PIRSPECTIVE

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Church Membership[1]
The Act of Admission, Part 1
By M. A. Carling

Acts 2:41, 47
Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.
...And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

How did God add to the church daily such as should be saved? How does He do so today? In one sense of the question the answer is easy. First, God awakens a dead sinner and grants him repentance and faith. With these gifts, the sinner is enabled to savingly respond to the Gospel. Then, as described in Acts 2:41 "...they that gladly received his word were baptized:..." The word *received* comes from the Greek compound ἀποδέχομαι which means "to welcome," "to accept gladly," "to receive without reservation." Those that are saved *welcome* the Word of Truth, and as a manifestation of that welcoming attitude or belief or confession of faith, they are baptized. Then as Heb. 10:25 teaches, those who believe do not forsake to assemble themselves together with other believers. Although this sequence is readily understood, what may not be understood is the procedure or the mechanism or the act of admission that was used. God adds to His church, but how exactly does He do that in a practical, day-to-day sense within the context of the local assembly? When someone comes to our local assembly and seeks to fellowship with us and come under the authority of our church, how are we, in a biblical, practical sense to add them to our number? Is there any explicit or implicit statement or biblical principle in the Word of God from which we derive our practice of voting in members to our fellowship? If

God is the one who adds to His church, do we, as a church, have the right or authority to vote members into fellowship? To answer these questions I want to look at two things. First, the God ordained polity of a congregational government, and second, the witness of history.

Congregational Government

There are two basic principles that define congregational government. First, each local church is autonomous, being completely independent in the regulation of all its affairs, and not under the jurisdiction of any authority other than Jesus Christ himself. Second, the right to govern the affairs of the church resides in the body of its members. What were the rights and duties of the members of churches in the New Testament? How did those assemblies function? What acts did they perform? I suggest to you that New Testament churches were self-governing, and that the congregation, as a whole, was given the duty and responsibility to regulate its own members and affairs. Ultimately, all authority in heaven and earth has been given to Christ, and He is the sovereign King and Head of every local church. Christ rules his churches by his Word. Therefore, the Word of God is the absolute standard for all points concerning faith and practice in the church. In addition, Christ rules by his Spirit. The fact that Christ has been given all authority, and is the Head of the church, and has given us of His Spirit, must always be kept in mind when we discuss church governance. I want to present three statements that I believe are supported by the Word of God concerning acts that were and are the responsibility of the church. From these *acts* I believe we can derive a principle of membership and the

responsibility of the church to be active in determining who its members should be (when I use the term *congregation* in the following statements, I am referring to the members that constitute a local assembly or NT church).

#1. The Congregation Has the Right and Duty to Receive its Own Members.

Romans 14:1 Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations.

This verse teaches that it is the congregation's business to admit members into the assembly. The English pronoun *ye*, inflected in the Greek pres. imper. verb *receive* is plural denoting the members of the church at Rome. This present imperative is not directed to the ruling elders but everyone to whom Paul is writing, that is, 'To all that are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints' (Rom. 1:7). As a present imperative, the sense of 'receive' is actually 'keep on receiving' denoting a continuous action. In addition, the middle voice gives the sense, 'keep receiving to yourselves.' The saints at Rome were commanded to receive the weak in faith into the fellowship of the church and to continue in this course of action. It was, and still is, the responsibility of the entire membership to receive its own members, and yet, how is this "act of receiving" to manifest itself?

In Acts 9:26, the right of the Jerusalem church to decide who its members would be, is distinctly implied.

Acts 9:26 And when Saul [Saul of Tarsus or Paul the Apostle] was come to Jerusalem, he assayed [or attempted] to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple.

Here we see that Saul of Tarsus experienced some difficulty in being *received* by the brethren at Jerusalem until Barnabas took up his case and urged his reception.

#2 The Congregation Has Authority to Exercise Discipline.

In 1 Corinthians 5: 1-5, 13, the congregation's authority to exclude unruly members is explicitly stated. Here we find that a terrible and scandalous sin was committed by a member of the Corinthian church. A man had had inappropriate relations with his mother.

1 Cor. 5:1-5 (1) It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. (2) And ye are puffed up [arrogant], and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you. (3) For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, (4) In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, (5) To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

In vs. 4 we find that the church must be *gathered together* to exclude the incestuous man. The language speaks of congregational action; it was the church that had the authority to discipline. The expulsion of a member is an act that can be performed only in a duly called meeting of the congregation. No member in his individual capacity can do this, not even the pastor. Paul instructed the members to assemble and judge in this matter. It is worthy to note in vs. 4 that Paul assures them that when they are assembled, "the power of [the] Lord Jesus Christ" would be with them. Thus by Christ's authority, the assembled church was to act and discipline the individual.

