

The End of the Protestant Reformation

How the Church Has Left “The Bible Alone”

By David A. DeWitt

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Notes

Chapter 1

The Sufficiency of the Bible

In 1517, Martin Luther nailed 95 theses to the door of the Wittenberg Church, beginning what came to be known as the Protestant Reformation. The foundation of the Reformation was the term *sola scriptura* (the Bible alone). Although the reformers disagreed with one another on many matters, and they disagreed about how to interpret certain passages, they agreed about *sola scriptura*. For nearly 500 years now, protestant leaders have understood that the Bible alone is the complete revelation of God.

By the “sufficiency of the Bible,” I mean what Luther meant by *sola scriptura*. The only difference between my use of the word “sufficiency” and Luther’s term *sola scriptura* is in application. Luther only (or primarily) applied it to the Roman Catholic Church. Luther denied that the sacred traditions (and other experiences, like the apparition appearances of Jesus and Mary) claimed by the Roman Catholic Church were revelations from God. Whereas Luther used *sola scriptura* to deny Roman Catholic extra-biblical revelations, I’m applying the word “sufficiency” to deny our current-day attempts to add extra-biblical revelation to the Bible.

Sufficiency/*sola scriptura* means that **the Bible alone is true, authoritative, and complete for the faith and practice of the Christian**. If you are a believer in Jesus Christ and were ever taught the Bible, if you were taught a Bible memory system, if you go to a church which practices verse-by-verse expository preaching from the Bible, or if you were ever personally disciplined, it almost certainly came from someone who believed in *sola scriptura*, a sufficient Bible. **Today, the vast majority of Christians, even most Protestants, do not believe the Bible is sufficient.**

The Reformation Is Over

Thoughts of personal revelation from God have gone on throughout church history. It's common to wonder if such-and-such an event, or circumstance, or feeling, or coincidence, is a leading from God. I might suspect that God led me to marry my wife, go to seminary, move back to Michigan, and travel to Eastern Europe. But I don't know that. But many today have stepped over the line and claimed that God told them to do such-and-such a thing, thus denying the sufficiency of Scripture. This is what has gone from a few, to many, to most Christians claiming to receive revelation from God or being under leadership that tells them they should be looking for such revelation. These claims deny the sufficiency of the Bible.

Necessity Is Not Sufficiency

Many "Christians" who do not believe in the **sufficiency** of the Bible think they do, and would say they do, because they believe in the **necessity** of the Bible. They believe it is a directive from God, but they must add things to it.

Christians who do not believe in the sufficiency of the Bible add things like:

- Extra biblical cultural information
- Sacred traditions
- Other writings
- Visions
- Voices
- Dreams
- Angelic visits
- Dreams about angelic visits
- Miracles
- Circumstantial events
- Tongues
- Nonverbal (silent) "whisperings"
- Modern apostles and pastors receiving a direct leading from God

All these ideas declare the Bible to be insufficient.

For example, suppose a man gets a visit from an “angel” that tells him to go to some particular place and find a missionary who will teach him the Bible. He goes to that place and finds the missionary who teaches him the Bible. That vision will always trump Scripture. Suppose that same “angel” comes along later and says it’s okay to get a divorce, cohabit before marriage, or be a homosexual. Suppose, since the man in question believes in personal revelations, he prays about getting a divorce, cohabitating with his girlfriend, or being a homosexual, and God “gives him peace about it.”

The easiest way to get someone’s focus off the Word of God is to give them an extra-biblical revelation that seems to be consistent with the Word of God. The fact that the extra-biblical revelation pointed them to the Bible, gives credibility to the existence of extra-biblical revelation. So, then, one tends to follow that revelation when it compromises the Bible.

*Whereas a study and application of the Bible
leads to humility, extra-biblical revelations
usually lead to pride*

Remember, every cult relies on some sort of extra-biblical revelation. If you have received revelation from an “angel,” then how do you know Mohammed didn’t receive the Koran from an angel of God? How do you know Joseph Smith didn’t receive the Book of Mormon from an angel of God? Because that’s exactly what they claim. If you received a revelation from God, how could you possibly object to the cults?

Chapter 2

Belief in Sufficiency

Understand:

This is not about the personal leading of the Holy Spirit (Proverbs 3:5-6; Romans 8:14). The leading of the Spirit is conviction of sin (John 16:8) and understanding and applying the revealed Word of God in Scripture (Romans 8:5-14; 1 Corinthians 2:14), not adding revelations to Scripture. Unlike revelation given to biblical authors, the personal leading of the Holy Spirit is:

1. Not a verbal message, and
2. Not a new revelation

But rather, it is:

1. A moral use of godly virtues, and
2. An application of Scripture

To be led by the Spirit is to not be led by the flesh (Galatians 5:16-24; Romans 8:12-13). The leading of the Spirit is not about non-moral decision-making.

This is not about God being involved in our lives. We know God is involved in disciplining and directing the course of the lives of believers because He is sovereign (Psalm 139:1-12; Hebrews 12:5-11; Luke 12:28-30; Ephesians 1:3-11). But we do not know what He is specifically doing in our lives (Ecclesiastes 3:11; 11:5; John 3:8), except that He is conforming us to the image of Christ (Romans 12:1-2; 8:29). Most of what people think of as the leading of God involves their thoughts or feelings. God's leading in our lives may have nothing whatsoever to do with our thoughts or feelings. Besides that, God never said He would tell us His specific plan for our lives, so it's none of our business (Genesis 50:20; Deuteronomy 29:29).

This is not about what we **think** or **believe** God is doing in our lives. Whatever we **think** God is doing is a speculation.

Speculations should not be proclaimed as a leading of God, nor should they be used in decision-making. Decision-making should be based on wisdom applied to verifiable evidence, not speculations about the unrevealed will of God.

This is not about what God can do. God can do whatever He desires. God can give people visions, dreams, visits from angels, or whatever He desires. This is about our declaring that a certain experience is indeed from God. It is about what we are declaring, not what God is doing.

*This is not putting God in a box,
it's putting us in a box*

We are limited in our knowledge of what God is doing. If we declare that God has specifically led us with some directive message, then we would be claiming to be prophets. But the only prophets that the Bible says will come, before the return of Christ, are the two witnesses during the tribulation period (Revelation 11:10) and false prophets. So we would either be a false prophet or the Bible is insufficient.

This does not mean the Bible tells us everything we need to know. Obviously, we need to know things about our spouse, our children, our job, our culture, technology, medicine, things we need to know to function in our society. We need to know how to get up in the morning, wash up, put on our clothes, eat something, and drive to work. None of that is in the Bible.

The question is:

- Does the Scripture give us a sufficient revelation from God, or should we look for revelation from God in other sources?
- Is the revelation of God complete in the Old and New Testaments (until Christ returns), or is it ongoing, progressive, and evolving?
- Should we apply what the biblical authors wrote, or

should we add things to what they wrote before we apply it?

- Did the Word of God end with the book of Revelation, or should we add other things, like the Book of Mormon, the sacred traditions of the Roman Catholics, the visions of Mrs. White, or rabbinic Judaism?
- Does the Bible sufficiently describe its surrounding culture, or do we need extra-biblical cultural information to understand it?
- Should we get our directives for daily living by applying biblical wisdom, or should we look for the circumstantial leading of God in our daily experience?
- Is the supernatural evidence given to the biblical authors sufficient, or should we also look to modern signs and wonders for messages from God?
- Did the apostles leave us with the New Testament as our only authority for the church, or is there an ongoing apostolic authority in today's pastors, elders, and charismatic leaders?

Here are some examples:

Rob Bell, formerly of Mars Hill Church in Grandville, Michigan, changed his church over to allowing women in leadership positions over men. The Bible strictly forbids that (1 Timothy 2:12; 1 Corinthians 14:34), but Rob Bell used extra-biblical cultural information to reverse the meaning of the Bible. He also believes Gandhi could go to heaven without being a Christian, and Jesus could have a father named "Larry." Rob Bell denies the sufficiency of Scripture.

