

1 *Introduction*

If A Later Prophet Diminishes A Prior Prophet, He Is A False Prophet

The Bible commands us in Deuteronomy 4:2 to not “diminish” any of the words of prior Prophets. Thus, this prohibits adding prophets who contradict *earlier* prophets.

For example, because Jesus and Moses came before Paul, the principle of *priority* applies so that Jesus’ and Moses’ words are to be used to test the *validity* of Paul’s words for inspiration.

The Bible also tells us to ignore prophets with signs and wonders that “come to pass” but whose words contradict or “diminish” the earlier validated prophets. If they “seduce us from following” the commands of God through His earlier prophets, God commands us to treat them as false prophets despite true “signs and wonders.” (Deut. 13:1-5.) (For more detailed discussion, see the chapter entitled “Must We Apply The Bible’s Tests For a True Prophet to Paul?” on page 37.)

Jesus was frequently concerned about the “signs and wonders” prophets to come who would mislead Christians. (Matt. 7:15-23, *viz.*, v. 22; 24:11, 24.) Jesus warns of these false prophets again in Mark 13:22-23. They “shall show signs and wonders to *seduce*, if possible, even the elect.” Jesus’ words are quoting Deuteronomy 13:1-5, and thus He intended us to apply that passage to discern true from false prophets.

Jesus in Matthew 7:15-24 refers again to these same “signs and wonders” prophets. Jesus says He will deny He ever knew them even though on Judgment Day they are able to say they did “marvelous works in Your name,” and many “prophecies in Your name.” (Matt. 7:22.) Jesus rejects them because they are workers of “*anomia*.” (Matt. 7:23.) The cor-

rect translation choice for the Greek word *anomia* is not *lawlessness*. These signs and wonders prophets obviously come with the appearance of an angel of light, doing amazing signs and wonders, and even true prophecy. They are not going to be notorious workers of *lawlessness*. Such sinners could not deceive “if possible, the elect.” Rather, Jesus’ real meaning could only be the second Greek dictionary definition of *anomia* which is “negator of the Law (of Moses).”¹ The false prophet who will do many miracles and signs and wonders *in Jesus’ name* will be one who is a “negator of the Law (of Moses).” Jesus is warning us that this false prophet to come is one who says he is a Christian, has sign and wonders, and preaches Christ, but he will be a “negator of the Law of Moses.”

Thus, for example, even if Paul came with true signs and wonders, this does not make him a true prophet if his words *diminish the Law of Moses*, or otherwise contradict earlier validated prophets, such as Moses.

These are not radical propositions. What is radical is *looking in the direction of Paul* to see whether he can be validated Biblically. Mainstream Christian commentators say, for example, that the prophetic words of Moses and Jesus must be used to validate any ‘holy book’ or person. For example, Muncaster states:

Importance of prophecy is stressed in the Bible with commands to:

1. *Test everything...including ‘holy books’ and people.*
2. *Use prophecy...to determine if something is from God.*²

1. See “Why Anomia Means Negator of Mosaic Law” on page 60.

2. Ralph O. Muncaster, *The Bible Prophecy Miracles: Investigation of the Evidence* (Mission Viejo: Strong Basis to Believe, 1996) at 5.

However, Mr. Muncaster would likely object that the Bible's test can ever be applied to test Paul's validity. In effect, most Christians operate on the assumption that the Bible's prophetic words can only test those with whom we disagree. Most Christians appear to believe if we like someone's doctrine and we assume it is Holy and from God, we do not apply the Bible's test to validate them as a new prophet. Yet, this practice of Christians is itself a violation of God's command to test everything by the word of God. We must compare what Paul said to the words of every verified prophet that *preceded* Paul. To survive God's tests, Paul must not only have true prophecy in God's name of unlikely events, he must never seduce us not to follow a single command God gave previously. God commands us to be able to defend Paul's inclusion in the Bible as much as any other writer.

Canon History: Additions to Scripture Have Not Been Scrutinized

We often take for granted that every book in the New Testament has been scrutinized by some responsible council or group to satisfy a Bible-based test for inspiration. Yet, it is mere presupposition with no basis in history.

The first *recognized* semi-**official** New Testament list of books assembled by anyone took place in 397 A.D.³ That year, three African bishops agreed on a list identical to our current list. (See Appendix B: *How the Canon Was Formed*.) The list was expressly stated to be tentative. The bishops

3. Neither Catholics nor Protestants agree the list from the Council of Laodicea of 363 A.D. is authentic. The evidence is that it was authentic, in my view. (See www.jesuswordsonly.com.) However, if you go by the traditional view, then the first church-wide council of any denomination to determine a list and promulgate it was not until the Roman Catholic Council of Trent in the mid-1500s.

wanted to consult with the bishop across the sea (*i.e.*, apparently Rome). These three bishops did not tell us the criteria they used to form their list. It is a mystery. They did not purport to say this list was true for all of Christendom.