1 Corinthians 5:12-13 (12) For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? (13) But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.

Paul urges the church to put out this wicked man as a rebuke to their indifference. The task of expelling unruly members is a duty the whole church must exercise, and yet how is this consensus to manifest itself? It is explicitly stated in 2 Cor. 2:6 that the majority passed the sentence of exclusion.

2 Cor. 2:6 Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many.

The prepositional phrase *of many* means *by the majority* in the Greek. It denotes the majority of the church membership, which implies that there may have been dissenters or abstainers. The language strongly suggests a formal gathering of the whole Corinthian church where the discipline was approved and carried out by the majority. This is an explicit statement of a majority opinion, and yet how was this opinion quantified? How did it manifest itself?

#3 The Congregation Has the Authority to Elect its Own Officers

In Acts 1:15-26, the Jerusalem church selected two candidates to replace Judas Iscariot.

Acts 1:15-23 (15) And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty,) (16) Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus. (20) For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishoprick let another take. (21) Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, (22) Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection. (23) And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias.

In vs. 15 we find a definite number of disciples. It is significant that their names were numbered because of the selection process that was about to take place. The 120 disciples (referred to in vs. 23 as *they*) chose two of their number that possessed the necessary qualifications. The verb for *appointed* in vs. 23 means *to place* or *put forward*. These two men were selected by the assembly, that is, *they placed two* or *put forward two*. This was a nomination process, and yet, how did this act of nomination manifest itself? What procedure or mechanism did they use? Although the actual selection process is not revealed to us, we can assume that both men, somehow, had the con-

sent of the assembly. And so I ask again, what procedure or what act was performed to obtain the consent of the assembly?

The church put the two candidates before the Lord in prayer. In order to determine God's will in the matter lots were cast.

Acts 1:24-26 (24) And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men [heart knower], shew whether of these two thou hast chosen, (25) That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place. (26) And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

When they *gave forth their lots*, it was tantamount to voting, and this was most likely done through the use of a pebble, or a potsherd, or a bit of wood. The action of the church at Jerusalem revealed the will of God. This is an unmistakable example of the self-governing nature of the local NT church.

We will continue in Part 2, Lord willing, to look at other examples of a local church's authority to elect its own officers. Then we will look at the practice of admitting members through the eye of Baptist History.

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[1] Information contained in this article was taken in part from the paper entitled, *The Context of Biblical Eldership*, by Dr. Paul S. Nelson. I want to acknowledge and thank him for his permission to freely use the data in that paper without having to footnote specific passages. A copy of that paper may be obtained from the author.

An Introduction to Islam
Part 5: The Prophet of Islam at Medina (2)
By Dr. Arthur L. Mellon

The Super-Tribe is established

After winning the victory over the Meccans at the "Battle of the Ditch" [or Trench], Muhammad had absolute power and authority over Medina. One of his first acts while his troops were fresh from victory was to oust the remaining Jewish tribe from Medina.

For the first three years at Medina, Muhammad attempted to convince the Jews that he was the expected Messiah. The Jews, however, rejected his claim on the basis that the Messiah was to come from Jewish stock. Muhammad, being rejected and jeered by the Jews, started systematically driving them from Medina for any provocation. Muhammad used assassins to kill those who were outspoken or had written poems against him.

In 4 A.H. / 626 A.D., Muhammad attacked the Jewish clan *Beni-Qaynuqa*, who owned the market place in Medina. The market was made up of Jewish silversmiths, goldsmiths and arms makers. Now the Muslims controlled the only market in Medina. The *Beni-Qaynuqa* were allowed to take only what they could carry away. In 4 A.H. / 626 A.D. Muhammad attacked the Jewish clan *Beni-Nadir* and drove them out of Medina. W. Montgomery Watt writes,

"They were to leave their weapons and to have nothing from the palm...By agreement with the Helpers (those Muslims who were already at Medina before Muhammad emigrated there) the houses and palm-gardens were allotted to the Emigrants (and two poor Helpers); this meant that they were now able to support themselves and were no longer dependent on the hospitality of the Helpers."[1]

The last Jewish clan, the *Beni-Qurayzah,* was not as fortunate as the other two clans. In 5 A.H. / 627 A.D. the Muslims laid siege to the *Beni-Qurayzah* for twenty-five days before they surrendered. The Muslims dug a trench in the market place where they beheaded all the Jewish males (about 700) and took the women and children captive. The Muslims now controlled all the rich palm plantations, along with the trade coming in and going out of Medina. Muhammad's final action was to conquer the Jewish settlement of Khaybar. It was a village north of Medina where many of the Jews who owned rich palm gardens were driven out. With the conquest of Khaybar, Medina was now the center of Islam; a real military and political power to be reckoned with. Muhammad had now forged the Muslims into one great

umma, *ummah*, or *ummat* [community] sometimes called a "Super-Tribe" with Muhammad as the tribal Chieftain.

