and also by His numerous quotations from the Old Testament, Christ ended it with His authority as the one complete revelation of God and His will.

The New Testament writers quote or at least refer to all the canonical books of the OT except *Obadiah, Nahum, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Song of Solomon, and Ecclesiastes*. However all those books just named were combined in the Hebrew Old Testament with other books which were quoted. For instance *Nahum* and *Obadiah* are part of what the Jews called *The Book of the 12 Prophets*, which is often quoted in the New Testament. (We now call its contents the "minor prophets," though that seems unwise since it implies their lesser value.)

The Jewish historian Josephus, writing around 100 A.D., said: "We [Jews] do not have an innumerable multitude of books among us, disagreeing from and contradicting one another, but only 22

books which contain the records of all the past times; which are justly believed to be divine." Those 22 books correspond exactly with the number in our present canon of 39 OT books. For as we saw, the 12 minor prophets were counted as one book; also *Lamentations* was combined with *Jeremiah*; *Judges* and *Ruth* were combined; etc.

Josephus goes on to say that later writings [which would include the OT apocrypha included in Roman Catholic versions of the Bible] did not possess equal authority because "there has not been an exact succession of prophets since that time."

The Apocrypha

"Apocrypha" originally meant "hidden" and came to mean "spurious" or "outside" (the canon). It was the term given to 14 books from the pre-Christian era which the outstanding scholar Jerome included in his translation, the Latin Vulgate, around 400 A.D. But notice this: Jerome did **not** put them on the same level of authority as the OT books we accept today. However, over 1000 years later the Council of Trent (1545ff.) declared them to be part of the inspired Scriptures. They did that despite the facts that there is clear evidence that they were *never* received into the Jewish canon by the rabbis, and *never* reckoned as part of the inspired Scriptures by Christians in the early centuries of our era. They are nowhere quoted by Jesus or the apostles in the NT. (Liberal scholars today are imitating the Council of Trent in this regard.)

Some of the OT apocryphal books are rather foolish. For instance, *Tobit*, "is a romance of a rich young Israelite captive in Nineveh, who was led by an angel to wed a 'virgin-widow' who had lost seven husbands" (Halley). But others are of great historical interest, filling us in on events during the "400 silent years" between *Malachi* and *Matthew*. 1st and 2nd *Maccabees* are especially valuable in that way, though the latter is occasionally inaccurate. Still others contain valuable spiritual teachings. I especially enjoy *Ecclesiasticus* (not to be confused with the O.T. book of *Ecclesiastes*). It is also called "*The Wisdom of Jesus, Son of Sirach*." In form it resembles the OT book of *Proverbs*. Here are a few fascinating excerpts: "When all goes well a man's enemies are friendly, but in hard times even his friend will desert him." Again, "A rich man does wrong, and adds insult to injury; a poor man is wronged, and must apologize into the bargain." Another: "A silent wife is a gift from the Lord; her restraint is more than money can buy."

B-u-t though these books contain some wise insights, the Jews rightly limited their Scriptures (our OT) to the 39 books we acknowledge today. In the same way, modern writers and their books may be profitable - like C. S. Lewis' *The Screwtape Letters* or *Mere Christianity*. (They're outstanding; read them!) But just because they

Thought-Provokers about the BIBLE'S TEXT and ACCURACY

Reconstructing the Bible's True Text from the Many Manuscripts Available

Edward J. Young, *Thy Word Is Truth*

Suppose a schoolteacher writes a letter to the President of the United States. To her great joy she receives a personal reply. It is a treasure which she must share with her pupils and so she dictates the letter to them. They are in the early days of their schooling, and spelling is not yet one of their strong points. In his copy of the letter Johnny has misspelled a few words. Mary has forgotten to cross her t's and to dot her i's. Billy has written one or two words twice, and Peter has omitted a word now and then. Nevertheless, despite all these flaws, about thirty copies of the President's letter have been made. Unfortunately, the teacher misplaces the original and cannot find it. To her great sorrow it is gone. She does not have the copy which came directly from the President's pen; she must be content with those that the children have made.

Will anyone deny that she has the words of the President? Does she not have his message, in just those words in which he wrote it to her? True enough, there are some minor mistakes in the letters, but the teacher may engage in the science of textual criticism and correct them. She may correct the misspelled word, and she may write in those words which have been omitted and cross out those which are superfluous. Without any serious difficulty she may indeed restore the original, by comparing the copies.

Now it is precisely this fact that caused Jesus to make the extraordinary statement recorded in Matthew 5:18, "I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished." In the great maze of documents extant in His day, Jesus recognized a pure text that was accurate right down to the jots and tittles.

Why God should not have protected the original writings from destruction we cannot be sure, but with the record of idolatry in the church, I can guess why. With the veneration accorded the bones of saints and relics one can imagine what would have been done with the original documents of Scripture. God has purposed in His providence to perpetuate His truth in such a written form as to keep men from bibliolatry.