Moreover, there was no long tradition that accepted their list of 397 A.D. The prior *informal* lists and even the earliest printed canon (Codex Sinaiticus, late 300s) included Christian writings that were inexplicably dropped in 397 A.D. In particular, this is true regarding the book entitled the *Shepherd of Hermas*. It previously had been identified closely with canon for 200 years. It was dropped in 397 A.D. (This is not to suggest it is canon. It lacks any *legitimizing* prophecy.) Thus, the 397 A.D. list suddenly *dropped* previously accepted books, but without any explanation.

The 397 A.D. list also *added* items previously routinely ignored. In particular, most of the ‘canon’ lists prior to 397 A.D. excluded Second Peter as an obvious *pseudograph*. For some unexplained reason, these three bishops in 397 A.D. suddenly accepted Second Peter. Second Peter still appears in our common New Testament despite its extremely unlikely authenticity. Even Calvin (a Reformation leader from the 1500s) said it was a forgery. Calvin provided a very elaborate analysis to prove this.⁴

The next attempt to determine canon was in 1522. Luther published a version of the New Testament (NT) with a commentary introducing the entire set. Even though Luther’s NT list simply adopted the list from 397 A.D., Luther declared two books uninspired. This was explained in his 1522 *Preface to the New Testament*. These two supposedly uninspired works were the Book of Revelation and the Epistle of James. His reasons had a lot to do with his adherence to Pauline doctrine. (For discussion on James, see “Luther’s Admission of James’ Direct Conflict with Paul” on page 247. For detailed discussion on Luther’s view of Revelation, see page 370.)

4. “The Special Question of Second Peter” on page xix of Appendix B.

□

of Trent finally affirmed this 397 A.D. list as the ‘official’ list, it likewise gave no justification other than tradition and its own authority.

Thus, there has never been any responsible voice that employed Biblically-mandated criteria to discern why *should* any book of the New Testament be included. When we examine the lists leading up to 397 A.D., this is even more evident. Books are attached one day and excluded the next. There is neither rhyme nor reason. As Ludlow notes in *The Unity of Scripture* (2003):

With regard to most books it was a question of [the church] explaining why it had what it had, rather than deciding on what it *should* have. No council sat down to choose the texts according to *some pre-established set of criteria*, just as a selection committee might decide on the sort of person they want to fill a post, before interviewing the candidates. Rather, there is some sense in which the canon chose (or formed) the Church, rather than the Church chose (or formed) the canon....[W]hat seems to be happening...is that the Church is *formulating reason or explanations for why it has what it had, not criteria for choosing what it should have in the future.*⁵

This is how we ended up today with the notion that the sole basis for what we decide is Scripture is *how* it sounds to us. Here is the official *Orthodox Presbyterian Church’s* (OPC) sole explanation of how we know something is Scripture from God.

5. Morwenna Ludlow, “Criteria of Canonicity and the Early Church” in John Barton and Michael Wolter (eds.), *The Unity of the Scripture and the Diversity of the Canon* (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2003) at 69-93.

Q. 4. How doth it appear that the Scriptures are the Word of God?

A. The Scriptures manifest themselves to be the Word of God, by their majesty and purity; by the consent of all the parts, and the scope of the whole, which is to give all glory to God; by their light and power to convince and convert sinners, to comfort and build up believers unto salvation: but the Spirit of God bearing witness by and with the Scriptures in the heart of man, is alone able fully to persuade it that they are the very word of God.⁶

This is a completely impoverished explanation. This Catechism lesson on how to determine Scripture offers no Bible-based justification for adding to God's words. It is all how it sounds to us, *e.g.*, it appears to us to have power to 'convert sinners.' In the next section, we will see the reason for this weak explanation. We will discover why no Christian can say prophetic inspiration was ever the sole grounds for *everything* we included in the New Testament. This embarrassing fact is what led to this above deficient explanation of how Scripture is determined.

What the Lists Prove About Criteria for Canon

The history of canon formation, detailed in Appendix B, demonstrates clearly that no coherent criteria was ever being used to assess *what is* and *what is not* approved reading in churches. Up through 397 A.D., texts come and go without explanation. Some are discarded for wrong reasons at various

6. *The Larger Catechism of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church* (68th General Assembly of the OPC) at <http://www.opc.org/documents/wlc1-50.html> (accessed in 2005).

points. Completely erroneous letters, such as Second Peter, somehow worm their way into our current canon. Works such as The Epistle to the Hebrews are ascribed to no one, then to Paul, then not to Paul. It is ignored, then accepted, then ignored again, but then finally accepted.

Applying the Biblical-test for inspiration is never explicitly done in the period leading up to 397 A.D. The focus is on genuineness—whether the author identified truly authored the work. Yet, no test of whether the work passes the Biblical-test of the prophetic is ever considered.