The early Constitution of Medina was made up of Muslims and Jews. It was itself an *umma* [community] in a mutual non-aggression and assistance pack; now only the Muslims made up the umma.

Cyril Glasse defines the *umma* as,

"A people, a community; or a nation, in particular the "nation" of Islam which transcends ethical or political definition..."[2]

Altaf A. Kheri writes,

"He also got the opportunity of organizing his followers into a well-knit and disciplined community. Despite differences of language, color, race, country of birth, and social and economic status, they all became one ummat—brethren in faith..."[3]

Muhammad now used his power to bring the surrounding tribes under subjection by treaty or force of arms.

Sir John Gubb writes,

"...in March 628, the Apostle sent messengers to the kings and princes of surrounding territories, summoning them to accept Islam. The rulers to whom the messengers were sent are alleged to have been the Byzantine Emperor, the King of Persia, the Ruler of Egypt, and the Emperor of Abyssinia..."[4]

After eight years in Medina, Muhammad's supreme triumph had come at last, for on 11 January 8 A.H. / 630 A.D., Muhammad entered the city of Mecca with 10,000 Muslims and peacefully captured the city.

Reza Aslan wrote,

"Only six men and four women were put to death for various crimes, and no one was forced to convert to Islam, though everyone had to take an oath of allegiance never again to wage war against the Prophet."[5]

Muhammad and his son-in-law Ali destroyed the 360 idols around the Kaaba then entered the interior of the

Kaaba itself and destroyed the main idol *Hubal*. Muhammad then proclaimed the Kaaba as the "House of God," the holy place of worship for the new faith of Islam and the one true God, *Allah*.[6]

On the 8th of June 632 A.D., Muhammad died from the lingering effects of poison after the battle of Khaybar. He was poisoned by a Jewish woman, whose husband, and various family members had been killed by Muhammad's men.

Prof. Bernard Lewis writes,

"…he had established a community and a state well organized and armed, the power and prestige of which made it a dominant factor in Arabia…What then is the final significance of the career of the Arabian Prophet? For the traditional Muslim the question scarcely arises. Muhammad was the last and greatest of the Apostles of God, sent as the Seal of Prophecy to bring the final revelation of God's word to mankind."[7]

Although the people of the desert may have perceived Muhammad as the leader of a "Super Tribe," in reality it was the *umma* or *community* growing larger and larger. It had conquered an area larger than the Roman Empire in less than ten years. It was a conquest by the sword from within and without the *umma*. Of the first four Caliphs or successors of Muhammad (known as the "Rightly Guided Caliphs"), only Abu Bakr, the first Caliph, died a natural death. Umar, the second Caliph, was murdered. Uthman and Ali, the third and fourth Caliphs respectively, were also murdered. Some of these murders were committed for both personal and clan power.

Soon after Muhammad died, this Super-Tribe was in crisis. Many of the tribes rebelled against Islam and the mandatory taxes [Zakat].

Reza states,

"…in true tribal fashion, they considered Muhammad's death to have annulled their oath of allegiance."[8]

Many with ambitions for power rose up and claimed to be chosen by Allah to replace Muhammad. Abu Bakr, the first Caliph, understood the gravity of the situation and needed to act quickly to secure the unity of the Umma. Abu Bakr not only acted quickly but ruthlessly, using the might of the army of the Islamic State to put down the rebellions of apostasy. These campaigns against the rebellions were called *The Riddah [apostasy] Wars*. The campaigns were fought against any tribe refusing to pay taxes, denying the Faith, or anyone claiming to be the new prophet of Islam. Any one of these rebellious acts was considered an act of treason against Islam and the penalty for apostasy was death.