Bill Hybels of Willow Creek Community Church in South Barrington, Illinois, wrote a book (Zondervan, 2010) called "The Power of a Whisper. Hearing God. Having The Guts To Respond." Hybels says: "My entire journey comes down to a series of unplanned promptings from heaven that have charted a course for my life even I could have never foreseen (16) ... I firmly believe that God whispers to you, too" (17). The biblical

examples Hybels used are: (1) hundreds of years apart, not regularly given to every believer, (2) audible, verbal statements, not silent “whisperings,” and (3) a record of God’s revelation to unique patriarchs, prophets, kings, and apostles, not directives given to individual believers. The Bible never suggests anyone will receive private silent “whisperings.” So, although Bill Hybels believes the Bible is necessary, he does not believe it is sufficient.

Dr. C. Peter Wagner of Fuller Seminary and the New Apostolic Reformation (NAR), claims that there are new apostles and prophets in the church today and that a coming apostolic movement will build the church into a glorious manifestation of God in the 21st century. This (NAR) group and others like them [such as Latter Rain, the Kansas City Prophets, the Vineyard Church, Joel’s Army, and the International House of Prayer (IHOP)] dominate many Christian gatherings—like The Response prayer gathering of Texas Governor Rick Perry in August 2011. Clearly, C. Peter Wagner and these new apostolic groups do not believe the Bible is sufficient.

Mike Bickle, president and director of the International House of Prayer (IHOP), says we should not passively wait for the coming of Christ but actively bring it about by establishing a glorious church which will defeat the antichrist and allow Christ to return. It seems that the church defeats the antichrist and Jesus is trapped in heaven until the glorious church is established. Bickle sees himself as appointed by God to lead this movement. Mike Bickle does not believe in the sufficiency of Scripture.

A “**gospel**” of miracles is being taught and experienced throughout the east. Many, if not most, of the people becoming Christians through church planting efforts in India and the Orient (Korea, China, Japan, etc.) are coming through miracles, visions, healings, and various supposed revelations from God. I have taught many groups of pastors in India where over 80%

of them came to Christ by healing, miracles, visions, and signs, not by hearing or reading the Gospel or a biblical message. Many church services say nothing about the Bible. They sing songs, have prayers, and tell stories about miracles and healings. The whole church planting effort in many areas is based upon denying the sufficiency of Scripture.

A missionary recently spoke in my church and told us God had led him to go to work with some churches in Colombia. If it is indeed true that God personally led him to do that, then the Bible is not a sufficient standard for decision making, since it says nothing about him moving to Colombia. So, for this missionary, applying the words of Scripture was not sufficient for wisdom from God. He also needed a personal, extra-biblical leading from God.

I realize it has become common “church speak” to say, “God led me to...” or “God told me to...” It’s kind of like “Everybody else is saying that, so I’ll say it, too.” But the reality is, we just think so or believe so. Or some pastor or author tells us God speaks silently to us through our thoughts and circumstances, so we think, “Hmmm...must be that was from God.” But when we say it’s of God, or when we declare to ourselves and others that such-and-such a thing is indeed the leading or calling or directing of God to do something not specified in the Bible, then we declare ourselves to be prophets and the Bible to be insufficient. We put ourselves in the place of saying we know what God is doing. Besides that being incredibly arrogant, it opens the door for the false teachers and false prophets flooding into the church to continue their influence. If you are receiving directives from God, then upon what basis could you deny that the false prophets are receiving directives from God?

If a missionary or pastor tells people God called them to their ministry, then it lets everybody else off of responsibility because God didn’t call them. If he is serving because of the Great Commission, then everyone has that calling.

Chapter 3

Scripture Points to Scripture for Direction from God

There is nothing whatsoever in Christ's teaching, of the apostles' teaching, or anywhere in the Old or New Testaments, that even remotely suggests that individual believers should be looking for visions, miracles, dreams, prophetic words, sacred traditions, circumstantial leadings, whisperings, cultural insights or personal leadings as a way to get directives from God.

What Did Jesus Say?

When He was tempted by the devil, Jesus answered everything with Scripture alone (*It is written...*), not visions, not whisperings, not sacred tradition, not cultural insights or personal leadings from God. He told His disciples, *The **Scripture** cannot be broken* (John 10:35), *not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from **the Law** until all is accomplished. But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one stroke of a letter of **the Law** to fail* (Luke 16:17). *If you love Me, you will **keep My commandments*** (John 14:15). *If you **keep My commandments**, you will abide in My love* (John 15:10). When disputing the Pharisees, He proclaimed, *Thus you nullify the **word of God** by your tradition...* (Mark 7:13). He told the Sadducees, *You are in error because you do not know the **Scriptures**...* (Matthew 22:29). He told the Jews, *You search the **Scriptures**... it is these that testify about Me* (John 5:39).

What Did the Apostles Say?

The apostles gave the same kind of instruction as Jesus. When the apostles looked to the future maturity of believers, they pointed them to Scripture as the only source of input from God.

Paul wrote:

*All **scripture** is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, **thoroughly furnished** unto all good works (2 Timothy 3:16-17).*

Peter wrote:

*Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the **knowledge of God** and of Jesus our Lord; According as His divine power hath given unto us **all things that pertain unto life and godliness**, through the **knowledge of Him** that hath called us to glory and virtue (2 Peter 1:2-4 KJV).*

John wrote,

*Anyone who goes **too far** and **does not abide** in the **teaching of Christ**, does not have God; the one who abides in the **teaching**, he has both the Father and the Son (2 John 8-11).*

What About The Old Testament?

When David instructed Solomon, he said: *Keep the charge of the LORD your God, to walk in His ways, to **keep His statutes, His commandments, His ordinances, and His testimonies**, according to what is **written in the Law of Moses**, that you may succeed in all that you do and wherever you turn (1 Kings 2:3).*

Psalm 1:1-2 says: *How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers! But **his delight is in the law of the LORD**, And in His law he meditates day and night.*

Psalm 119 is the longest psalm in the Bible. Here are verses 97-105: *O how I love **Your law**! It is my meditation all the day. **Your commandments** make me wiser than my enemies, For they are ever mine. I have more insight than all my teachers, For **Your testimonies** are my meditation. I understand more than the aged, Because I have observed **Your precepts**. I have restrained my feet from every evil way, That I may keep **Your word**. I have not turned aside from **Your ordinances**, For You Yourself have taught me. How sweet*

are **Your words** to my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth! From **Your precepts** I get understanding; Therefore I hate every false way. **Your word** is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

The psalmist considers nothing but the written Word of God as his source of direction. For example, notice that in verse 102 he says, *For You Yourself have taught me*, and he is referring to God's commandments, testimonies, precepts, words, and ordinances, **not** visions, voices, silent whisperings, or circumstantial leadings.

When dedicating the temple, Solomon told the people in 1 Kings 8:61, "*Let your heart therefore be wholly devoted to the LORD our God, to walk in His statutes and to **keep His commandments**, as at this day.*"

When Moses died, God told Joshua: *This **book of the law** shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may **be careful to do according to all that is written in it**; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success* (Joshua 1:7-8)

Through Isaiah God said: *But to this one I will look, To him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at **My word*** (Isaiah 66:2).

Here is what we know from the Bible:

1. We know God is involved in His creation, and He is involved in the circumstances of our lives.
 - Psalm 139:1-6 KJV — *O LORD, Thou hast searched me and known me. Thou dost know when I sit down and when I rise up; Thou dost understand my thought from afar. Thou dost scrutinize my path and my lying down, And art intimately acquainted with all my ways. Even before there is a word on my tongue, Behold, O LORD, Thou dost know it all. Thou hast enclosed me behind*

and before, And laid Thy hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; It is too high, I cannot attain to it.

- Romans 8:14—*For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.*

2. We know that we do not know what God is doing through the circumstances of our lives.

- Ecclesiastes 3:11—*He has made everything appropriate in its time. He has also set eternity in their heart, yet so that man will not find out the work which God has done from the beginning even to the end.*
- Ecclesiastes 11:5—*Just as you do not know the path of the wind and how bones are formed in the womb of the pregnant woman, so you do not know the activity of God who makes all things.*
- John 3:8—*“The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.”*

Conclusion: Therefore we should not use our circumstances, feelings, or inclinations as a message from God for decision-making.