With genuineness the key issue, we then find some books are rejected as non-genuine on flimsy arguments.

For example, politics seem to enter the fray regarding Revelation by John. It is easily accepted as genuine in the first three lists beginning from 170 A.D. to 325 A.D. However, then Eusebius raises doubts sometime around 325 A.D. The Book of Revelation is dropped at the Council of Laodicea in 363 A.D. (assuming the records are accurate), only to be re-attached in 397 A.D. without any explanation.

Proof of the lack of any consistent criteria of acceptance is also evident from looking at the early list from the *Muratorian Fragment* (170 A.D.-350 A.D.). This list included the *Apocalypse of Peter*. No one considered that work afterward as canon. Another example is that in 380 A.D., the Syrian Apostolic Canon adopted a blatant forgery—the *Constitution of the Apostles*. No one else gives it any credibility then or now. Why do they come and go? No one knows.

Furthermore, the lack of institutional memory affected the evaluation of various books' genuineness. For example, the Epistle of Jude was included in the very early Muratorian list of 170/350 A.D., but then is repeatedly disputed in the 300s period on grounds that Jude was not cited earlier. Yet now we know it was in the early Muratorian list itself. *James* was disputed on the same ground, but we find

the ancient presbyters did cite it early on. Thus, books are being discarded for brief periods as non-genuine for wrong reasons, showing a lack of institutional record-keeping.

From this history of canon-formation in Appendix B, it is abundantly and shamefully evident there is a lack of diligence about determining what is genuine. Nor is anyone paying any attention to the issue of inspiration. They are preoccupied with determining what is genuine, and not doing a very good job on that score either.

This failure to focus on the question of inspiration is even more evident when lists are set forth in council rulings, such as Laodicea in 363 A.D. or Carthage in 397 A.D. Despite their semi-official nature, no explanation is attached to the otherwise long council records purporting to explain why the list is true. There is never any defense to justify the decision.

How Can The Question of Inspiration Be Ignored?

It is hard to imagine how this issue of inspiration has been ignored for Paul's letters. It is easy to understand for John and Peter who do not claim inspiration in their letters. Likewise, Jude does not make any claim to inspiration. Nor does James make such a claim in his epistle. Nor does Barnabas who authored Hebrews claim inspiration. Luke, for his part, disavows affirmatively he is writing under inspiration. Instead, Luke affirms he has investigated like an historian the events involving Jesus. (Luke 1:1-4.) As the *Catholic Encyclopedia's* article on "Canon of the New Testament" states, the New Testament lacks "a strong self-witness to Divine inspiration."⁷ That is to put it mildly.

7. <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03274a.htm> (last accessed 8/27/05).

However, Paul is a different case. He certainly repeatedly stakes out a claim that the *Lord directly gave him a message*. (E.g., 1 Cor. 14:37; 1 Tim. 2:11; 1 Cor. 2:13; 1 Thess. 4:1-2,8; 1 Thess. 2:13; Eph. 4:17. cf. 1 Cor. 7:25, 40.)

If the intent in putting the NT together early on was simply as a *reading list*, then we can understand why the issue of inspiration was not being addressed. That appears to be the *real explanation* for the origin of the canon: it was a reading list. However, Paulinist⁸ scholars insist there was something more implied in the lists other than that they were to be read in church. Yet, is there any evidence that the issue of the Bible-test for inspiration was addressed *ever* in the history of *any* Christian denomination?

No Scholarly Discussion Anywhere of Inspiration

With the exception of Eusebius around 325 A.D. saying Jesus' words on the fall of the temple of Jerusalem prove Jesus was a Prophet, there is never any discussion why we should believe anyone else in the NT is inspired. Never once will you find a discussion based on the Bible-test of inspiration (Deut. ch. 12-13, 18) why Paul, James, Jude, the author of Hebrews, Peter or John in their Epistles would be treated as *inspired* (as opposed to edifying). No one thinks it is worth a moment's attention to ask for prophetic credentials.

Thus, Battifol, a Catholic scholar, correctly recognizes "the Judaic notion of inspiration did not at first enter into the selection of the Christian Scriptures." Later, he explains the NT writings which we accept today were merely

8. A Paulinist does not mean every Christian who believes Paul is inspired. Rather, a Paulinist is someone whose doctrines conform to Paul, not Jesus, when there is an apparent conflict.

“assimilated” as “Scripture” with the ‘Old Testament,’ without any explanation.⁹ Thus, the most fundamental question of all has never been addressed anywhere in church history!