In quick succession the rebellious tribes were squelched and brought back under the Banner of Islam. Now that the rebellion was put down, Abu Bakr turned his attention to the wishes of Muhammad in bringing all nations to Islam. In 12 A.H. /634 A.D., Abu Bakr declared *Jihad* [Holy War] and sent his armies against Persia and Syria. Washington Irving gives a great account of the battles of Khalid bin Waleed.[9]

K. Ali says of Abu Bakr,

"Abu Bakr may rightly be called the savior of Islam. He not only saved Islam from disruption but "made it a world-religion by diverting the attention of the warring tribes from internal conflict to conquest and glory in the lands of Persia and of the Byzantine Empire"…It was Abu Bakr who first tried to collect the verses of the Holy Quran into one volume."[10]

For Muslims around the world, this was the start of the Golden Age of Islam and lasted well into the 13th Century. In the introduction to his book, S. E. Al-Djazairi writes,

"…the loss of the centers of Islamic power and civilization: Cordova (1236), Valencia (1238), Seville (1248), and Baghdad (1258), all fell in the space of few decades to invading forces…in Baghdad, in 1258, the palaces, colleges, and mosques were plundered and burnt…800,000 is the lowest estimate given of the number of men, women and children who were slaughtered in the streets and houses."[11]

The desire of the Muslim today is to recapture this Golden Age worldwide through *Dawah* [evangelism] or by *Jihad* [Holy War]. Their infiltration of our local and highest governmental offices has already taken place. The attempts to introduce *Shariah law* [Islamic law] into our judicial system and to weaken our Constitution can be seen in our media almost daily. Everyone needs to buy a copy of *Shariah: The Threat to America*[12] and read the truth of what is occurring in America today.

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[1] W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman* (Oxford University Press: London), 1961, pp. 150-151.

[2] Cyril Glasse, *The New Encyclopedia of Islam* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.: Walnut Creek, CA), 2002, p. 464.

[3] Altaf A. Kheri, *A Comprehensive Guide Book of Islam* (Adam Publishers & Distributors: Delhi), 1994, p. 99.

[4] Sir John Gubb, *The Life and Times of Muhammad* (Cooper Square Press: New York, NY), 2001, p. 301.

[5] Reza Aslan, *No god but God: The Origins, Evolution, and Future of Islam* (Random House Trade Paperbacks: New York), 2006, p. 106.

[6] Ibid., p. 206.

[7] Prof. Bernard Lewis, *The Arabs in History* (Goodword Books: New Delhi), 2001, p. 47.

[8] Reza Aslan, *No god but God: The Origins, Evolution, and Future of Islam* (Random House Trade Paperbacks: New York), 2006, p. 118.

[9] Washington Irving, *The Works of Washington Irving: Mahomet and His Successors* (The Co-Operative Publication Society, Inc.), 1849, pp. 273-385.

[10] K. Ali, *A Study Of Islamic History* (Adam Publishers & Distributors: New Delhi), 2003, pp. 90-91.

[11] S.E. Al-Djazairi, *The Golden Age and Decline of Islamic Civilization* (Bayt al-Hikma Press: Manchester), 2006, p. 1.

[12] *Shariah: The Threat to America: An Exercise in Competitive Analysis*, Report of Team B II, (Center for Security Policy: Washington D.C.), 2010.

Essential Texts for a Biblical Approach to Apologetics (12) Hebrews 11:3

By P. S. Nelson

Hebrews 11:3 Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

Heb. 11:3 is a very important text in regards to Christian apologetics because it establishes the crucial relationship between faith and knowledge, and declares what we understand by faith. Its structure can be divided into a simple outline; 1) *How We Understand*, and 2) *What We Understand*. In the first article we addressed how we understand.[1] In the second article we began to consider *what we understand*.[2] Our text articulates three realities we understand by faith: 1) the order, 2) the cause and 3) the material of the universe. Having already dealt with the order of the universe, this article will deal with the cause and the material of the universe.

The Cause of the Universe

Next, we consider the cause of the world's framing. The author to the Hebrews states, "the worlds were framed by the word of God." In the NT Greek, the phrase "by the word of God" is ῥήματι θεοῦ. The word ῥήματι denotes that which is spoken or uttered. Thus ῥήματι θεου is God's utterance. God framed the worlds by his command! God summoned space, time, and matter into existence by divine fiat.

In Rom. 4:17, the apostle Paul reveals something of the nature of God. He says of God, "who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were." In other words, God calls into being what does not exist. Now, it is true, that Paul is not speaking of the creation of the world in Rom. 4:7, but rather of the hope that Abraham would have a son. But this description of God can be applied in general. It belongs to the very nature of God, that he is able to summon into being what does not exist. By God's sovereign will, he called the universe into existence. This is the cause of cre-

ation and *the framing of the worlds*.