Historical and Geographical Accuracy of The Bible

Rendle Short, *Archeology Gives Evidence*

It was the Roman custom to try to govern the scattered provinces of their great empire through rulers maintaining the forms to which those provinces were accustomed. So a great variety of titles was to be found in towns or provinces around the Mediterranean Sea, and a writer who had neither sat in the Foreign Office of the Emperor, nor gone around these areas himself, was unlikely to get all these titles correct. But Luke does get them right: He mentions a tetrarch, Herod, in Galilee, and another, Lysanias, in Abilene; another Herod is a king, by special favor of Emperor Caligula. He lists a proconsul at Cyprus; praetors at Philippi; politarchs at Thessalonica; Gallio the proconsul at Corinth; a townclerk and Asiarchs at Ephesus; chief-man Publius at Malta. All these titles we can confirm by independent evidence, either from historians or from coins or inscriptions.

Still More Examples

E. M. B. Green, *The Authority of Scripture*

Every fresh archeological discovery tends to show how trustworthy the inspired record is.... For example, for years it used to be thought that St. John's statement that Pilate tried Jesus "in a place called the Pavement, and in Hebrew Gabbatha" (19: 13) was quite unhistorical--a bit of late embroidery on the simple story of the crucifixion. The scholars knew very well that there never was such a pavement. But a few years ago it was discovered some 15 feet below the surface of present day Jerusalem. It measured some 50 yards in each direction, and was the courtyard of the Roman barracks in Jerusalem.

The same was said about the pool of Bethesda with its five porches (John 5). This, too, was regarded as mythical, since not only had no trace of it been discovered, but there was no reference to it anywhere in ancient literature outside St. John. But now, not only have the porticoes of Bethesda been dug up, but the name has occurred in one of the scrolls at Qumran!

compass of one small country; but the NT books in widely separated countries.

The Earliest Collections Incomplete: It was not a world of railroads, airplanes and radios. Travel and communication were slow and dangerous. Printing was then unknown, and the making of copies by hand was slow and laborious work. Moreover, it was an age of persecution, when precious Christian writings had to be kept hid. And, there were no church councils or conferences, where Christians from distant parts could come together and compare notes on what writings they had, till the days of Constantine. So, naturally, the earliest collections of NT books would vary, in different regions; and the process of reaching unanimity as to what books properly belonged in the NT was slow.

Spurious NT Books: Beside the canonical NT books there were many others, both good and fraudulent. Some were so fine and valuable that they were for a while, in some sections, regarded as Scripture; others were unadulterated forgeries. Investigation was not easy, especially of less known books of a distant region.

What about the 'doubtful' books? They were not 'doubtful' in regions where they first appeared. The exigencies of the times hindered their becoming widely known for a while. *The fact that they were slow in being generally received is a testimony to the carefulness of the churches against imposters.*

Eusebius, 264-340 A.D., was bishop of Caesarea and a church historian. By extensive research he made himself informed as to what books had been generally accepted by the churches. In his Church History he speaks of 4 Classes of Books:

1. Those universally accepted.
2. The "disputed" books: James, 2 Peter, Jude, 2 & 3 John, which, though included in his own Bible, were doubted by some.
3. The 'spurious' books: among which he mentions the "Acts of Paul," "Shepherd of Hermas," "Apocalypse of Peter," "Epistle of Barnabas," and the "Didache" ["Teachings"].
4. The "forgeries of heretics": "Gospel of Peter," "Gospel of Thomas," "Acts of John," etc.

The Council of Carthage, 397 A.D., gave its formal ratification to the 27 books of the NT as we know them, *expressing what had already become the unanimous judgment of the churches.* [End of quotes from Halley.]

James Packer makes an important clarification about this process: "The Bible is *not an authorized collection* of books, but a collection of *authorized books.*" That is, official canonization by the church added nothing to the intrinsic value of the books.

Christ himself *accepted* the OT's canonization-process, and *provided* for the NT's canonization. He gave these promises to His apostles, whom He chose and trained: "The Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.... I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you." (John 14:26; 16:12-14.)

[I am indebted to several sources, especially *The New Bible Handbook* in the section above on the OT canon, and to *Halley's Bible Handbook* re: the NT canon. --avw]

Jesus Trusted the Bible; So Can We

A worthy old bishop of yesteryear had a sound philosophy:

"Jesus absolutely trusted the Bible, and though there are in it some things inexplicable and intricate that have puzzled me so much, I'm going to trust the Bible because of Him."

Jesus' attitude toward Scripture is worth noting:

- *Jesus read Scripture (Luke 24:27).
- *Jesus trusted Scripture (Matt. 5:17, 18).
- *Jesus accepted Bible history (Matt. 19:4).
- *Jesus believed its prophecies (Luke 24:44, 45).
- *Jesus endorsed its creation account (Matt. 19:4-6).
- *Jesus validated the historic flood (Matt. 24:34-39).
- *Jesus warned of rejecting Scripture (Luke 16:31).
- *Jesus declared scripture the basis of judgment (John 5:45-47).
- *Jesus recommended Bible study (John 5:39).
- *Jesus taught that Scripture sanctifies (John 17:17).

--W. A. Townend

are *inspiring* does not mean they are *inspired* in the 2 Tim. 3:16 sense ("God-breathed") and belong in our Bibles. We should distinguish between the two meanings.