- Deuteronomy 29:29—*The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law.*

Chapter 4

The Bible Is a Record of God's Special Revelation

Of course, the patriarchs, prophets, and apostles of the Bible received special revelation from God. **That's what the Bible is—a record of God's special revelation to man.** But it never even remotely suggests that God will give special revelation to every believer. The Bible is not a cross-section of history telling stories of what God is doing everywhere, all the time. It is a record of what God did when He penetrated the course of history with special revelation, given through His unique messengers, whom He called upon to carry out His own purposes.

Biblical Revelation Was Never Circumstantial Whisperings

Revelations of the kind given in the Bible are not what most Christians are claiming today. For example, the revelations to Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Gideon, Samuel, and Elijah, and most of the revelations to the apostles were **real audible voices**. They were not using feelings, inclinations, or inaudible whisperings to try to figure out what God was doing. No one in the Bible ever did that.

The New Testament does not record the leaders of the church constantly looking for directives from God (beyond the Scripture) in their everyday lives. [Actually, the only personal directive sought is in the selection of Mathias to replace Judas, and the Bible does not sanction that as a good idea.] The apostles never asked God who to heal, where to go, or who to evangelize, personally and individually. Paul did not ask God whether he should go on missionary journeys, what cities to go to, or even who to take along.

For example, when Paul wanted to take along Timothy, and when he and Barnabas disagreed about taking John Mark, the

text does not say they sought a special directive from God. Even the Old Testament leaders generally sought out the prophets to get directives from God. They did not daily look for God's leading in dreams, voices, silent whisperings, feelings, inclinations, or their circumstances. One could say such directives are just not recorded in the Bible. But that's the point, the Holy Spirit did not record any such directives for us to follow. It is unreasonable to suppose that their lives were full of them, yet they never mentioned them.

Although most of the revelations in Scripture were audible voices, there are a few examples of directives from God where the form is not known. We do not know how Simeon and Anna knew they would see the Messiah, or that the baby Jesus was indeed that Messiah (Luke 2:25-38). We do not know how Peter knew to proclaim, *Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God* (Matthew 16:16). We do not know how Paul received his instruction to not go to the province of Asia (Acts 6:6-10). We do not know how the prophets and teachers in Antioch were told by the Holy Spirit, "*Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.*" And we do not know how the Jerusalem Council concluded, *For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these essentials* (Acts 15:28). We do not know the exact content of many of the dreams God used for revelation.

But we need to keep in mind:

1. In no case do we know there was not a verbal revelation from God. So none of those examples are proof of non-verbal revelation.
2. Some of these are very likely wisdom from faith in previous revelation, not a new revelation from God (as with Peter in Matthew 16:16 and the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15:28).
3. All these are without a closed canon of Scripture. In other words, they did not have a sufficient Bible.
4. In all cases where we are not sure of the form of the

revelation, those who received it knew it was from God. They did not have to run it through some battery of tests to see if it was indeed from God. They didn't have to wonder if it may have been from some other source (the devil, demons, one's conscience, the tendency of human nature to look for such things, or chance events). They knew for certain their revelation was from God, something we could never know about extra-biblical "leadings."

5. The revelations of God recorded in Scripture are about God's special plan, such as the coming of the Messiah, the beginning of the church, or the God-directed missionary journeys. They are about God penetrating history to accomplish His work, not what's going on in the details of believers' lives. It was not about who to marry, what education to get, or what house to buy. The point is, the apostles did not define the spiritual life as looking for extra-biblical directives.
6. There was no suggestion in these examples (or anywhere in the Bible) that any individual believer should go about looking for any private leading about anything. If Paul expected Timothy or Titus to receive individual directives from God, why write 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus with pages of directives? Why not tell them to look for God's leading rather than *All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work* (2 Timothy 3:16-17)?
7. Could they have received non-verbal revelations from God through such things as circumstantial coincidences, or silent "whisperings," which are not recorded in Scripture? Any such conclusion is purely speculative. But what we know is, the Holy Spirit did not tell us about it in Scripture. Therefore, it is not something we can apply to our lives.

Biblical Revelation Was Not Regular and Ongoing

There was over 1000 years between the revelation to Adam and the revelation to Noah. There was about 500 years between the last revelation to Noah and the revelations to Abraham. There was about 500 years between the revelations to Abraham and the revelations to Moses.

Next, God gave verbal revelation to Moses, Joshua, the judges, and the prophets (for about 1000 years). Then there was another 400 years of no verbal revelation until the time of Christ and the apostles.

There has been 2000 years without verbal revelation from God, which seems to be consistent with the Peter's prediction in 2 Peter 3:3-8.

*Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation." For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that **by the word of God** the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water, through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water. But by **His word** the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day.*

Peter seemed to predict a long period of no revelation from God (like maybe a couple of thousand years) when people will mock the idea of the coming of Christ. Peter did not (nor did anyone in the Bible) predict an outpouring of new revelation before the Second Coming of Christ. Quite the contrary, Peter said there will be false teachers and false prophets, but as far

as God's revelation goes, Christ's return will be sudden and unexpected, and according to God's Word.

The Bible Does Not Predict New Signs and Wonders for Today

The biblical authors consistently predicted what would increase at the end of the age: false prophets, false teachers, false messiahs, and an apostate church. In other words, the Bible predicts just about what we see today, which is the opposite of what the new revelation groups are predicting today: new apostles, new prophets, and a glorious, perfected church.

What About Where Peter Quoted Joel 2 in Acts 2, "...your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams"?

The claim of many in the new revelation movements is that this passage from Joel 2, quoted by Peter in Acts 2, describes the situation we are experiencing today, in these last days as we approach the Second Coming of Christ. The verse in question says:

"And it shall be in the last days" [in the Hebrew text of Joel, it says after this] God says, "That I will pour forth of my Spirit on all mankind and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams" (Acts 2:17 from Joel 2:28).

First of all, we need to understand the meaning of the passage in both Joel and Acts. **In neither passage is this describing the time before the Second Coming of Christ.** In both passages, it is describing the time *after* the coming of Christ, not before. Therefore, these things are not predictions that Christ will soon come but assurances that He has already come. Peter used it to show that the Messiah had indeed come. In Joel, the passage describes the work of the Holy Spirit during what we call the Millennial Kingdom, after the Second Coming (as in Jeremiah 31:31-34).

Here is an outline of Joel chapter 2:

- **Verses 1-10** describe the Tribulation before the Second Coming. These verses speak of a future army, which may be the demon-locusts described in Revelation 9:1-12, or it may refer to the invasion of the king of the north in Ezekiel 38:15 and Daniel 11:40. Either way, it describes the terrible trouble before the Second Coming.
- **Verse 11** refers to the Second Coming of Christ. *The Lord utters His voice before His army* (see also Joel 3:16).
- **Verses 12-17** are an appeal for Israel to repent and return to God.
- **Verses 18-29** describe the blessings of the Millennial Kingdom, including verse 28, *And it will come about after this* [after the Tribulation of verses 1-10, the Second Coming of verse 11 and the call to repentance which follows] *that I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; And your sons and daughters will prophesy, Your old men will dream dreams, Your young men will see visions.*
- **Verses 30-31** are a summary of the whole chapter.

So Joel predicted the pouring out of the Spirit, prophecy, dreams, and visions after the Second Coming of Christ and during the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom. The only events predicted before the Second Coming are about a day of darkness and gloom.

Now let's look at the first part of Acts 2:

- **Verses 1-12** describe the beginning of the church age with the coming of the Holy Spirit displayed as tongues of fire, and the apostles speaking in the languages of the visitors to Jerusalem from all over the Roman Empire.
- **Verse 13** describes the response of unbelievers in the crowd, *But others were mocking and saying, "They are full of sweet wine."* This comment inspires, or anyway

initiates, Peter's speech. Peter began by addressing this mocking which accused the apostles of being drunk.

- **Verses 14-21** are Peter's explanation of the events they were experiencing. He said: *For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only the third hour of the day; but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel.* Then Peter gave the Greek rendering of Joel 2:28 (which was, of course, originally written in Hebrew, the language of the Old Testament).