This error is then perpetuated today by scholars who realize one can never find any early or later analysis for the lists being developed.¹⁰ They resort to claims that the books of the New Testament are somehow self-authenticating. These works’ own existence allegedly forced themselves upon us by some magical power. This is the view of Metzger, whose book on canon formation is regarded as the modern standard of how to defend the formation of the Christian canon. Yet this is his ultimate reasoning:

In the most basic sense neither individuals nor councils created the canon; instead they came to perceive and acknowledge the ***self-authenticating quality of these writings***, which imposed themselves as canonical upon the church.¹¹

9. “Canon of the New Testament,” in the *Catholic Encyclopedia* (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03274a.htm>)(last accessed 8/27/05).

10. The article “Canon of the New Testament,” in the *Catholic Encyclopedia* is most illuminating in this regard. One can see various theories put forth *today* why a work was accepted as New Testament canon. Some say it is because the work can be linked to an apostle as the voice behind the writing. But this is not true in Jude’s case, nor in Barnabas’ work (*Hebrews*), nor of Luke. In light of this, we are left concluding the criterion must have been a work’s “evangelical character.” We are thus reduced to a completely subjective criterion: does it fit the evangelistic message we prefer? This is the worst reason to accept something as canon. The only thing never considered is to ask whether a Biblical standard for inspiration was applied. If we asked the proper question, the answer comes back in the negative. Everyone knows several NT works *on their face* must no longer be regarded as inspired because they lack any validating prophecy.

11. Metzger, *The New Testament: Its Background, Growth and Content* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1965) at 276.

Thus, Metzger says the New Testament works “imposed themselves” upon the community as authentic without any testing.

However, the Bible teaches us that books do not impose themselves on us as authentic. We are duty bound to test them, under Deuteronomy 4:2 and chs. 12 & 13. There is a complete absence in Christian history of even once such a rigorous testing ever being applied to explain the selection of any current NT book.

What Metzger regards as the books imposing themselves on us, as if they had a life and force of their own, is simply one way to describe a credulous church’s shameful behavior of accepting works without testing their prophetic authority.

Books do not authenticate or impose themselves. Rather, a community decides, by testing or by laziness, that books are accepted. Our Christian history has all the earmarks of a lazy church who disobeyed Jesus’ warnings to beware of false prophets to come. We were duty bound to authenticate the works being submitted for canon approval using the Biblical-tests of Deuteronomy chapters 4, 12, 13, and 18. Metzger’s statement thus becomes an excuse for the most fundamental omission of all by the early church: testing what is canon by the Bible’s own test.

*Jesus’ Words Alone Pass the Test of
Canonicity*

However, if we apply the test we were supposed to apply, it turns out that Jesus alone passes the rigorous test of Deuteronomy ch. 12, 13, and 18. Jesus’ prophecy of the fall of the Temple of Jerusalem (Matt. 24:2; Luke 21:33)¹² and of

12. For reasons explained elsewhere, the Hebrew Matthew was likely written before 65 A.D. See page ix of Appendix B.

His own resurrection (John 13:19) make His words that of a prophet satisfying the tests of Deuteronomy. This is true whether His words are in the gospels or the book of Revelation. All Jesus' words are therefore inspired. (And more so because of *who* He truly was.) We trust the Holy Spirit then inspired the twelve apostles to recollect Jesus' words accurately, as Jesus told them the Spirit would do. (John 14:26.) Thus, the apostolic gospels are all reliable Scripture.

However, no other New Testament figure than Jesus uttered fulfilled prophecy "in the name of the Lord" of highly unlikely events. That includes Paul.

Yet, when someone proposes to treat Jesus' Words Only as the inspired part of the New Testament, they receive resistance. Why?

No one would mind treating Jesus as the sole inspired prophet of canon if it meant pushing aside writings other than Paul. None of the epistles of John or Peter suggest new doctrines that would be lost if they were eliminated *as inspired canon*. So the resistance has a different explanation.

The Authority of the Twelve Apostles (Of Which Paul Is Not Numbered in the Bible).

Let me pause to note here the authority retained by the *epistles* of John and Peter, and the bishop-*letters* of James and Jude. First, Jesus taught us to heed the *twelve* apostles' words as authoritative messengers (*apostoli* means *messenger*) rather than as teachers. He would not even let them call themselves *teachers*. (Matt. 23:8-11.) But they carried a very important message. Jesus, speaking to the *twelve*, warned that whoever would not "receive you, nor hear you" shall be in danger of judgment. (Matt. 10:14-15.) The message they carried was so important that if rejected, the listener would be in danger of judgment. Jesus said the message they were to deliver was to teach the nations "to observe (*tereo*) all things whatsoever I commanded you." (Matt. 28:19-20.) Thus, we heed the twelve apostles not because every word from them is

as an inspired prophet. Rather, it is because they are putting forth the teachings and commandments of *the* inspired Prophet.

Then this command of Jesus to heed the twelve applies to their appointed bishops, such as James and Jude when they too carried the teachings of Jesus.