The Canon of the NEW Testament Scriptures

If the Lord raised up prophets, psalmists and others to write down His messages during the Old Covenant era, how much more would we expect Him to do the same when He sent His own Son to establish the new and better Covenant? And He did. In 2 Peter 3:15-16, Peter says Paul's writings are "scripture." And in 1 Tim. 5:18 Paul quotes Luke 10:7 right along with Deut. 25:4 as authoritative "scripture." They knew that God was not a retired author! But again that raised the question, *Which documents are truly God-breathed?* Of which books could the writers say (as David did in 2 Sam. 23:2), "The Spirit of the Lord spoke through me"? Which other writers could claim to "speak by the Holy Spirit," as Jesus himself said when referring to David? (Matt. 22:43)? This leads us to the current debate over what writings belong in the New Covenant Scriptures?

Though it is more common to use the term *apocrypha* to refer to writings during the O.T. era, there are also some books from the post-apostolic era which are called apocryphal. They were written during the early centuries of the Christian era. And the current claims being made in *The Da Vinci Code* and *The Gospel of Judas*, etc. for various Gnostic writings require us to investigate these later apocryphal books. Evangelical scholars through the centuries have always insisted they are truly "outside the canon," but now radical scholars cry out for their inclusion. In fact the "Jesus Seminar" marble players published an edition of the New Testament omitting the book of Revelation but including the Gospel of Thomas!

The following criteria were used by the early Christians to determine the NT canon:

1. Inspiration: Was there evidence of divine inspiration? This was the major test. Was its message God-honoring, life-changing, and consistent with other inspired Scripture?

2. Was the book Apostolic: Was it written by an apostle, or by someone of very close connection to some apostle(s)? Examples of the latter would be Luke, James, Mark, and apparently Jude. Of *Mark* it has been said, "It is the voice of Peter and the pen of Mark."

3. Contents: the spiritual character of the book. This standard alone eliminated many of the NT-era apocryphal writings. Rendle Short's book *Why Believe?* explains this point: We have "information as to what the early Christians would have done to the story of Jesus' life if they had depended on their imagination instead of sticking to facts. A large collection of 2nd, 3rd, and 4th-century 'Gospels' have come down to us" – for instance, the gospels of James, of

Thomas, of Nicodemus. These contain "statements such as, the ox and the donkey kneeled to the Child in the manger; lions and leopards adored Him on the trip to Egypt; roses blossomed where He trod; all the idols in Egypt fell from their pedestals when He entered the country; in Nazareth He struck dead a boy who jostled Him in the street, and turned 12 clay models of birds into living sparrows, and criticized one of his school-teachers and killed another one; also that He came forth from His grave in a form that towered to the skies.

"Yet these legend-writers seem to be quite sincere Christians. At least they show us what the four Gospels would have been like if they had been fiction instead of fact."

I believe it's helpful to compare—at least in some ways--those books with some modern books of fiction about Jesus and His life, family, death etc. There are many examples, including *Ben Hur*, *The Robe*, *Quo Vadis* (all of which were made into movies) and two novels by a contemporary writer, Marjorie Holmes – *Two from Galilee* (about Joseph and Mary's courtship, ending with Jesus' birth) and *Three from Galilee* (Jesus' boyhood and young adulthood). I've read neither of Ms. Holmes' books, though Ruth read the first one. The author, a Christian, seeks to help us understand the culture and customs of that day so we can more fully grasp—and *feel*--what life then was like, and what some vague passages mean. Nothing wrong with that, since she didn't try to persuade a publisher to insert her books into the sacred Scriptures!

4. Universality: Was the book universally received in the churches (or almost so, at least)? This test – consensus of opinion -- was an important safeguard. But it also delayed the final settlement of the canon for a long time.

Here is a helpful section from *Halley's Bible Handbook* on the Formation of the NT Canon, especially related to the question of universal acceptance:

As the writings of the Apostles appeared, they were added to the Jewish Scriptures, and held in the same sacred regard. Each church wanted, not only what had been addressed to itself, but copies of writings addressed to other churches. [See Col. 4:16.]

The Apostles, it seems, wrote many letters, having in mind the immediate needs of the churches. As to which letters were to be preserved for future ages, we believe God Himself watched over the matter, and made His own choice. [Note that *First Corinthians* 5:9 mentions an *earlier* letter Paul wrote to Corinth!]

The NT books were written in various locations and sent to various regions: Palestine, Asia Minor, Greece, Crete, Rome. These regions were far apart. Most of the OT books had originated within the

Extremes re: the Canon of God's Word

Subtraction:

Marcion was a 2nd-century heretic influenced by Gnosticism. His canon of the Bible excluded all the OT scriptures and all but Luke and some of Paul's epistles from the NT.

In our time the Jesus Seminar's *5 Gospels* rated the Gospel of Thomas as having the highest number of Jesus' sayings, and the Gospel of John as having the fewest! They make many other such claims, such as that Jesus actually said only 1 of the beatitudes, etc.

So Marcion accepted too few of the *books* of the Bible. And the Jesus Seminar accepts too few of the *parts* of the books of the Bible!

Addition:

The Catholic Council of Trent (mid-1500s) added the O.T. apocrypha to the Bible: 14 books.

The Mormons (1800s) added 3 books to the Bible (the Book of Mormon, The Doctrine and the Covenants, and The Pearl of Great Price), claiming all 4 are God's Word.

The Jesus Seminar adds the Gospel of Thomas to the Bible.

Beware of Too Few, and of Too Many.

Remembering Earl Mullins, Sr.

A Well-watered Tree

By Richard Paris,
longtime teacher at Portland Christian High School

As a biologist, pondering the analogy of Earl to a tree planted by the streams of water, I couldn't help but recall that the closer you study a tree, the more of the Creator you see.