So neither Joel 2 nor Acts 2 predict the outpouring of the Holy Spirit as we approach the end of this church age. There is no prediction of any kind, any place in the Bible, of a special work of the Holy Spirit poured out upon the church before Christ returns, neither before the Rapture (John 14:1-3; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18) nor before the Second Coming (Matthew 24; Revelation 19). [The only prophets from God mentioned before the Second Coming are the two witnesses in Revelation 11. These are not part of the church age. They are special messengers of God during the tribulation period who *tormented those who dwell on the earth* (Revelation 11:10).]

Jesus did say that, shortly before His return, *Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many* (Matthew 24:11, 24; Mark 13:6). A prophet is someone who receives a special revelation from God. So, according to Jesus, as the end times approach, many will be saying the Bible is not sufficient, denying *sola scriptura*, by adding false revelations, as if they were from God.

Chapter 5

Shepherding, Sufficiency, and the Nature of Prophetic Revelation

What about “The Lord is my shepherd” in Psalm 23 and John 10?

The question is, *if the Lord is my shepherd*, that is, Jesus is my shepherd, then should I not look to Him for individual, personal, directives? The guidance of God is the work of God as a shepherd of His sheep. But shepherding is what **God** does, it’s not anything He asks us to do. Think about David’s metaphor in Psalm 23 (and Jesus’ in John 10:14-16) a bit. First let’s read them.

- Psalm 23:1-6—*The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters. He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness For His name’s sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You have anointed my head with oil; My cup overflows. Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life, And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.*
- John 10:14-16—*“I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd.”*
- John 10:27—*“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.”*

What does a shepherd do for his sheep? He provides direction,

protects them, leads them so that they follow, provides for their needs, and gets them out of trouble. What a shepherd does not do is give his sheep special directives concerning what they are to do individually. They might not even understand what he is doing. His sheep are those who follow his voice, his real, clear, audible, understandable, objectively verifiable words. They keep his commandments. Sheep are not those who expect a shepherd to give them silent circumstantial whisperings as to how they should make personal non-moral decisions.

We can very easily follow the voice of Jesus as our shepherd. He said, *If you love Me, you will keep My **commandments*** (John 14:15; 15:10). His voice is clear, verbal, and written down in inspired Scripture for us to follow. For David, following the Lord as his shepherd meant to delight *in the **law of the LORD**, And in His **law** he meditates day and night* (Psalm 1:1-2). It meant to *love Your **law** to have observed Your **precepts**, to keep Your **word**, to not turned aside from Your **ordinances** so that, Your **word** is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path* (Psalm 119:97-105). For David, the Lord being his shepherd had nothing to do with silent whisperings, circumstantial coincidences, or personal thoughts. It had to do with trusting God and obeying the written Word of God.

Prophets Declare New Revelation

If you are receiving personal directives from God, then you are receiving revelation from God. And if you are receiving revelation from God, then you are a prophet. In the New Testament, this occurred with the gifts of tongues and prophecy.

Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy. For one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God; for no one understands, but in his spirit he speaks mysteries. But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation (1 Corinthians 14:1-3).

Paul encouraged the gifts of tongues and prophecy, but espe-

cially prophecy because tongues had to be interpreted to be useful. The reason Paul encouraged the gift of prophecy is because *the one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation*. Many (pastors) say this is what preachers do. They say they are “forthtelling” not “foretelling.” But if they mean they are declaring new revelation from God, they have an insufficient Bible. If they are talking about biblical preaching, that is not what this passage says. Verse 3 is not about preachers, it’s about prophets. Their new revelation from God was able to be understood and, therefore, valuable *for edification and exhortation and consolation*. But notice two things about these gifts:

1. The gifts of tongues (after interpretation) and prophecy were real understandable words.

It was a clear verbal message, which could be discussed and evaluated (verses 29-32). Paul had no use for unclear, vague, meanings. He said, *For if the bugle produces an indistinct sound, who will prepare himself for battle?* (verse 8). Paul never promoted unclear circumstantial guesses about the directives from God.

2. Tongues and prophecy assume an insufficient Scripture.

The gifts of tongues and prophecy were new revelation, which, by their very existence, declared that the existing Scripture was not sufficient. At the time of the writing of 1 Corinthians, the church had the Old Testament plus the epistle of James, Paul’s letters to the Galatians and the Thessalonians, and the gospels of Matthew and Mark. They did not have the other two gospels, the later writings of Paul, nor the books of Jude or Hebrews, nor the epistles of Peter, or John, or the book of Revelation. Like all new revelation from God, these gifts declared that the current Scripture was insufficient.

Could God allow tongues and prophecy in primitive areas where they do not yet have a Bible? Of course, He could.

God can do whatever He desires. But there is no biblical command or precedent for that. Therefore, it would be inappropriate for anyone to declare that's what God is doing. Here is how the gospel was to be spread around the world.

Matthew 28:19 — *Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations*

Acts 1:8 — *you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth*

Romans 10:14-15 — *How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news of good things!"*

The tongues and prophecy in Jerusalem and Corinth were not because they were in primitive areas, it was because the canon of Scripture was not yet revealed. Many, if not most, of the cities Paul visited had synagogues with an Old Testament. They had Scripture, but they did not have the complete revelation of God. Their Bible was insufficient.

The biblical prescription for the spread of the gospel to the lost was for believers to travel to the people of the world and tell them. Primitive people who did not have the Bible were to be evangelized by people who did. No mention is ever made in the New Testament about people from primitive areas understanding the gospel from tongues or prophecy. Those gifts were for the church, whether the people were primitive or educated, before there was a complete Bible in existence, not before they had a copy of it.

New Revelation Was Not Necessarily Consistent With Old Revelation

One of the arguments made today is that we can know extra-biblical revelation is of God if it is consistent with the Bible,

that is, if it does not violate a biblical command.

For one thing, most “Christians” today know very little about the Bible. So how would they know if their revelation is or is not violating a biblical command? A high percent (see Chapter 7) of self-declared born again church-going Christians believe Jesus sinned, there is no absolute truth, there are many ways to get to heaven, and we should tolerate divorce, cohabitation, and homosexuality in the evangelical churches. So how would they know how to determine if a personal directive from God was consistent with biblical commands?

But even for those who do know the Bible, this is not a good test. Many times new revelation from God was not consistent with old revelation. Changes in food regulations (don’t eat meat, eat meat without the blood, eat only clean animals, eat unclean animals), the commission to go to the Gentiles, the end of the Mosaic Law, the cessation of animal sacrifices, the gifting, regenerating, indwelling, baptizing, and sealing work of the Holy Spirit, and the priesthood of the believer were all inconsistent with the Old Testament and violated previous commands. Morally, too. Abraham was told to sacrifice his son. Hosea was told to marry a harlot. Saul was told to kill every man, woman, and child of the Amalekites. All of these are things we would consider inconsistent with previous biblical commands. The point is, new revelation is new, it’s something different, not something redundant, and not necessarily consistent with previous revelation. God never changes, but His revelation often does.

The Bible Describes Its Own Sufficiency

The early church, from about A.D. 33 to 60, encouraged the practice of the gifts of tongues and prophecy. But while discussing this with the Corinthians, in the middle of his encouragement to practice tongues and prophecy, Paul said:

1 Corinthians 13:8-12 — *Love never fails; but if [there are gifts of] prophecy, they will be done away; [if there are]*

tongues, they will cease; if [there is] knowledge, it will be done away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part; but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away. When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known.

Paul said prophecy, tongues, and knowledge would *cease* or *be done away*. The NASB word “gifts” is not in the Greek text, and *knowledge* is clearly a special supernatural knowledge because Paul was certainly not predicting the end of all knowledge. Paul did not know when that would happen, but he knew his current gifts of tongues and prophecy represented:

1. A *partial* revelation
2. A *childish* revelation (not in the sense of foolish but incomplete) and
3. One we see *dimly* and *know in part*

Then Paul gave us the general principle, *when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away*, possibly referring to the completion of the New Testament in the mid-90s, more probably referring to the Second Coming of Christ. But it is likely that Paul did not distinguish between those two events, since God never revealed the time of the Second Coming. Paul’s purpose was not to predict the time **when** prophecy would cease. He was only predicting that it **would** cease, because prophecy, by its very existence, represents revelation which is partial and incomplete, or what I have called “insufficient.”