The twelve apostles had a second role given by Jesus: they were judges. In this capacity, their judicial decisions are binding in heaven. (Matt. 16:19.) This did not extend to the twelve apostles a constant prophetic authority. Their every word did not become thereby *inspired* legislation from God. We would say a judge who starts to legislate is an activist judge violating the scope of his office's authority. Likewise, the twelve apostles did not have authority to *legislate* merely because they had judicial authority to 'bind and loose.'

Let's review this with some care because it has been a source of misunderstanding by Catholics and Protestants.

The twelve apostles had authority from Jesus to "bind and loose." (Matt. 16:19.) This is a clear reference to the power of a judge. In court, a judge could let go of a criminal defendant by ordering the "loosing" of a leather strap. A judge could also order his arrest and condemnation by "binding" him with such a strap. This fits exactly the role Jesus said the apostle would have in the regeneration: the *twelve* apostles would be the "*twelve* judges" sitting on "*twelve* thrones" over the "*twelve* tribes." (Matt. 19:28.)

Thus, when the eleven adjudicated Judas's transgression, they remedied this by having Matthias replace Judas. Matthias would become the twelfth. This finding and remedy were in the nature of a judicial decision that would be binding in heaven. (Acts 1:26.) Such a decision was not as a law-giver whatsoever. It was a judicial determination of transgression and its remedy of replacing Judas. (John 20:22-23.)

Thus, it is very important to realize Jesus never told us the apostles' personal writings are on par with inspired canon. The apostles like elders in Jesus' day had authority over God's people, but like elders in Jesus' day, they were to be

tested by prophetic inspired canon. When a conflict arose, we were to obey the inspired canon, not the elders. (Matt. 15:6.) Thus, the Epistles of John, Peter, Jude and James stay, but if they contradict Scriptures *provable as prophetic*, then Jesus commands us to follow the higher authority of *inspired* Scripture. In the case of these four authors, I know of nothing they ever said that contradicts the words of a *validated prophet*.

*Paul Alone Must Be Tested by
Deuteronomy's Test for False Prophets.*

Returning to the point at issue, what motivates the resistance to the proposition of using Jesus' Words Only (JWO) as the test of orthodoxy? It principally comes from a desire to protect Paul. There is no concern to protect the *inspired* status of the Epistles of John, Peter, James or Jude. This is true because none of these writers ever claimed inspired status for their own epistles. If we denied inspired status to them now, we would not be taking away anything the authors of those writings claimed for their epistles.

By contrast, Paul repeatedly made the claim that *thus sayeth the Lord* belonged on his lips. (E.g., 1 Cor. 14:37; 1 Tim. 2:11; 1 Cor. 2:13; 1 Thess.4:1-2,8; 1 Thess. 2:13; Eph. 4:17. *cf.* 1 Cor. 7:25, 40.) It is Paul alone who made statements that he was, in effect, speaking as a prophet. This is why we are duty-bound to apply to Paul the test for a true prophet under Deuteronomy chapters 12, 13 & 18.

Why do so many find protecting Paul so important? Because if we accept Jesus as the sole prophetic authority in the New Testament, we have a dilemma. Paul had many *novel* and *unusual lessons of what the gospel represents*. If Paul is no longer on par with Jesus, then Pauline salvation doctrine would lose its grip and legitimacy. A different salvation doctrine would emerge.¹³ If we only had Jesus, then Jesus' message on initial justification by repentance from sin would emerge unmolested. (Luke 18:10 *et seq.*; Mark 9:42 *et seq.*) If

Jesus' message had sole emphasis, salvation would be a process that requires ongoing repentance from sin to stay justified with God and be saved. (1 John 1:9; John 15:1-6.) We would no longer have the freedom to sin without losing salvation, contrary to what Paul is viewed to teach. (Rom. 8:1; 10:9; Eph. 2:8-9.)

Instead, if we relied upon Jesus' words without any constraint to make them fit Paul's doctrines, we would have to trust Jesus' promise of salvation for endurance and obedience in keeping His words. (John 8:51; Matt. 10:22.) If we had Jesus' words alone, then Jesus' doctrine would emerge that we have only two choices: we can go to heaven maimed (*i.e.*, having repented from sin) or hell whole (*i.e.*, not having repented from sin). (Mark 9:42 *et seq.*) Jesus' message is not comforting at all to those engaging in sin after becoming a Christian. We will lose the assurance we are still saved despite our unrepentant sinning. To some, this assurance is the essence of saving faith. If we lose Paul, then we lose the very gospel that comforts us. We would then be forced to accept Jesus' very different and uncomfortable gospel.