Forty-seven years ago I was a 9th grader at PCHS starting my second semester, when Bro. Earl Mullins arrived to take over science classes from Bro. Robert Garrett who was leaving for Africa. We soon learned several interesting things about Bro. Mullins: he had played football in college; he was Irish; he had a temper; he had a paddle and he knew how to use it. As I got to know him better, I learned that he loved his students and was genuinely interested in

them and their success. Under Bro. Earl I learned to love biology and to view with some suspicion my ability in Chemistry.

In December of 1967 I came back to Portland to become a member of Earl's faculty. I relieved him of his science teaching duties so that he could have more time to devote to being Principal. In this new relationship I learned how hard teaching in a small school could be. In those days there were 6 class periods plus Bible.

Earl assigned me 6 different subjects plus Bible with no break. After the first semester, feeling very put upon, I complained bitterly to him about the work load. In response he just laughed and said that was no more than he had done. So I learned how hard he had worked at it.

Earl was quite patient with his teachers. We complained a lot. But you knew you had gone too far when his face slowly turned beet red. Time to drop the subject.

He loved his teachers as much as his students. He even gave his 1980 Oldsmobile diesel to one of his faculty members who needed a car.

Years passed, and Earl and I were called to work at the Highway Church in Pekin, Indiana.

He was the senior minister and I helped [as elder—avw]. He wouldn't want anyone to know, but his generosity led him to put his small check back into the offering plate to help out. He was also known to give anonymous gifts to different ones. For the life of me I don't see how he did it on his principal's salary.

Our family enjoyed so much the hospitality shown by Earl and Ragenia on the many Sunday afternoons we spent in their home. Earl baptized our daughter, later performed her wedding ceremony, and even traveled all the way to West Virginia to perform the wedding ceremony for our oldest son.

It was in these years that I came to realize the depth of his knowledge of the Scriptures. He was a man who loved God and had rock-solid beliefs and convictions. He did not compromise these convictions and yet he was always ready to extend the right hand of fellowship to anyone who trusted in Jesus for salvation. To me that is his greatest legacy.

Inspired to Reach Out to Russia

Pam Wilson, teacher at P.C.H.S., Louisville

Several years ago at a teachers' conference, ACSI introduced the Co-Mission, a coalition of mission groups working together to take advantage of the new openness in Russia. I remember thinking at the time that Bro. Earl would be a great addition to a Co-Mission team. I think I even mentioned that thought to him. I don't know if anyone realized then that God already had plans for Bro. Earl that went beyond the Co-Mission to include ACSI student mission trips, teacher seminars and the founding of Goin' Fishing. I certainly had no idea that I would participate in 7 mission trips to Russia.

Before our first student trip in 1994, Bro. Earl warned us we would need to be flexible and possibly even "fluid" once we were in Russia. We encountered travel problems before we even left the U.S. and joked with him about going beyond fluid to "vapor." But no matter what situation we found ourselves in, on that trip or any other, Earl always handled it with grace, with sensitivity to cultural differences, with love for the Russian people and above all with integrity. That is why he was respected, loved and trusted by the Russians we worked with. And trust is not always easily given in Russia.

Many images come to mind as I think about all those trips. There were always fun times on trips with Bro. Earl, but I also remember poignant moments -- Russian teachers asking me to teach them how to pray; Russian teenagers waiting for hours in the snow every evening to talk to our students when we returned from a day of visiting schools (the lady guarding the dorm wouldn't let them wait inside); ladies in Phyllis and Pam Hickman's teachers seminar almost climbing over desks to get Russian Bibles; Mira, the director of the teachers college in Kineshma telling us she could see in our eyes that there was something different about us.

When I returned from that first trip, my enthusiasm must have made an impression on my family, because our son Ben became interested in going to Russia. He could hardly wait until he was old enough to make his first mission trip in 1999. So, I guess in a sense, he represents a second generation of Bro. Earl's Russia ministry.

We can't know how many people in both the U.S. and Russia have been influenced because Earl Mullins committed himself to being used by the Lord in Russia. I do know how thankful my family and I are that we were privileged to share in the life and in the Russian ministry of God's servant, Bro. Earl.

The Worldwide Legacy of Earl Mullins, Sr.

Reminiscences by Dan Wilson

What will *you* do when *you* retire?

After working diligently for the same company for thirty-one years, most people look forward to fishing or spending more time with their grandkids. After thirty-one years as educators at Portland Christian School, Earl and Ragna Mullins decided to “retire” from Portland so Earl could go fishing. It seems, however, that they didn’t get the memo about what everyone else meant by “fishing.”

My history with Earl goes way back. Our families go back to Dallas, Texas, before I was even born. It was there that my great-grandfather (Dr. Eugene Wood) was the dentist of Earl’s father (Frank Mullins, an outstanding preacher and Bible teacher). I first came to know Earl during my high school days at Portland when he was the head administrator. I never got to know him like some of my schoolmates did. I heard a story about how he had leaned over a desk, picked up a young man who was being unruly and held him off the ground while he “talked with him about his behavior.” I didn’t know if the story was apocryphal, but I figured I didn’t want to get to know him in that way.