Historically, prophecy and tongues did end. All mention of those gifts in the New Testament ended in the early 60s, some 30 years before the New Testament was completed. The last 18 books of the New Testament make no mention of these gifts. One group, called the Montanists, believed in these gifts until

nearly 250, but then that belief also ended and their followers became part of the rest of Christianity. No mention is made of the gifts of tongues or prophecy until the 1900s. So Paul said they would cease, and they ceased—apparently, before the New Testament was completed.

But remember, if you believe that the gifts of tongues and prophecy are still going on today, then:

1. They need to be applied according to the rules of 1 Corinthians 14.
2. These are verbal revelations from God, not silent whisperings or circumstantial coincidences.
3. They declare the Bible to be insufficient.

The author of Hebrews wrote,

Hebrews 2:3-4 — how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.

It sounds very much like the author of Hebrews is saying the revelation of Christ was confirmed by those (apostles) who originally heard Him, and their message was accompanied by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit. So miraculous wonders and some gifts of the Holy Spirit were specifically for those early believers, not for every believer of every age, or any other age. Actually, the author of Hebrews seems to be explaining why they were no longer going on in his time (the late 60s). The reason for their temporary nature is because certain gifts were a confirmation of the message of those who originally heard it from Christ and passed it on.

When the book of Revelation was written in the mid-90s, the revelation of God was finished until Christ comes back. The

Old Testament ended looking for more revelation from God, which would surround the coming of the Messiah (Malachi 4:5). The New Testament ended by closing the door on any ongoing revelation from God before the Second Coming of Christ.

*I testify to everyone who hears the **words of the prophecy** [this is not the word for apocalyptic prophecy but the general word for revelation] of this book [the book of Revelation, the last book written, so obviously, it applies to any of the previous books of the Bible]: if anyone **adds to them**, God shall add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone **takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy** [same general word for inspired revelation from God], God shall take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book. He who testifies to these things says, “Yes, I am coming quickly.” [So there are to be no additions to God’s Word until Christ returns.] Amen. Come, Lord Jesus (Revelation 22:18-20, emphasis and brackets mine in all quotes).*

Let’s suppose that, for some reason, I want to have a row of ten spoons on a table (say, I am teaching something to a class of small children). So I begin to line up the spoons, counting them off until I set down the last, tenth, spoon. Then I say: “No one should add **any** spoons to this last one.” I am referring only to the last “tenth” spoon. But, of course, it means no one should add to any of the spoons because that would add to the last spoon. John said no one should add to, or take away from, the book of Revelation. Revelation was the last book in the row (historically). So any additional revelation to that book would add to the whole row of books that we call the Bible.

Chapter 6

The Battle for Sufficiency Throughout History

The battle for the sufficiency of the Bible is not new, but it has increased since the beginning of the 20th century, and exponentially since the 1980s. The sufficiency of the Bible has been challenged throughout history, but never before has insufficiency been the dominant view of the Bible-believing Christians, those who we refer to today as “evangelicals.” Here is a thumbnail sketch of what happened historically.

Clement of Rome

The first century ended with the death of John, the last apostle. The disciples of the apostles saw the leadership of the apostles passed along to elders, but not to a succession of apostles with apostolic authority. For example, at the end of the first century, possibly in A.D. 96 or 97, Clement of Rome (probably the Clement of Philippians 4:3) wrote an epistle to the church at Corinth. The letter gives us solid evidence that the early church did not believe that the apostles had successors. No new apostles were to replace the original apostles to provide direction for the church. The leadership of the church was to be found in elders, confirmed by the church as men of God, not new apostles with ongoing authority. The authority was only in the teaching of Christ and the original apostles. **So for Clement of Rome, what we call the New Testament was not only necessary, but it was also the sufficient revelation of God.**

Athanasius

In the first two centuries after the apostles (the 100s and 200s), the main body of Christianity believed in the sufficiency of the Bible. But some groups, especially the Montanists, believed God was still giving revelation. Others tried to add Greek philosophy and gnosticism to the gospel. But by the 300s, it was clear that only the first-century writings of the apostles, and those writing for them and about them, were inspired by

God. In 367, Athanasius recognized the 27 books of the New Testament (the only Christian writings that exist from the first century, through the Book of Revelation) to be the only inspired revelation from God. In 397, the church council at Carthage agreed. **So Athanasius and the Council of Carthage declared the New Testament (along with the Old Testament, of course) to be the sufficient revelation of God.**

Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy

The Coptic and Eastern Orthodox Churches claimed divine authority for the first seven church councils, the Cappadocian Fathers, and their national patriarchs. In the 400s, Leo I, bishop of Rome, claimed papal authority dating back to Peter. Throughout history, the Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches have claimed that the Bible was necessary but not sufficient. The church was also necessary for declaring the full counsel of God and distributing the grace of God. Here is how the Roman Catholic Church explains it:

We teach and define that it is a dogma Divinely revealed that the **Roman pontiff when he speaks ex cathedra**, that is when in discharge of the office of pastor and doctor of all Christians, **by virtue of his supreme Apostolic authority**, he defines a doctrine regarding faith or morals to be held by the universal Church, by the Divine assistance promised to him in Blessed Peter, **is possessed of that infallibility with which the Divine Redeemer willed that his Church should be endowed** in defining doctrine regarding faith or morals, and that therefore such definitions of the Roman pontiff are of themselves and not from the consent of the Church irreformable (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, emphasis mine).

So the Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches clearly deny the sufficiency of the Bible.

The Reformation

The Reformation was all about the sufficiency of Scripture (*solo scriptura*). Beginning two hundred years before Luther,

Wycliffe (in the 1300s), Hus (in the 1400s), and groups like The Brethren of Common Life taught that the Bible was sufficient. Luther taught grace alone, faith alone, the priesthood of the believer, and all this came from the Bible alone. Disagreements within Protestantism were all about interpretation, not sufficiency. Of course, there were splinter groups and cults, but mainline Protestant Christianity did not disagree about sufficiency. For example, the Lutherans, Presbyterians, and the Reformed churches allegorized the Old Testament promises made to Israel into the church, whereas the Anabaptists, Puritans, and Baptists took them to be literally fulfilled in a future for Israel. But both of these camps believed in the sufficiency of the Bible. Their quarrel was over interpretation, not sufficiency.

The Protestant leaders from the 1500s to the 1900s did not declare or follow special messages or words or “whispers” from God. All the Protestant leaders from Luther to the mid-1900s (for example, Luther, Zwingli, the Anabaptists, Calvin, the Baptists, the Puritans, the Separatists, John and Charles Wesley, Jonathan Edwards, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, D. L. Moody, C. I. Scofield, Harry Ironsides, Billy Sunday, Lewis Chafer, C. S. Lewis, Francis Schaffer, John Walvoord, Charles Ryrie, J. Vernon McGee, and Billy Graham) believed in the sufficiency of the Bible. None of these leaders ever suggested believers should look beyond the Bible to extra-biblical leadings from God.

The Last 110 years

From the Puritans to the Pentecostals

The Baptists, Puritans, and Separatists of the 1600s, the leaders of the Great Awakening of the 1700s, and the big meeting evangelists of the 1800s all taught the sufficiency of the Bible. Then around the beginning of the 1900s, something strange happened. Groups of formerly mainline Protestants began to focus on God giving them new revelation, thus rendering the Bible insufficient. The “tongues” movement began in Topeka, Kansas in 1901. Most of these were known as Pentecostals and

joined churches like the Assemblies of God, which believed all the gifts were operative today. This was a bit of an inconsistency because the tongues and prophecy were considered revelation from God. **Other than that, the early Assembly of God churches proclaimed a sufficient Bible.**

The “Latter Rain” Movement

But the Pentecostal movement was fraught with strange teachings. Early in the 20th century, some began to understand that the tongues experience was the beginning of the end of the age. One early movement was referred to as the “Latter Rain.” In his book *The Latter Rain Covenant* (1910), a Canadian Pentecostal named David Wesley Myland (1858-1943) elevated the Pentecostal revival of the 1900s by allegorizing Joel 2:23 and comparing the Acts 2 Pentecost to the early rain (after the spring agricultural crop in Israel) and the movement in the 1900s as the latter rain (the fall crop). This, without saying so, of course, declared the Bible to be insufficient because there is nothing about such a “latter rain” in the Bible. This was not just a misinterpretation (there is no such passage to misinterpret), it was a new, extra-biblical, idea. The Assembly of God Church rejected this idea and held to traditional premillennial theology, but many others accepted it as the new work of the Holy Spirit. Their point was, the Holy Spirit was doing something that the Bible did not anticipate. **So the Latter Rain Pentecostals began to declare the Bible to be insufficient.**