The first chapter of Genesis vividly describes the cause of creation, "And God said, Let there be light: and there was light" (Gen. 1:3). That was the first day of creation, and the five subsequent days of creation are all prefaced with "and God said." By uttering the word of his power, God called all things into being. Ps. 33:8-9 says, "Let all the earth fear the LORD: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast."

Ultimately, God's will was the cause of the universe. He does all things after the council of his own will. All of creation was but the execution of His will, and its purpose was for His glory. Romans 11:36 says, "For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen." And again, "All things were created by him and for him" (Col. 1:17).

Embarrassingly, the postulate of evolution is devoid of a cause for the universe. The best it can offer is the Big Bang Theory. Evolutionists try to mislead us on the origin of the universe by taking us back 15 billion years in time to what they say was the "Big Bang," where all the matter of the universe was condensed into a single, infinitesimal point (infinitesimally small and infinitely dense) and then exploded with such immensity and at roughly the speed of light that the universe was created. That was the beginning of space and time and according to this theory, the universe has been expanding ever since. However, the Big Bang Theory is not an explanation of the cause of the universe. It is but a meaningless description of an endless chain of cause and effect, devoid of a first cause. And if the universe does not have a first cause it must necessarily be self-existent.

Again, we see the evolutionist ascribing divinity to the universe in order to avoid incoherency in their explanation of its cause. To the evolutionist, the universe exists only for itself, without ultimate cause or purpose. Nothing exists outside it that could have been its cause. Nothing existed before it that

could have been its cause. Therefore the evo-lutionist must ascribe the divine attribute of self-existence to the universe. It is a faith commitment.

The Material of the Universe

Finally in the latter part of Heb. 11:3 we are told, "so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." The Greek verb translated "made" is γίνομαι which denotes coming into existence, or coming into being. In translating the text from the original language, the negative adverb "not" [μὴ] can be placed either before the verb "made" or before the participle "appear." The better sense is given when "not" is placed before "appear"; "that which is seen was made out of things which do <u>not</u> appear." Also, in the Grk, we find that εἰς τὸ occurs with the perfect infinitive of γίνομαι (to come into existence), a grammatical construction that denotes actual result. The things "which are seen" with our eyes came into existence out of things invisible, and are the result of things that do not appear. This directly implies creation *ex nihilo*, i.e., creation out of nothing. *Ex nihilo* refers to the material world and the absolute absence of any pre-existent material. Before the beginning, there was nothing outside of God, and hence there was no pre-existent material from which He would construct the universe. We understand this to be infallibly true by faith. The material that this universe consists of is not eternal, but had a beginning, and this beginning can only be explained by the creative power of God.

Again, let us critique the evolutionist's worldview. First, we need to understand what *matter* is. Matter is the technical term for the substance that makes up the physical universe. It includes all physical entities such as particles, light and energy; elements, atoms, protons and neutrons, subatomic particles, etc. – all these make up what we would call *matter*. The common definition of matter in science is, "any substance that has mass and occupies space." And the universe is defined as the sum total of all matter and energy.

Secondly, evolution is part of a materialistic philosophy where *matter* is ultimate reality. To them, *matter* is the only objective reality, and hence everything in the universe is derived from *matter*. Matter is sacred; for all of reality exists totally within the realm of the material universe. By faith, the evolutionist believes there exists only one substance – *matter* – and everything in the universe is ultimately explicable in terms of material properties and interactions.

But where did the initial material of the universe come from? This is the first great dilemma of the theory of evolution that neither science nor philosophy can solve. The explicitness of Heb. 11:3 concerning creation out of what is invisible, suggests that the writer had other philosophical views in mind he desired to repudiate. Creation *ex nihilo* was contrary to the ancient philosophers, and is indeed contrary to modern day philosophy and science. There is a philosophical maxim which is absolutely necessary for the idea of science, *ex nihilo nihil fit, "*out of nothing comes nothing" or "out of nothing, nothing can be made." This axiom is universal and non-negotiable in science. However, evolutionists arrogantly point us to the Big Bang Theory and think they have given us a sufficient answer. But the Big Bang Theory presupposes the pre-existence of *matter*. You cannot have a "big bang" without *matter* already existing. The Big Bang Theory only explains what happened to *matter*, not where *matter* came from. So from the very get-go, evolutionists have a philosophical dilemma.