It wasn’t until 1996 that I first came to know him *personally*. In the spring of that year he called me and said that he would like me to consider helping lead a team of teenagers on a mission trip to the city of Kineshma, Russia. God help me – I said no! At the time, I didn’t know that saying “no” to Earl was not really possible for long.

In September of that same year he called again and asked me if I would consider helping him out. He had two mission teams scheduled to go on trips at the same time, and (although he was a great man in many ways) he couldn’t be in two places at once. He asked if I would be willing to coordinate one of those two trips just this once. That was ten years ago, and I am still coordinating short-term mission trips today! Earl had a way of getting people to do things they didn’t want to do at the time, but for which they later thanked him.

When he called me that September it was late in the evening and a friend of mine was visiting me. Earl asked if I would go with him to Moscow for a week in October to get a feel for how to do things in Russia before I led a team of teenagers back there in the spring. I told him I would pray and think about it, and asked him how long I had to consider this opportunity. He replied that he had tickets on

hold with an agent at a sale price and that he needed to know my answer by the next morning! After praying with my friend I decided I would do it. I had plans to go to graduate school the next summer to study architecture and I figured that this would be a good last fling before I started a new career. That was ten years ago and I am still leading mission teams to Russia! Earl had a way of changing the course of people's lives.

On that trip to Moscow I came to know many of those unique characteristics that all of those who went with Earl to Russia loved about him. I was caught off guard by his long Texas gait and almost had to run at times to keep up with him as we walked down Moscow's streets. I was shocked to life each morning by his thick, black coffee which was a staple of his diet. I came to love his signature, "Welllll...", long and drawn out in his down-home Texas drawl. I was awed by how he could navigate the labyrinth of the Moscow metro system in spite of only being able to read a little Russian.

On that trip I also began to see the depth of his love and dedication for Ragna, his beloved wife and co-worker for the Gospel. He spoke of her often and called her at every chance. He once told me that the most difficult passage of his life was the three months spent apart from her one year as he was coordinating mission trips in Russia.

Over the eight years during which I had the privilege of working with them as part of Goin' Fishing Ministries, I came to appreciate how God had brought them together and molded them to be a perfect partnership, not just in raising a wonderful family, but also in serving the Lord in whatever ministry God opened before them. [Besides Russia, they also served together about a year in the Philippines, and another year in Israel. -avw]

It was Earl's inability to pronounce many Russian words properly that led to one of my funniest memories of him. One spring he and I were in St. Petersburg meeting with two missionaries from Finland. We were considering an opportunity they had for us to get involved in a Russian summer camp ministry. One of the missionaries was named Jouko, pronounced **You-ko**. The other was named Jussi, pronounced **Yu-si**. At the end of our meeting we stood in a circle and took turns praying. I'll never forget Earl praying that God would bless these two wonderful missionary men, **Jocko and Juicy!** To their credit, the two Finns did not react in any noticeable way to his humorous mispronunciation of their names, but our Russian translator, Masha, and I were shedding tears by the end of the prayer as we struggled to contain our laughter.

It was these little idiosyncrasies that we loved about Earl, but it was his humble spirit, deep faith and simple obedience to God that caused us to respect him so highly. In spite of the difference in our ages and the much greater experience he had in working in Russia, Earl never showed me anything but respect, treating me as if I were an equal partner in the work. He never sought attention or respect for himself, but those who met him soon gave him both because they recognized the strength of his character, the sincerity of his love and the depth of his wisdom. That first student mission program that Earl convinced me to help lead is still going on today, eleven years after he started it. He led that first team from Peoria Christian School to Vladimir, Russia, and then turned the annual exchange over to me. Although he had only gone once, for years after that I would have Russians in Vladimir ask me about Yurl's health and welfare (they couldn't pronounce his name any better than he could pronounce theirs). He had gained their respect the same way he gained ours, by his simple, sincere interest in them as individuals, created in the image of a God who loved them dearly. It was his sincere interest in people and his obedience to God's call that I believe will forever remain as Earl's greatest legacies.

To illustrate the size of that legacy, let me tell you about a girl named Yulia. When I first met Yulia, she was part of the exchange team that was visiting Peoria Christian School in Illinois in the fall of 1998. She was a shy 13 year old girl, who smiled a lot but spoke very little. The following spring I accompanied the Peoria Christian School exchange team to Vladimir, Yulia's home town. The Russians who had visited Peoria in the fall had gathered to welcome us, and when I saw Yulia, I thought that something was different in her expression. Her face was beaming with something more than the quick, shy smile she had shown before. I later asked her what had changed. She shared with me that when she had returned to Vladimir after the trip to America, she had wanted to know what it was that made her new American friends have such joy, so she sought out a church like the one she had visited in Peoria. God had led her to a Christ-centered church, and before long she had accepted Jesus as her Lord and Savior and had been baptized. In the ensuing years I have had the privilege of seeing Yulia each spring when the annual exchange team from Peoria Christian visits Vladimir. I have seen her grow in her faith, becoming passionate about sharing Christ with others and teaching them, especially little children, about the love of God. She invited her mother to church, and she too gave her life to Christ. This coming summer Yulia will marry the youth minister of the church, and together they plan to work full time in the harvest fields of Russia leading precious souls to Christ.