Jesus' Words Only Is A Valid New Testament Test for Canonicity

Some people respond to the JWO proposition by saying you cannot test Paul by the standard for a true prophet in the '*Old Testament*.' It is old. We are under the new. They do not see this is based on a fallacious presupposition that Paul is inspired. The very notion that the old is nullified and no longer valid comes from Paul. We cannot rely upon a teaching of Paul that discards the very source for testing him. ***This is precisely what a false prophet would love to do:*** come with

13. For a thorough comparison of Jesus' versus Paul's salvation doctrine, see the chapter entitled "Does It Matter If We Rely Only Upon Jesus?" on page 447 *et seq.*

a false message and then ***give you a reason to disregard the Bible's standard for determining whether he or she is a true prophet***. Thus, this idea that we cannot use the 'Old Testament' to measure Paul rests on a fallacious presupposition that we can rely upon Paul's doctrine. (He alone declared the Law abolished and defunct. See Chapter 5.) Such a response fallaciously assumes the validity of Paul, which is the very question at issue.

Regardless, even if Paul could conflict with the 'Old Testament' and still be a true prophet, Paul could not be valid if he conflicts with Jesus. There are three passages that set this up as an *additional standard* that Paul must pass to be *truly* canonical. This New Testament standard requires consistency with Jesus' words.

The following New Testament (NT) passages support the proposition that (a) we need only teach Jesus' Words in the NT era and (b) any author who contradicts Jesus' words is uninspired.

First, Jesus commands us to teach His teachings. He did not authorize us to come with Paul's *distinct* teachings. In Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus says we are to "make disciples of all the nations... ***teaching them to obey (tereo) all things whatsoever I commanded you.***"

Jesus thus commanded us to teach "whatsoever I commanded," not anyone else's teachings. Jesus also said He was to be our sole teacher; we should not call anyone else our teacher. (Matt. 23:8-11.) Clarke explains this means "To him [Jesus] ***alone*** it belongs to guide and lead his Church....Jesus is the ***sole teacher*** of righteousness. It is he ***alone***...that can illuminate every created mind." Thus, Jesus' words are the sole source of NT teaching. No one else can share this honor..

Apostle John explains this principle. He says if we go "beyond" Jesus' teachings, we *do not have God* when so speaking. John writes in 2 John 1:8-11 (Websters' Bible):

(8) Watch yourselves, that we [*i.e.*, the twelve apostles] don't lose the things which we have accomplished, but that we receive a full reward.

(9) Whoever *transgresses* [or *goes beyond*]¹⁴ and *doesn't remain in the teaching of Christ, doesn't have God*. He who *remains in the teaching [of Jesus Christ]*, the same has both the Father and the Son.

The phrase “teaching of Christ” in the Greek means clearly “Christ’s doctrine.” It does not mean teachings *about* Christ.¹⁵ Canon is to be tested by the *words of* Jesus, not whether we like your *words about* Jesus. Any teacher who contradicts Jesus offers ‘no light’ at all.

Apostle John therefore is warning that if you *go beyond* or *overstep* those teachings from Jesus, John can lose his reward. You are following doctrines of men, not God. You are following those who do not *have* God, *i.e.*, they lack the Holy Spirit when so teaching. You can become lost and, if so, John will lose his reward. To go *beyond* the teachings of Christ, *transgressing* them, includes teaching something that *contradicts* Jesus. Anyone who blatantly contradicts Jesus and disobeys Him lies when he says he “knows” Jesus.¹⁶ Thus, everyone claiming to be a prophet who came after

14. The *Textus Receptus* has *proagwn*, but the UBS GNT has *parabainwn*. The word *proagwn* in the TR means *go before* or *lead forth*. It doesn't make much sense. Thus, some translate this as *run ahead* to fit the context. It appears the UBS GNT variant is more accurate while still similar in meaning. The word *parabaino* means “to go aside” or “to go beyond.” Judas fell because he *parabaino*-ed (Acts 1:25.) A good paraphrase would be *overstepping, exceeding* or *going beyond the bounds*.

15. Some try to claim Paul can contradict Jesus and still be canonical as long as Paul's teaching *about* Christ is correct. However, the verse is talking about *the teachings of Christ* in a way that means *by Jesus*, not about Him. The Greek format is identical to all similar references to *teachings by someone* yet in these other contexts we would never misconstrue it means *teachings about these people*, *e.g.*, “doctrine of the Pharisees” (Matt. 16:6, 12); “the apostle's doctrine” (Acts 2:42); “doctrines of men” (Matt. 15:9); “doctrine of the Nicolaitans” (Rev. 2:15); etc.

16. John explains: “He that saith, I know him, and does not keep on obeying (*tereo*) His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.” (1 John 2:4.) Here, *tereo* is in the present participle active.

Jesus must therefore be subject to the test of 2 John 1:9. If Paul teaches contrary to Jesus, Apostle John says Paul does not “know” Him and Paul is a “liar.”

Accordingly, if Paul goes beyond the teaching of Christ, and contradicts Him, then if we follow Paul, not Jesus' words, we are at great risk. If it causes us to break fellowship with God, our Lord will deny we know Him. Adhering to Paul's word, if contrary to Jesus, runs a *terrible risk*. These principles also prove that Paul is as much subject to this test of 2 John 1:9 as anyone. Hence, even if Paul can explain away the *Hebrew Scriptures* as the *Old Testament* and entirely eliminated (he cannot), Paul has to prove he does not transgress Our Lord's words.