There are only two possible explanations for the existence of *matter*. Either the material of which the physical universe is composed was created and had a beginning, or it is self-existent and possesses the divine attribute of eternality. Therefore it is necessary for evolutionists to fabricate another pantheistic deity, a metaphysical presupposition, in order to avoid making their worldview incoherent. They must ascribe to *matter* the divine attribute of eternality. Because outside of creation, there is no other rational explanation. It is a presupposition held to by faith. It is

noteworthy that Stephen Hawking readily admits, "an expanding universe [the big bang theory] does not preclude a creator." This admission reveals a lack of faith in the eternality of *matter*. The late atheistic philosopher Antony Flew said, "Why should we not simply accept the existence of the universe, as theists simply accept the existence of their God"[3] He too, readily admits it is a matter of faith.

The British philosopher Herbert Spencer, a renowned proponent of evolution in the 19th century, has rightly defined atheism as the religious presupposition of the eternality and self-existence of matter and force. Faith commitment to the self-existence of *matter* necessarily makes evolution an atheistic religion because it excludes the existence of any personal God that transcends the physical universe. With this presupposition alone the Creator-God of Scripture is completely shut out of all reality. By faith, the evolutionist believes the eternality of *matter*. It is a religious commitment. The bottom line is, evolution is not scientific, but rather a religious worldview masquerading as science.

When God revealed himself to Moses at the burning bush (Ex. 3:14), he revealed himself as the self-existent God, "I am that I am" [אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה].[4] In the Hebrew, the "to be" verb is in the imperfect tense denoting a continuing reality. His timeless and eternal existence is emphasized by the repetition of the verb. As self-existent and absolute, God's being is completely independent of his creation. He alone is eternal, self-contained, self-sufficient and dependent upon nothing. He is the transcendent Creator. It necessarily follows that all of creation is wholly dependent upon him for its existence and being. It is God alone who governs this universe and "upholds all things by the word of his power" (Heb. 1:3). He is the ultimate ground of reality; everything else derives from his creative power. The Bible says that man "lives, and moves and has his being" in God (Acts 17:28). The God of Scripture is the Creator of heaven and earth.

Conclusion

The doctrine of creation asserted in Heb. 11:3 establishes a Creator-creature relationship between God and man. The reality of creation brings man face-to-face with God. If God is Creator, then we are subject to him as his creatures. There is an ethical relationship to him. Man becomes accountable to God for his sin. Man becomes accountable to God for breaking His moral law, and stands guilty before God without excuse (Rom. 1:20). He knows he is under the judgment of God (Rom. 1:32). When he studies the universe, the wrath of God is revealed to him. The apostle Paul writes, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men" (Rom. 1:18). This is inescapable because man is made in the image God, and a sense of deity is indelibly inscribed on his heart.[5] Evolutionists are confronted with the witness of God every time they look up into the heavens. For "the heavens declare the glory of God" (Ps. 19:1).

Therefore, there is an ethical motivation for subscribing to the philosophy of evolution. Evolutionists must suppress the truth of the Creator-creature distinction (Rom. 1:18). They must deny Biblical creation at all costs. For to admit it, is to make themselves accountable to God. They would seek to deny God, so they don't have to be accountable to him and face the reality of sin. Evolution is not science; it is an atheistic worldview that seeks to deny the God of creation. It is not an objective approach to scientific facts; there is no neutrality about it.

Not too long ago, Stephen Hawking, hailed as being the most brilliant man in the world, made a very profound assessment of the existence of the universe: "If we can find the answer to that [why we and the universe exist] it would be the triumph of human reason – for then we should know the mind of God."[6] I have news for Dr. Hawking; we can know the mind of God and we can think God's thoughts after him, for he has revealed himself to us in his Word. Do you believe in the God of the Bible, or in the pantheistic gods of evolution?

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[1] See author's article in *PIRSpective*, vol. 4, issue 2.

[2] See author's article in *PIRSpective*, vol. 4, issue 4.

[3] Flew, Antony, *Stephen Hawking and the Mind of God* (http://www.infidels.org/library/modern/antony_flew/hawking.html)

[4] See author's article in *PIRSpective*, vol. 2, issue 2.

[5] See author's article in *PIRSpective*, vol. 3, issue 3.

[6] Hawking, Stephen, *A Brief History of Time*, (Bantam), 1988, p. 193.

Exegetical Notes:
Heresy and English Grammar

By Dr. W. R. Downing

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Acts 2:38 ...Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...