What does Yulia have to do with Earl's legacy? John 12:24 says, "I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds." Earl once told me that his life's dream had always been to have a ranch where he could ride horses and work with his hands. But early in his life Earl heard God's call to higher things and laid down his own dreams and desires in order to obey that call. Because Earl was obedient, dying daily to his own desires, God used him to produce many seeds. That obedience took Earl to places he never imagined he would ever go, experiencing things he never imagined he would experience, eating food he never imagined he would eat, all in order to share God's Word with those who needed to hear it. Although Earl never met Yulia, she is his granddaughter in the faith. She represents the countless thousands worldwide who have come to know Christ because Earl laid down his own desires to obediently follow Christ to go fishing for the souls of men.

What will your legacy be? What will you do when you retire?

VOICES from the FIELDS

Dennis and Betty Allen

Now Home in Indiana

We returned from China on March 2. These six months we were in the same city (Quanzhou) as in 2003-2004, working in New Beginnings Language Training Center. This ministry continues to grow in size and outreach. Many of the students are children and there is now a special ministry to parents helping them to cope with the problems they face in training their children and in their homes.

We did not have a heavy teaching load, so we were able to give more time to one-on-one contacts as opportunities opened up. We were especially grateful for the opportunity to teach a Bible class in our apartment. We were also invited into several homes.

We were blessed by contact with a brother in his 70's who has been working with a team in Yunnan province. They conducted training schools for Christian leaders. As a result over 100 churches have been established among the many minority groups there.

There is still a large measure of openness in this part of China. Many good things are happening in some of the 3-Self churches. China is developing and changing very fast. There is a great deal of unrest especially in the rural areas, but the cities seem peaceful. There is still persecution of Christians in some areas. China is count-

ing heavily on the Olympic Games in 2008 and will want to make as good an impression on the world as possible.

Robert and Joy Garrett
April 10, 2006

Ruwa, Zimbabwe

Earthquake: Late at night Feb 23 we were woken up by a loud noise on the roof. (Our roof is of corrugated iron and the ceiling is expanded polystyrene which insulates against heat but not noise. When it rains the noise of the roof makes normal conversation almost impossible.) We thought the noise was made by one or more monkeys jumping up and down or fighting on the roof. Joy shouted to make them go away. I told her "shish" - I would get my shotgun and go out to shoot them. I shone the flashlight around but could see nothing. A little later I was called by one of our workers who said that he thought thieves were up on his roof trying to steal the roofing material. That is when I realized that we had experienced some kind of earthquake. Indeed, in the morning we heard on the news that there had been an earthquake in a remote part of northern Mozambique - 7.5 on the Richter Scale - and the tremors had been felt in all the neighboring countries for hundreds of miles around. No lives lost or injuries were ever reported. However, there have been many terrible earthquakes in different parts of the world in recent years - a reminder of the last great earthquake yet to come - Rev. 16:18,19

Food to the Hungry: Last month we sent Bro. Zilawe, accompanied by Bro. Justice, with the 4-ton truck up to Bulawayo, Binga and Hwange -- a 1,200 mile round trip. He carried 2 tons of corn meal to help the hungry among our church members up there plus some window frames for the church in Bulawayo and a 10 ft by 10 ft steel hut to Hwange. He erected a temporary shelter for the church to meet in on our site in Hwange and the hut for someone to live in to watch over the property as there is so much thievery these days -- they would come and dismantle the shed and cart it off. On the way he suffered a puncture in one of the tires and the tread came off another. It was a hard 5 day grueling trip but the Lord enabled.

Famine Relief - NO MORE FUNDS NEEDED. We give thanks to our Lord for all who contributed to this worthy cause. What we have on hand is more than sufficient. Most of the country experienced an excellent rainfall and people are now harvesting their grain. There may still be a few who will need help but we have enough to take care of them. **OTHER NEEDS: Building Funds** are a continuing and worthy need.

Study Bibles: In times past some individuals/classes/congregations sent us a good quantity of NIV Study Bibles. These have been

much appreciated, but we have dozens more men and women who would dearly love to have a good Study Bible. They do not have access to the study helps that are so freely available to you in the USA. I understand that the NIV Study Bible has been discontinued.... [Note by Alex Wilson: I notified Robert last year of that fact – while being revised, the NIV Study Bible did get phased out temporarily. But now the "NIV Study Bible, Revised" is available. My research shows that the cheapest way to purchase them is to order from Christian Book Distributors, 1-800-247-4784. Ask for NIV Study Bible #WH923069: "Hardcover Personal-Size edition." It costs \$26.99 + the cost of postage to you. You must pay by credit card. Other distributors charge from \$9-13 more, though I did not try Amazon.com. Robert added this note:] To those who are led to take this up [sending such Bibles] -- please contact me so I can tell you as to the best way and how to send them to us.

"Bible Survey": I recently reprinted Bro. Richard Ramsey's "Bible Survey," a 60 page booklet. We are able to use it here for our many who want to learn more of the Word. I now have a multifunction laser printer which is also a copier and a scanner. It was easy to scan the pages, make the few corrections, print out the master copy and then run it off on the Risograph. Joy then folded, assembled and stapled them together -- 150 copies.

Elders Appointed: Sunday April 3, 2006 was a great day for the Glen Norah congregation - (one of 11 in the Harare area). We appointed three elders and three deacons. (Acts 6:1-6 applies). This is now the second congregation here to have elders and we are working with several others who have now reached that stage of maturity and should be having elders soon.