To discharge our duty under Matthew 23:8-11 and 2 John 1:8-11, the examination must be thoroughly objective and neutral. If anything, we need to err on the side of favoring protecting Jesus' words over Paul's words. The reason is that Jesus tells us to love Him above any human being.¹⁷ Also, we receive a special assurance of “eternal life” if we should have “obeyed” (*tereo*) Jesus' words. (John 8:51.)

How are we to apply the “Sole Teacher” test to Paul and remain objective, unaffected by a presupposition that Paul is valid? Here is a test true to the “Sole Teacher” test:

- The Christian must resist the temptation to bring two texts into harmony when their affirmations do not agree, if he or she is convinced that such a synthesis is incompatible with the word meaning and historical context of each competing passage. If you disobey this, be careful that you are not putting your love for Paul above your love for Jesus Christ. (Matt. 10:37.)
- The Christian must do this no matter how painful it may be to admit a contradiction by Jesus of something Paul says. If you disobey this, be careful you are not again putting your love for Paul above your love for Jesus Christ.

17. Matthew 10:37 says: “He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.”

- In case you are unsure, err on the side of excluding Paul precisely because Jesus told you to have a priority of love for Him anyway. (Matt. 10:37.)
- Remember always there is never any risk following Jesus' words only. There is only risk in not following Jesus' words and accepting contradictory notions.

Is It Too Radical To Be A Strict Fundamentalist?

The key to being a conservative fundamentalist is to *know* and to *be able to prove* what is Scripture. It is not established by tradition. It is not established by presuppositions. Rather, it is established by testing each book we affix to Scripture by the revealed word of God that came before. It must fit the prior Prophetic words before it is accepted as Scripture.

The premature and presuppositional addition of Scripture is what the Bible prohibits. That is spiritual liberalism. The gullible addition to God's word is spiritual liberalism at it worst. Such a liberal textual approach does not depend on Biblical-tests for additions. It depends rather on how *nice it sounds*, or how long it has been accepted. However, one cannot presuppose inspiration because *you like the writer's thoughts*. That is the *worst reason* to accept something as inspired. Man was snared in the garden by *new and seductive words* from the serpent who by subtle commentary *changed* and *added to God's words*. This led to taking the fruit of the forbidden tree of knowledge. Adam and Eve had a liberal understanding on how to test *new* messages.

So the questions presented here are the most *fundamental* and *conservative* questions you can possibly ask. And the most important. Fundamentalism is not something we should just preach to the Mormons. We must look at the beam in our own eye before we try to remove the speck from their

eye. We need to test our own assumptions within the evangelical Protestant community by the same rigor we want others to examine their own history and additions to canon.

Didn't The Twelve Apostles Already Make This Determination?

Many respond to JWO by asking: 'didn't the twelve apostles accept Paul?' In Acts 9:28 and 15:4, they received Paul. They counted him a beloved brother. (Acts 15:5.)

Yet, this evidence is inadequate to prove they accepted Paul as either a thirteenth apostle or as a prophet. In fact, in that encounter with the twelve apostles in Acts chapter 15, Paul is not proclaiming any inspiration or even apostleship. Not once will you find such a statement in the Acts account. Rather, Paul comes with a question from the church of Antioch. He wanted to find out what the twelve apostles would decide about the issue of circumcision.

Had Paul in Acts chapter 15 been saying instead that he had a revelation from Jesus that answered the question, we would have a different situation. The twelve would have needed to examine whether Paul had a prophetic office. If they did, then we would have some basis to conclude their acceptance of Paul was *after* applying the Deuteronomy test. But that is not what is going on at all. Paul is a mere messenger of a question. In presenting the question, Paul never suggests he has an authority *on par* with the apostles to give an *answer*. Paul, like the twelve apostles are doing, waits for James, the Lord's brother, to reach a final decision. (See "James Is the Head Bishop of the Church" on page 242.)

In fact, the issue of Paul's possible apostasy (*i.e.*, contradicting the Law of Moses) does not arise in Acts until later, but the investigation is not completed. This is clearly presented in Acts 21:18-26. This passage is probably the most overlooked significant passage in the New Testament.