In the 1930s, this “latter rain” idea reasserted itself when a man by the name of William Branham began to preach and exhibit supernatural manifestations. Branham claimed to have a personal angel who gave him revelations, including the prophecy that he was the Elijah who would come before the return of Christ. He also claimed to be the messenger of the Laodicean church, the supposed last church of history (from Revelation 3). **So Branham did not believe in the sufficiency of the Bible.**

The NOLR (New Order of the Latter Rain)

This idea was injected into the teaching of several Pentecostal preachers, especially in Vancouver, British Columbia and North Battleford, Saskatchewan, where a “Latter Rain” revival became the “New Order of the Latter Rain” (NOLR). This included the idea that God was still desiring to do great miracles through the church, like the ones He did in the first century, but He is unable to do so in traditional churches because of their lack of faith. So the NOLR took the idea that the Pentecostal movement is the “Latter Rain” and added the idea that Jesus is waiting on the church to develop a faith in Pentecostal signs. This nonsense that God was limited by the faith of the church is not only extra-biblical but contrary to the sovereign God taught in the Bible. **So the NOLR clearly did not hold to a sufficient Bible.**

In 1951, a man named George Warnock wrote a book called *The Feast of Tabernacles*, which became a key reference for the NOLR. Warnock, like Myland, allegorized the early and latter rains in Israel to make them prophetic for the church. Warnock’s book gives an allegorical interpretation of the feasts of Israel where the Feast of Tabernacles stands for a perfected church, which will come into being at the end of time before Christ returns. Instead of looking for Christ’s return as the blessed hope of the church (Titus 2:13), the NOLR is looking for the church to become the new “incarnation” of Christ on earth. **The “blessed hope” of the church has thereby ironically become the church itself.**

Warnock also claimed that God is progressively restoring truths lost during church history. He believed this began with the Reformation but that Luther went too far. Instead of the priesthood of the believer, Warnock believed in an elitist “Melchizedek” priesthood that only applies to some. This coming glorious (NOLR) church will be possible because it follows the ministry of these new apostles and prophets. So the Bible cannot be taken at face value as a sufficient source for predicting the

future. It must be allegorized by the new NOLR prophets and apostles. **In other words, churches that believe in the sufficiency of the Bible must be replaced by (or left behind by) new churches that do not.**

The “Shepherding Movement”

A man named Ern Baxter was a personal assistant to William Branham, and when the charismatic movement came along in the 1970s, Baxter became a key leader in that movement. He eventually joined with four other charismatics to become the “Fort Lauderdale Five” who were known for what was called the “Shepherding Movement.” In the 1970s and 1980s, this movement taught that God was now speaking to certain shepherds through extra-biblical revelations. These shepherds were more advanced than others at “hearing from God.” The shepherds would “hear from God” directions for those under them. **So the “Shepherding Movement” clearly did not believe that the Bible was sufficient.**

Bob DeWaay (from whom I get much of this material) in a paper called “The Roots and Fruits of the New Apostolic Reformation” (<http://cicministry.org/commentary/issue103.htm>) tells of his former involvement in this movement:

“By definition, the leader of the group I was involved with (a man by the name of Jack Winter) “heard from God.” He came armed with a cache of miracle guidance stories that he repeated to convince people that when it came to hearing from God, he was unsurpassed. Under him were shepherds who heard from God for those under them. Everything we did was under the scrutiny of over shepherds. This included every decision from whom to marry even to mundane decisions like taking trips... If there were any serious complaints about this arrangement, Winter would come into town and preach a sermon on “Korah’s Rebellion” with the application that Winter was “Moses” and anyone who disagreed with him was Korah. I personally heard that sermon more than once.”

By the way, Jim Samra, pastor of Calvary Undenominational Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan (who I quoted above), uses many of these same arguments in his book *The Gift of Church*. He claims to hear from God and to be a special shepherd of God because of his position as the pastor of a local church. He also uses the “Korah’s Rebellion” example, comparing himself to Moses, to deal with any who would oppose him (or any local church pastor). Samra claims, “Jesus, the Great Shepherd of His people **is simply first in a line of shepherds** who would fulfill the promise of Jeremiah 3:15” (103).

[By the way, I taught the only adult Sunday School class in that same Calvary Undenominational Church for 4 years between 1982 and 1986 when George Gardner and Lewis Paul Lehman were pastors there. Both were godly men who believed in the sufficiency of the Bible. Apparently, things have changed.]

The NAR (New Apostolic Reformation)

A pivotal date in church history is May 21-23, 1996. On that date, Dr. C. Peter Wagner of Fuller Seminary conducted “The National Symposium on the Post-Denominational Church.” It was actually a symposium on the Post-Reformation, Post-*sola scriptura*, post-sufficiency of the Bible church. Wagner (and others) claimed this was a prophetically orchestrated work of the Holy Spirit to fulfill God’s progressive purpose of bringing His church to its ultimate destiny. **The symposium concluded that there are still apostles and prophets in the church, and that a coming apostolic movement will build the church into a glorious manifestation of God in the 21st century.** This movement was known as the New Apostolic Reformation (NAR), and it reiterated doctrines already promoted by the “Latter Rain” movement and the NOLR.

C. Peter Wagner, in his paper “The New Apostolic Reformation,” described what he called a “New Authority Structure” in the church today. He said,

“In my judgment, views of leadership authority constitute the most radical changes from traditional Christianity. We

are seeing a transition from bureaucratic authority to personal authority, from legal structure to relational structure, ... from rational leadership to charismatic leadership.”

With respect to local church leadership, Wagner made this comparison:

“In traditional Christianity, the pastors are regarded as employees of the church. The new apostolic pastors are the leaders of the church. ...It is a question of trust. The apostolic congregations trust their pastor. Traditional congregations trust boards and committees. An important dimension of what we are seeing...is the reaffirmation, not only of the New Testament gift of apostle, but also of the office of apostle.”

Wagner thus concluded:

“A basic theological presupposition in new apostolic [churches], as contrasted to traditional churches, is that supernatural power tends to open the way for applying truth, rather than vice versa” (© Chapter 14, excerpted from *The New Apostolic Churches*).

One of the attending pastors at the symposium was Bill Hamon who, supported by Wagner, proclaimed that the whole creation was waiting for this new apostolic last generation church. His text was, *For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God* (Romans 8:19 NKJV). This fully restored church will come about before Christ returns.

Bob DeWaay reports:

The “**Joshua Generation**” is another allegory popular in this movement. The crossing of the Jordan into the Promised Land by Israel is allegorized to mean the triumph of the church over all enemies so as to take the land, “every place your sole treads,” they claim.

According to NOLR and NAR teachers, the kingdom of God is established by the church during history before the Second Coming of Christ. Wagner's friend Bill Hamon writes,

“Now let us begin to pray earnestly that the full dominion of His literal kingdom be established in all reality over all nations and people of the earth... **They will pray and declare that it is time for God's kingdom to be established over all the earth by the divine delegated authority and ministry of Christ's Church**” (Earl Paulk, *Held In The Heavens Until... God's Strategy for Planet Earth*; Atlanta: K Dimension Publishers, 1985, p. 277).

IHOP (The International House Of Prayer)

There is another significant ministry that began in the 1980s we should be aware of. It is called the International House Of Prayer (IHOP). It's director is Mike Bickle, who claims that he began his ministry through the hearing of an audible voice of God in 1983 that told him to start a 24-hour prayer in the spirit of the tabernacle of David. When he figured out what that meant, IHOP was born.

The website for IHOP states this:

“The International House of Prayer of Kansas City is an evangelical missions organization that is committed to praying for the release of the fullness of God's power and purpose, as we actively win the lost, heal the sick, feed the poor, make disciples, and **impact the seven spheres of society—family, education, government, economy, arts, media, and religion.**”

This idea to impact these seven areas of society, called the “Seven Kingdoms,” or “Seven Mountains,” or “Seven Spheres” has been adopted by much of the current movements (such as the NAR).