Lights Out : Our electricity supply has been off now for six days as I write this, and indications are that it may be many more days in the fixing. Thankfully our generator has been repaired and has been working almost continuously for the past week Thanks to those good souls who especially contributed funds to enable that repair and to repair our security alarm system which had been damaged by the same lightning strike.

Much Prayer needed: Please keep us in your prayers. There are problems and conditions here which cannot be mentioned in this letter. But God is our strength and helper.

David Moldez Manila, Philippines March 25, 2006

Praises to our God for enabling Central Bible Seminary to finish another school year of teaching and training disciples of Christ. Of

the 80 students who studied this year, 16 graduated from the 3 programs that we offered. We are encouraged by the testimonies of students and graduates recently. Pastor Arturo Sangalang, a graduate, testified: "After studying and applying what I learned at the Bible school, the church that I lead has experienced growth. From 60 members we now reach 150." Elias Medalla, another CBS alumnus visited us last month. He said, "I thank the Lord for using me to start a church at Laguna. I pray that God will use this church to do mission works to reach the lost." Recently Josephine Glinofria, a graduate this year, shared to me how she helped someone to trust Christ and be freed from Occultism. Pastor Robert Cortez, another alumnus, told me that he is teaching a newly born Christian who was almost deceived by a cult. Praise God for using Central Bible Seminary to better equip believers to do the ministry that God has entrusted to them.

The theme for this year's Commencement Ceremonies is Sharing Jesus, the Hope of All Nations. Dr. Josue Ganibe, the graduation speaker, challenged us from 2 Corinthians 4. He preached that though we are vessels made of clay yet we have a treasure in us and life to share to all nations. He mentioned that we should not lose heart in comparison to big secular Universities who have thousands of students because we train students who are serving the King of kings and the Lord of lords. He emphasized that the greatest treasure that we can offer to the Nations is Jesus in us--the Hope of glory.

Please pray for our extension training at San Jose, Occidental Mindoro [the island just south of Luzon] on April 5-11 and then the Churches of Christ Holy Week conference. The church pastors, leaders and workers are very eager to learn about Bible Interpretation and Exposition. Please pray for wisdom and good health as Brother Vir and I minister for a week to the brethren there. I hope also that delegates from Novaliches and also the staff of the Bible School can attend the conference, as resources are available.

NEWS and NOTES

Edited by Bennie Hill, BHill40482@aol.com

Linton (Ind.) Church of Christ A year of planning, and eight months of work is almost complete. We are planning our first service in the new auditorium for Easter Sunday. The pews were installed yesterday, the steeple was placed, the furnaces are being moved, and it sure is exciting to anticipate this Sunday. **Plans are still going for the Centennial weekend for May 27-28.** It is going to be a wonderful time in the Lord. --Jerry Carmichael

Rhoda Edens Perozzi honored: A number of our readers know Rhoda Perozzi, who graduated from P.C.H.S. and S.C.C., and later taught for a while at the latter school. Recently she was honored in Beijing, China, where she and her husband Ed teach. A newspaper there ran an article about the event. Here are some excerpts:

Beijing launched an annual award in 1999 to honor 10-20 foreign experts each year who make significant contributions to the development of the city. Vice-mayor Zhang Mao spoke at the award ceremony held last night.....

Beijing has about 7,000 foreign experts working in diverse fields such as education, culture, the arts, the press, medicine and business, said Zhang. Foreign experts are specialists such as researchers, teachers or senior managers, who are invited to promote the country's economic growth and social development. 15 foreign experts were chosen this year.

Award winner Professor Rhoda Perozzi, 58, an American who has been with Beijing University of

Technology's ecology department for three and a half years, was described by one of her colleagues, as "extremely devoted. Every semester, she carries two huge and heavy trunks of books borrowed from American libraries to Chinese teachers and students and takes them back at the end of the semester.

"She devotes almost all her time to helping students and colleagues. She invites her students home to enjoy every American festival," Ji said. "She has touched every student in our school." --Shenzhen Daily, Jan. 12, 2006

Pray for them and their many students and friends, especially as Rhoda has gotten pneumonia *many* times since living there—plus some other illnesses. They need wisdom in making plans for the future.

Gallatin, Tenn. Many of you probably saw on t-v the devastating tornado that struck the Gallatin area. 2 families belonging to the Gallatin Church of Christ suffered damage to their homes. 1 of those families' members was injured, though not too seriously (if I understood correctly). David and Delores Schreiner live in a hard-hit subdivision, where 3 people were killed (5 more were killed elsewhere) and 15-20 houses destroyed. They suffered only minor damage. Some church members formed 4 teams that helped clear away the rubble, etc. Pray for all who live there, that good will come from the horrible experience.

LaGrange, Ky. Church Louis Schuler reports that strong winds

blew off some of the roof over the church auditorium. The church is meeting in another part of their building. Pray for the congregation.

Pray for Robert Garrett in Zimbabwe: He had a spell of dizziness, lightheadedness, numbness and tingling going down his body, according to his daughter JoAnn Broaddus. This apparently isn't the first episode.

Bruce Chowning's 90th Birthday was celebrated Saturday April 15 at the Cherry St. Church of Christ. The fellowship room overflowed with family and friends as familiar faces reminisced. Sis. Irene Chowning's dad was minister at Cherry St. when Bruce & Irene married and when Bro. Kranz died Bruce became the minister. Having retired years ago, he continues to worship there. God has blessed him with many, many years of useful service, and he continues, at ninety to be a blessing to all.