In Acts 21:18-26, Luke describes James' encounter with Paul a couple of years after the Jerusalem council. James says he has heard rumors that Paul is teaching the law is no longer binding on Jews who come to Christ. James then reassures Paul that he knows Paul would never teach such a thing. In that context, James says he wants Paul to prove in the eyes of others that Paul is not teaching this. Paul can do this by going through the public gestures required to fulfill the Nazirite vow from the book of Numbers chapter six. James then reiterates that his decision in the earlier Jerusalem council—circumcision was not for Gentiles—only applied to Gentiles. James explains this earlier ruling was not meant to imply that Christian Jews did not have to circumcise their children. Paul then complies, and does the public acts to keep the vow from Numbers. Paul never once suggested that indeed he held the view that the Law of Moses was no longer binding on Jews who come to Christ. Yet, we all know that Paul's letters precisely teach this. Paul does so in particular in Romans chapter 7. (For proof of this, read the chapter entitled: "Did Paul Negate the Law's Further Applicability?" on page 73 *et seq.*)

Thus, the New Testament leaves the validity of Paul's teachings as an unresolved issue as of Acts chapter 21. It was being examined. However, James had insufficient data. The Jerusalem Bishop, James, must never yet have seen any of Paul's letters. For clearly, Paul's letters directly affirm that Jews in Christ are "released" from the Law of Moses. (Romans 7:2.) In Acts chapter 21, James assumed the rumor to this effect was false. We are left wondering what will be the outcome when James and the twelve find out what Paul was truly teaching.

*If Paul Is Like Balaam, It Matters Little If
the Apostles Approved of Him Initially*

Furthermore, even if the apostles knew and approved of Paul as a true prophet of God, this does not mean Paul could not change and become like Balaam. Who is Balaam?

In the lifetime of Moses, Balaam was a diviner who was converted to a prophet of God by his meeting an angel on the Road to Moab. Later, Balaam is filled with the Holy Spirit and utters prophetic messages direct from God, according to Moses' account in the Book of Numbers. Yet *later* Balaam apostasizes by teaching the Israelites that it was permissible to eat meat sacrificed to idols. Because Balaam seduced the Israelites from following the Law, he became a "false prophet" under the standards of Deuteronomy 4:2 and 13:5. In other words, Balaam apostasized against the Law of Moses, and hence became a false prophet.

Jesus Himself in Revelation 2:14 said His church was threatened from within by a New Testament "Balaam." Thus, it was a realized risk within the early New Testament church.

Furthermore, there is strong reason to believe Jesus was identifying Paul as Balaam in Revelation 2:14. Jesus said this NT Balaam says it is permissible to eat meat sacrificed to idols. It is an undisputed fact that Paul three times teaches it is permissible to eat meat sacrificed to idols.¹⁸

Therefore, even if early on the apostles accepted Paul, this does not end the analysis. You still have the possibility a true prophet turned false, like Balaam (or like the old prophet in 1 Kings 13:1-26), using the standards in Deuteronomy 4:2.

Our Core Duty Remains To Test Paul

The possibility that Paul is like Balaam brings us, of course, back to our core duty. We have to be able to prove Paul passes the test of Deuteronomy chapters 12, 13 and 18 because *we are commanded to do this*. We cannot rely upon supposition or conjecture about what the apostles did or did not do. We must see the proof in the writings of Paul that he can pass this Biblical test before we can *add* to Scripture anything Paul wrote. Jesus' words can be scrutinized to this very

18. See the chapter "Why Does Jesus Mention Balaam in Rev. 2:14?" on page 131.

day, and Jesus can be proven to pass Deuteronomy's tests with flying colors. (This includes Jesus' prophecy on the fall of the Temple and on His own resurrection). Then why should we not be able to test Paul the same way?

**Historical Note:
What Was Defective In The Pharisees' Teaching?**

—Was It Legalism? Or Anomia (Negation of the Law)?—

Jesus excoriated the Pharisees for shallow teaching which undermined the Law of Moses, including: (1) teaching selectively from the Law only the lesser commands (such as tithing), leaving the more weighty matters of the Law untaught (Matt. 23:23); (2) teaching traditions which if followed led to the violation of the Law of Moses (Matthew 15:2-9)(certain korbán payment negating duty to honor your parents); and (3) expressly teaching that certain wrongs under the Law were acceptable behavior (*e.g.*, adulterous lust was permissible if no adulterous act followed).(Matt. 5:27-28.)¹⁹

Josephus in 93 A.D. said the Sadducees likewise faulted the Pharisees for taking people's focus *off* the Law of Moses:

What I would now explain is this, that the Pharisees have delivered to the people a great many observances by succession from their fathers, which are *not written in the Law of Moses*; and it is *for this reason that the Sadducees reject them*, and say we are to esteem those observances that are *in the written word*, but are *not to observe what are derived from the tradition of our forefathers*. (Josephus Flavius, *Antiquities of the Jews* 13.10.6 (13.297))

19. "People had come to believe that one could lust after a [married] woman, as long as the act of fornication was not committed. But Jesus showed that this understanding was foreign to the actual command by Moses." Robert A. Hawkins, "Covenant Relations of the Sermon on the Mount," *Restoration Quarterly* Vol. 12, No. 1 (explaining Matt. 5:27-28).