Romans 3:22 Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:

There are certain biblical blunders which are characteristic of the cults, and even at times of some otherwise evangelical Christians.[1] Some are given to a "proof-text mentality," basing their heretical teachings on a few isolated passages of Scripture. These are usually taken out of context, and thus made to teach errors which are contrary to the analogy of faith, i.e., the coherent or self-consistent teaching of Scripture as it bears upon any given statement or verse.[2] Many hold to a "Chapter-and-Verse" mentality, not understanding that these divisions are not inspired, and often obscure rather than elucidate the meaning.[3] Some verse and even chapter divisions occur in the middle of a thought (e.g., Eph. 2:1).

There are some who hold that the English Bible and therefore the English grammar are sufficient for any given doctrine. While our English Bible is the Word of God in the English Language, its grammar is not inspired as is the grammar of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures. The English Bible remains at best a version of a translation.[4] The following three examples aptly illustrate the insufficiency of the English language to convey the fullness of Divine truth and the error or outright heresy which proceeds from applying the rules of English grammar to the Greek New Testament:

First, one of the major proof-texts for Russelites[5] or "Jehovah's Witnesses" is John 1:1, with the focal-point being the final independent clause, "And the Word was God"[...καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος]. This, they mistranslate as, "And the word was a god," thus denying the deity of our Lord. This is simply an instance of applying the rules of English grammar to the Greek language. English possesses both the definite article, "the," and the indefinite article, "a" or "an." The Greek does not possess an indefnite article. The Greek in this clause does not have the definite article; it is anarthrous.[6] Using the rules of English grammar, *The New World Translation*[7] mistranslates this "a god." The presence [arthrous use] or absence [anarthrous use] of the definite article in Κοινή Greek[8] is peculiar or idiomatic. "The presence of the article identifies; the absence of the article qualifies," i.e., the absence of the definite article [anarthrous use] stresses character or quality, the very opposite of the mistranslation: "And the Word as to its [his] very essence is Deity."[9] This is a concluding clause in the opening tripartite statement of John 1:1.

"In [the] beginning was the Word"
[Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος]
The Eternity of the Word

"And the Word was with God"
[καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν]
The Equality of the Word

"And the Word was God"
[καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος]
The Deity of the Word

Second, the Campbellites, those of the "Church of Christ" Church use Acts 2:38 to teach that "Repentance plus Baptism = Salvation." One of their slogans is that "We meet the Blood in the Water," holding that water baptism is essential to salvation. Absolutely necessary to their argument is the fact that "repentance" and "baptism" are compound verbs in the English text of Acts 2:38 ["Repent and be baptized"]. This is pressed and often diagramed on a chalkboard during public debates. However, these two terms are not equal in the Greek text [Μετανοήσατε καὶ βαπτισθήτω ἕκαστος ὑμῶν ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν]. The force is on the command to repent, and the mention of baptism is not a command.[10] Further, the idea that repentance and baptism are essential "for the remission of sins" because the preposition "for" [εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν] always means "in order to" the forgiveness of sins, does not necessarily stand. The preposition εἰς may have several connotations, such as "at," "with a view to," or even "because of."[11]

Third, some within evangelical Christianity hold that we are saved "by the faith of Christ," i.e., that in some way it is his faith which actually saves us. When asked how this can be or what our Lord believed in, we are told that "He had faith in his own work." This, again, is simply applying the rules of English grammar to the Greek and not only obscuring the meaning, but inventing an error which is irrational at best and greatly misleading at worst. An idiom of the Κοινή Greek is the objective genitive,[12] and the phrase should be translated "faith in Christ," which is also in accord with the analogy of faith.

Care must be taken to be consistent or coherent in our approach to the Scriptures, and this means gaining an understanding of the original languages to avoid such errors. Most error or heresy begins by making relatively simple mistakes which in reality twist the meaning of Scripture, engender error and result in heresy.

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[1] While it remains true that no one person seems to possess all the truth, and errors may occur even in the very best of minds, a working knowledge of the original languages is one of the best preventatives for

error.

2 The term "Analogy of Faith" refers to the coherency or self-consistency of Scripture. As the very Word of God inscripturated, Scripture cannot and does not contradict itself.

3 The chapter divisions in the English Bible were made the in Twelfth century, probably by Stephen Langton (c. 1150–1228), Archbishop of Canterbury. The present verse divisions were first made in 1550 by Robert Estienne (1503–1559) in his publication of the Greek Stephanus Text.

4 The English language, despite its modern dominance, is woefully inadequate to convey Divine truth. There are numerous constructions, emphases and nuances in both the Greek and Hebrew languages which simply cannot be transferred into the English—and these have a great bearing on the meaning and force of any given text.

5 Some hold that Charles Taze Russell was *not* the founder of the Jehovah's Witnesses, although there is a connection between them. The term "Russellites," however, is commonly used for "Jehovah's Witnesses."