In another article (<http://cicministry.org/commentary/issue107.htm>), Bob DeWaay evaluates IHOP:

Earlier this year, the International House of Prayer (IHOP) sponsored a conference in Kansas City entitled “Passion for Jesus” that was heavily promoted toward young people. The purpose of the conference was to “cultivate intimacy with Jesus.” In the conference’s second session, IHOP president and director Mike Bickle preached a message based on an allegorical interpretation of a Matthew 25 parable in which he explained his end times theology and “revelation of the bridal paradigm” [Mike Bickle audio message #2; given March 6, 2008]. Bickle claims that Jesus cannot return until something drastically changes in the church: “He is not coming any day. He is not coming until the people of God globally are crying out in intercession with a bridal identity under the anointing of the Spirit.”

So Bickle and IHOP add the idea that the church will impact seven areas of society, that Jesus is not coming back until it does, and this glorious church will form some sort of global “bridal identity.” **Therefore, another ministry (IHOP) declares the coming of a superior church based upon extra-biblical revelation that dismisses the sufficiency of the Bible.”**

The Vineyard Church and “Joel’s Army”

When C. Peter Wagner of Fuller Seminary had his symposium in 1996, one of his special guests was John Wimber, who began the Vineyard Church. Vineyard Ministries have held conferences overseas and throughout the USA. Churches and denominations have been taught with a “gospel” that leaders claim is ordained to bring forth “Joel’s Army.” “Joel’s Army” supposedly represents the greatest miracles, supernatural signs and wonders, far exceeding that of the apostles and prophets of old. According to them, the great out-pouring of the Spirit mentioned in Joel 2:28-29 is to have its complete fulfillment in this age, when God will pour out His Spirit, exceeding that of the apostles on the Day of Pentecost. They believe that this new church will have a “New Breed” of people (“Joel’s Army”)

with supernatural qualities. [The above information from Discernment Ministries (<http://www.discernment-ministries.org/JoelsArmy.pdf>).]

So the Vineyard Church and the “Joel’s Army” movement denies the sufficiency of the Bible and presupposes an extra biblical work of the Spirit.

Chapter 7

Are We Establishing a Glorious Perfect Church? Or, "How's that going for you?"

Progressives (religious “prophets” and political liberals) are always talking about what will happen in the future. It’s what their program is **going to produce**, what the church is **going to become**, what their organization or movement is **going to do**. And somehow that sounds to many like a good argument. With progressives, it’s never about what **is** going on in the present or **has** gone on in the past but what new great things will happen in the future. Reality is rarely a consideration.

But what has actually happened is that the constant barrage of extra-biblical information we hear today is accompanied by a slide in morality. We have an epidemic of Christians getting divorced and remarried, cohabitating, getting abortions, becoming homosexuals, using “casual” blasphemy, as well as illegal drug use, lying and cheating. The new attitude toward sin is: “I prayed about it, and God has given me peace about it.”

Throughout the 20th century, the religious progressives predicted a glorious church with new apostles, new prophets, and an elite group of visionaries who would receive words from God and do miracles. And remember:

Deuteronomy 18:22— When a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not come about or come true, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him.

Well, here we are in the second decade of the 21st century, and what kind of church do we have? Here are some statistics.

Never before in the history of Christianity has the conservative (so called Bible-believing) core of Christianity denied the existence of absolute truth. The self-described born-again

church young people who agree that **there is no such thing as absolute truth** are as follows:

- In 1991 — 52%
- In 1994 — 62%
- In 1999 — 78%
- In 2005 — 91%

Never before were non-Christian seekers considered a part of the regular congregation of the churches. Of those regularly attending our evangelical churches:

- [Only] 4% agree that *the Bible is the infallible Word of God and true in every situation.*
- [Only] 15% of those who regularly attend a Christian church ranked their relationship with God as the top priority in their life.
- 26% of born agains agree that “while he lived on earth, Jesus committed sins, like other people.”
- 37% of born agains believe that if a person is good enough they can earn a place in Heaven (2007).
- 46% agree that Satan is “not a living being but is a symbol of evil” (2007).
- 65% say we cannot know whether any religion is true or not, including Christianity.
- 75% of teenagers have engaged in at least one type of psychic or witchcraft-related activity.

Never before have the **most influential** Christian authors:

- Denied the sufficiency of the Bible (example Bill Hybels)
- Discouraged individual evangelism (example Jim Samra)
- Made fun of the virgin birth of Christ (example Rob Bell)
- Declared theology to be irrelevant (example Brian McLaren)
- Criticized the church for disciplining sin (example Philip Yancey)

[Compare today's authors: McLaren, Yancey, Wagner, Samra, Hybels and Bell to, say, Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, Spurgeon, Scofield, Chafer, Lewis, or Ryrie.]

Never before has divorce and remarriage been considered a solution, rather than a problem. The current divorce rate of the church is approximately the same as (actually, a little higher than) the general society, around 50%.

Never before has pointing out the sin of homosexuality been criticized in the church.

Never before have fundamental, evangelical believers made a case for women teaching or having authority over men.

Never before have “Christians” co-habited outside of marriage (from young people to seniors) without comment from the pulpit.

Never before in the history of Christianity has “a good church” been defined as one which is growing in numbers (or one which tolerates sinners remaining sinners, or one where “good” is defined as being tolerant of sin, or one where “grace” is defined as forgiveness without repentance) rather than one which is teaching the Word of God.

Never before has “a good pastor” been defined as “successful” referring to the number of people attending his meetings, rather than one who teaches the truth.

Never before have missions been defined as social work without the Great Commission (of Matthew 28:18-20 and Acts 1:8).

Never before have Christians, and popular Christian personalities, gathered together for a religious event with members of cults and other religions who are publically proclaiming the universalism of all religions (as with Christians supporting Mitt Romney and Glenn Beck).

The previous statistics come from George Barna's surveys, and they go mainly through the turn of the century. But now we are in the second decade of the 21st century, and things are much worse (if you value biblical morality and theology). If you could interview people up and down the row in nearly any of our churches, you would find affairs, adultery, cohabitation, homosexuality, abortions, pornography, the use of illegal drugs, constant lying, cheating (with spouses, school tests, expense reports, taxes, and purchases), and "casual" blasphemy going on in every extended family (and you wouldn't have to extend the family too far either). If you scratched the surface in the church attenders' lives, you would find all the perversion you would find in the rest of the world, which are worse than they have ever been in the history of the world since Noah. And they go on without condemnation from the pulpit.

And no, it's not just that reporting of statistics is better today. True, the sin nature remains unchanged. People have always been as sinful as they are now. But:

1. There has never been so large a **percentage** of people committing these sins.
2. There has never been the **availability**, easy access, to these sins.
3. There has never been such a **tolerance** for these sins.

Suppose you were living in a small town in Europe in the 1500s. There would be an occasional sexual affair, or divorce, and an occasional closet homosexual. But what would be the

1. Percent
2. Availability, and
3. Tolerance

for those sins?

There is not a sin that the New Testament condemns, which does not go on without mention in the evangelical churches today. There has never been anything like that in the history of Christianity.

Like our political liberals, these progressives will tell you the church is getting better because

1. It is just getting started at improving, we haven't gone far enough yet.
2. We are changing the definition of "better" from discipline to tolerance.

In a paper called "The Church's Moment in the Unraveling of the West," (<http://www.battlefortruth.org/ArticlesDetail.asp?id=441>), S. Michael Craven wrote this:

I do not think it too strong or sensational to say that we are witnessing the collapse of Western civilization. Across the Western world, the fruits of apostasy and secularism are manifesting themselves in overwhelmingly destructive ways. In my lifetime I have seen the rapid demise of the family. For the first time in American history, nonmarried households now outnumber married households (52 percent vs. 48 percent respectively). Today, only one-fifth of American households represent "traditional families—married couples with children" (New York Times, "Married Couples Are No Longer a Majority, Census Finds," May 28, 2011). Out-of-wedlock birthrates in the US have reached 40 percent following a similar trend throughout Western European countries, some of which are as high as 66 percent (New York Times). While out-of-wedlock births continue to rise, more and more people are simply not having children at all, leading to depopulation of the West on a scale unprecedented. Add to this the radical redefinition of marriage and family to include same-sex couples and the future of the natural family—an institution essential to a healthy society—only promises to worsen. Our academic institutions have shifted from teaching virtues and the pursuit of truth to intolerant platforms for secularized political values and godless indoctrination. Students are taught—with self-assumed authority—that God does not exist, your life is your own, sin is an archaic myth, and morality is a matter of individual preference... As for the church, we alone bear

the responsibility for our own demise. The culture did not render us irrelevant — we did!