Sis. Ellen Ward (resident of Maple Manor and member of Cramer & Hanover Church of Christ, Lexington, KY) celebrated her 100th birthday Thursday, April 20, 2006. She has been a faithful supporter of PCS through her craft items she continues to make. Several ladies from Cramer surprised her with a visit on her birthday.

Sis. Mae Broaddus now resides at Brook's Place, 200 Rose Mary Dr., Winchester, KY 40391

From "Israel My Glory" (A ministry of the Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, Inc.) High Priest's robe

completed. "After much hard work and research, the techelet (azure blue) robe of the high priest has been completed by the Temple Institute and is ready to be worn in the Third Temple.

The blue coat, or me'il techelet as it is called in the Torah, sports 72 golden bells alternating with 72 pomegranates attached around its hem, woven of blue, purple, and scarlet wool. It will join the already completed ephod and chosen (breastplate), featuring the 12 precious stones associated with the 12 tribes of Israel. The commandment to make such a robe appears in Exodus 28:31-35."

Many exciting things are happening in Israel that provide yet another sign of the soon return of the Messiah, Jesus Christ our Lord!

Fayette County (Georgia) to teach Bible in high schools. As families gather around this week to watch "The 10 Commandments" and celebrate Easter, Fayette Co. school officials are gearing up for teaching Bible classes next fall.

Acting on a new state law that allows teaching the Bible as historical literature rather than as doctrine, the local system will offer the elective courses in all five high schools.

When Gov. Sonny Perdue signs the bill, Georgia will become the first state in the nation to approve the Bible as a textbook. (Article from "Raptureready.com" a commentary on world events that relate to Bible prophecy.)

GracEmail:

DEPRESSION AND FAITH

Edward Fudge

A gracEmail reader in Texas writes, "Am I saved if I trust in Jesus, even though sometimes I am depressed and have doubts? My depression is physically based. I don't know if I get depressed because of my lack of faith, or if my faith goes lacking because I become depressed."

* * *

You seem to be sorting through this quite well. Depression is often physical in origin, whether from hormone imbalance, chemical irregularity or mere exhaustion and fatigue. We are psychosomatic creatures—our emotional, spiritual and physical aspects are all intertwined. Depression itself is not "wrong" or immoral, although it is something the devil likes to lay on us to make us miserable and to rob our joy (John 10:9-10). We may remember that "God is greater than our hearts" or emotions and that he "knows all things"—including the truth of our relationship with him (1 John 3:19-20). God's love is an objective reality. It is grounded in his own nature and he has demonstrated it to us in Jesus Christ (John 3:16). It does not depend on our subjective feelings.

Faith does not mean always having an optimistic attitude or feeling "bubbly." It allows us to tell God exactly how we feel and what we think, to explain any situation to him as we see it, and to register our complaints and requests and arguments. But faith also means that after doing all those things, we finally say to God, "I place myself and all my circumstances in your hands. You are my Creator and Savior. I commit myself to follow you—with gratitude and with ultimate confidence that you are there and that you will do what is right" (Heb. 11:6).

The late Chinese evangelist Watchman Nee illustrated this with a parable. Fact, Faith and Feeling were walking along the top of a stone wall. While Faith looked at Fact, Feeling followed Faith and all went well. But then Faith took his eyes off Fact in order to look at Feeling, and fell off the wall. God's truth in Christ, the gospel message, and the realities revealed by Scripture are "fact." Our practical reliance on those realities constitute "faith." Unless we are ill, our "feelings" usually follow our "faith."

Keep your eyes on Jesus—and on the God who showed us in Jesus that he is "for" us and that he is always faithful (Rom. 8:31-39; 15:13).

Any Volunteers? Pray about it.

Sister Louise Wells has been Word & Work's office manager for many years now. She handles the record-keeping required by the Postal Service, and the listing of new or renewing subscribers plus changes of address, and sending reminders to lapsed subscribers, and the banking, etc. Moved by Christ's love and the importance of helpful Bible teaching for His people (which is W&W's goal), she works hard. We Could Not Go On Without Her! THANK YOU, dear sister! Other dear friends come in to help her on mail-out days, and with proof-reading, etc. But we need *at least* one additional volunteer to assist Louise with the jobs listed above. Needed qualifications include patience, perseverance, love, and "a sound mind" or "self-discipline" (2 Tim. 1:7, NKJV, NIV). Is God calling you to this sphere of humble service? Great will be your reward in heaven! Ideally you are not too old, but perhaps retired from a regular job so you can work irregular hours — in spurts. Some weeks there may be nothing to do but read the mail for awhile. On the busiest weeks you might be needed several hours on 2 days (or maybe 1 long day, or maybe parts of 3 days)--especially if there are 2 of you. Less time will be required if there are 3 of you. Of course for practical reasons you need to live east of the Mississippi River! (I'm not really prejudiced, just smiling.)

Word & Work Cannot Stay Afloat If It Only Has An Editor And Some Writers. Without an office worker(s), we'll be sunk! I believe the Lord wants this ministry to continue. Many readers testify to spiritual renewal and "light from above" through its pages, praise the Lord! Any volunteers? Please pray about this need, at least, whether you're eligible or not. Thank you; we appreciate you all. —avw