6 The presence of the Greek article is termed the arthrous or articular use; the absence of the Greek article is termed the anarthrous use. Both the presence and absence of the definite article are very significant, unlike the English language.

7 The New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures is the official "Bible" of the Russellites and is published by the Watchtower and Tract Society, their official publishing house. This "Bible" is anti–Trinitarian.

8 Κοινή [common] Greek was conversational, i.e., the language of the marketplace, differing from Classical or literary Greek. The era of the Κοινή extended from approximately 300 BC to 300 AD; the Greek New Testament was written at the very zenith of the Κοινή.

9 ...καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος. In a sentence or independent clause with an equitive verb [ἦν], the word with the def. art. [arthrous or articular] is the subject [ὁ λόγος] and the word without the article [anarthrous] is either the predicate nominative or adjective [θεὸς]. In this statement the word θεὸς is in the emphatic position and is anarthrous, also stressing character or quality, and thus we translate in the context of the entire verse, "...and the Word as to His very essence was Deity"–the very opposite from the Russellite mistranslation.

10 Μετανοήσατε καὶ βαπτισθήτω ἕκαστος ὑμῶν. The division is between Μετανοήσατε, an aor. act, 2 pers. pl. imp. ["All of you urgently and immediately Repent!"] and καὶ βαπτισθήτω ἕκαστος ὑμῶν, aor. 3 pers. sing. imp. ["and let be baptized each one of you"]. The second is not a command, nor is it plural, but permissive, in the singular, and thus much less in force. The English translation obscures this very necessary distinction.

11 The prep. εἰς occurs 1,865 times in the Greek New Testament, and must be translated in this context according to the analogy of faith. Other translations can be "unto" (Matt. 3:11. John's baptism was "unto repentance," i.e., these were baptized because they had repented, not "in order to" repentance), or even "at" or "because of" (Jn. 11:32, the people repented at or because of the preaching of Jonah).

12 The Greek has its share of idiomatic expressions. One is the objective genitive, i.e., "when the noun in the genitive receives the action, being related as the object to the verbal idea contained in the noun modified." E.g., "the preaching of Jesus Christ" [τὸ κήρυγμα Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ] (Rom. 16:25). It is not our Lord who is preaching, but rather the one being preached about. Mk. 11:22, "Have faith in God" [ἔχετε πίστιν θεοῦ], i.e., it is not God's faith, but our faith in God, i.e., God is the object of our faith. E.g., Rom. 10:2, "have a zeal of God" [ζῆλον θεοῦ], not God's zeal, but the traditional religious zeal of the Jews. Cf. Rom. 3:3, "make the faith of God of none effect" [τὴν πίστιν τοῦ θεοῦ καταργήσει], it is faith in God, not God's faith, which is made of none effect. The importance of this idiomatic use is seen in such passages as: Rom. 3:22; Gal. 2:16, 20; 3:22; Eph. 3:12; Phil. 3:9. In each of these passages, the KJV reads, "...the faith of Christ." The correct translation of the objective genitive is "faith in Christ." For a full and complete discussion of the objective genitive, see: Dana–Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, pp. 72–83. See also: A. T. Robertson, *Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, pp. 491–551; Blass–Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, pp. 89–100; J. H. Moulton, *Grammar of New Testament Greek*, I, pp.72–74; III, pp. 207, 210–212; IV, p. 84; C. F. D. Moule, *An Idiom–Book of NewTestament Greek*, pp. 39–41; and Stanley E. Porter, *Idioms of*

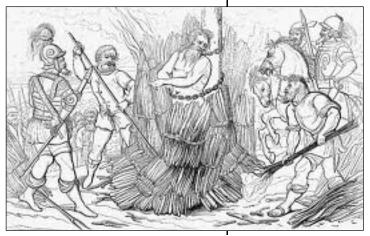## Images from Church History

Jerome of Prague
(1379 – May 30, 1416)

Jerome was born in Bohemia (modern day Czech Republic) in 1379 and graduated from the University of Prague in 1398. He later studied at Oxford where he first became familiar with the reformist teachings of John Wyclif.

He was a philosopher, theologian, university professor, and church reformer who dedicated his life to eradicate those church doctrines and dogmas he found to be corrupt.

His radical ideas eventually brought about his death by execution as a heretic to the church, but became a martyr for the Protestant Reformation and followers of Jan Hus (known as Hussites).[1]

1 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jerome_of_Prague

The death of Jerome

http://www.exclassics.com/foxe/foxe099.gif