The New Testament does describe the condition of the church at the end of the age, but it is not a glorious, victorious, perfected, return to the signs and wonders of Pentecost. It's an apostate church full of sin and false teachers and false prophets.

Jesus said:

Matthew 7:13-15 — *Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it. For the gate is small, and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few are those who find it. Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves.*

Mark 13:22 — *for false Christs and false prophets will arise, and will show signs and wonders, in order, if possible, to lead the elect astray* (also Matthew 24:24).

John 18:36 — *My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting, that I might not be delivered up to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm.*

Paul also wrote this:

2 Thessalonians 2:1-3 — *Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together to Him, that you may not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction.*

But There Is Another Problem

Not only is the professing church full of sin and false proph-

ets, as the Bible predicts for the end times, but true born again believers, instead of condemning such groups, are joining together and gathering together with these false apostles, false teachers, and false prophets.

In August of 2010, Christians gathered with Glenn Beck for a “Restoring Honor Rally” in Washington DC. A similar rally was held in Israel in August of 2011. Also in August of 2011, Christians gathered with Texas Governor Rick Perry for a prayer meeting called The Response: A Call to Prayer for a Nation in Crisis. The Response prayer meeting included the New Apostolic Reformation (NAR) and its offshoots, such as Latter Rain, the Kansas City Prophets, Joel’s Army, and the International House of Prayer (IHOP).

Of course, we will not agree with all the religious convictions of our political candidates. And this is not to say Governor Rick Perry is part of these groups. The point is, these were not just political rallies, these were religiously-oriented gatherings, and so-called Bible-believing Christians had no problem mingling together with these groups who deny the sufficiency of the Bible.

Glenn Beck is a Mormon who believes the Book of Mormon must be added as a revelation from God. Mormons believe our God, once a man on the planet Kolob, is one of many gods, and Jesus became a god just like we all can become gods. Beck continually links together America and Israel because he sees America as God’s promised land as dictated in Mormon theology. On his radio program, Beck daily emphasizes the spiritual nature of his message and that our only hope is in turning to God—the Mormon god, one of many gods, the one who populated this planet with many celestial wives, the one who created Jesus and Satan as brothers, the one like whom anyone might become a god and populate their own planet. Beck wants the world to believe his Mormonism is a Christian denomination and that other religions, at least the Christians, Jews, and

Muslims will join together to provide the world with a glorious church.

So it is not just charismatic groups that are involved in this. Other evangelical groups and non-charismatic churches band together to support an extra-biblical idea, which assumes an insufficient Bible.

As we have seen, the NAR and its offshoots believe there are modern-day apostles speaking to the church as the apostles did at the day of Pentecost. So Christians are gathering together in a religious context with those who clearly deny the sufficiency of the Bible. The same thing happens every time Christians go to a seeker-oriented mega-church. Seekers are not just invited in to see the church, the church service is oriented around the seekers.

But what does the Bible say about such gatherings?

The Apostle Paul told the Corinthians:

2 Corinthians 6:14-17 — *Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness... Therefore, **come out from their midst and be separate,***” says the Lord. *And do not touch what is unclean.*

Later Paul told the Ephesians:

Ephesians 5:5-11 — *For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore **do not be partakers with them;** for you were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness and righ-*

*teousness and truth), trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. And do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but **instead even expose them.***

Chapter 8

Making Wise Decisions

Of course, the Bible does not tell us everything we need to know. It says nothing about how to use this computer I'm typing on, or who to marry, or what career to pursue. But neither does it tell me to look for a personal leading from God in these matters. Good decision-making is a function of applying biblical wisdom, not looking for special revelation.

Asking God for special individual leading for decision-making, is asking God to do what God is asking us to do.

We are responsible for our decisions. We should not be trying to avoid decision-making by obligating God to make them for us. The solution is not to punt to God but to apply the wisdom already given in the Bible. When Nehemiah built the walls of Jerusalem, he applied wisdom. He received no special revelation. He was passionate about the need, organized the supplies, the labor and protection, and dealt with those who opposed it. Moral areas are covered in the Bible. Non-moral areas require wisdom.

Possibly the biggest problem with seeking an individual will of God through circumstances, experiences, and feelings is that it distracts from focusing on the wisdom of God's directive will revealed by studying the Scriptures (2 Timothy 2:15; 3:16-17). Since God has only revealed His sovereign plan (realized through what actually happens) and His directive will (stated in the Bible), then we can assume these are sufficient for decision-making. In other words, the teaching of God's Word dictates our moral actions, and wisdom derived from His Word directs our non-moral decisions.

Here Are Some Suggestions for Decision Making, Based on Wisdom

- (1) Look back at your past decisions. What have been the results of those decisions? Maturity comes from training yourself to make good decisions (Hebrews 5:14).

Hebrews 5:14 — *But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.*

- (2) Look for the consistent patterns of life. Wisdom comes from knowing the regular pattern of events (Proverbs 1:1-5, 21, 22; 6:6-11; 30:24-28). So following unusual circumstances (like unexpected phone calls, gifts, or coincidences) runs contrary to wisdom. Wisdom is a firm grasp of the obvious. It is what usually happens most of the time.

Proverbs 1:1-5 — *The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel: To know wisdom and instruction, To discern the sayings of understanding, To receive instruction in wise behavior, Righteousness, justice and equity; To give prudence to the naive, To the youth knowledge and discretion, A wise man will hear and increase in learning, And a man of understanding will acquire wise counsel.*

Proverbs 1:21-22 — *At the head of the noisy streets she cries out; At the entrance of the gates in the city she utters her sayings: How long, O naive ones, will you love being simple-minded? And scoffers delight themselves in scoffing And fools hate knowledge?*

- (3) Evaluate life's patterns from God's point of view. There is worldly wisdom and godly wisdom (1 Corinthians 2:13, 14). Godly wisdom comes from practicing the attitudes revealed in the Bible (like in Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, the

Sermon on the Mount [Matthew 5–7], the Fruit of the Spirit [Galatians 5], the characteristics of love [1 Corinthians 13], etc.). Worldly wisdom will always leave out the fear of God.

1 Corinthians 2:12-16 — *Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, **not in words taught by human wisdom**, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one. For **WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE WILL INSTRUCT HIM?** But we have the mind of Christ.*

- (4) Make the most of every opportunity for the Kingdom of God (Ephesians 5:15-16; Colossians 4:5).

Ephesians 5:15-16 — *Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil.*

Colossians 4:5 — *Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time.*

- (5) Study the situation. Use the circumstances as a context to guide your decision making, not as something pointing out God's individual will. That includes counting the cost (Luke 14:28), being well-informed (Hosea 4:6), and using wise counsel (Exodus 18:19; Proverbs 19:20). Examine the situation like Nehemiah examined the walls of Jerusalem (Nehemiah 2:11-16; see also Joshua 2).

- (6) Study the Bible for God's attitudes (Micah 6:8). The actions of God supply a basis for decision-making, even in non-moral areas (Psalm 119:97-105).
- (7) Look for what is closest to the heart of God, not what you can get by with or get away with. Settle for second-best financially and organizationally but not morally (1 Corinthians 6:9-10).
- (8) Use wise counsel.

Proverbs 11:14 — *Where there is no guidance the people fall, But in abundance of **counselors** there is victory.*

Proverbs 12:20 — *Deceit is in the heart of those who devise evil, But **counselors** of peace have joy.*

Proverbs 15:22 — *Without consultation, plans are frustrated, But with many **counselors** they succeed.*

Proverbs 24:6 — *For by wise guidance you will wage war, And in abundance of **counselors** there is victory.*