

◀ MINISTRY MATTERS ▶

▶ Committee

If your church is interested in adopting our ministry or would like to partner with us, do get in touch with Jeffrey at jeffrey@2Tim2-2.com.

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▶ Past Issues

Past issues of the newsletters are available on the website



<http://www.2tim2-2.com/newsletters/newsletters.htm>



▶ Administration

Our ministry is looking for volunteers to help us with encoding Cecilia's messages to online videos.

If you like to help, write to sgsoon@gmail.com



▶ Newsletter

If you wish to contribute articles for the newsletter, kindly write in to Jeffrey. Deadline for submission of articles for issue 9 will be *mid October* 2006.

▶ Announcement

Jacob Prashc will be dropping by Singapore from 26-27 August 2006. You can play your part by volunteering to help out in organizing this session! Contact Jeffrey@2Tim2-2.com for more details.

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▶ Donations & Love Offerings

Please make cheques payable to 2Tim2-2.com

Please include your name, church, contact numbers, e-mail address & mail to:

2Tim2-2.com
*c/o Bukit Panjang Gospel Chapel;
12 Galistan Ave, Singapore
669686*

You can also do a money transfer to the DBS corporate account of 2Tim2-2.com @ **014-900687-1**

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Entrusting the Word to the Faithful

MICA (P) 058/08/2005
Issue: 0806 (Apr - Jun 2006)

TIMOTHIAN
TIMES



www.2Tim2-2.com

THE GOSPEL OF JUDAS



Yet another fad in the form of an infatuation with conspiracy theories that the Christian Church has plotted to keep certain historical facts hidden from its adherents is in vogue. This time it is the fourth century Coptic 'Gospel of Judas'.

(I) There were various kinds of pseudographical gospels floating around in the post apostolic church, mainly in the patristic period. The Church Fathers with links back to the apostles (eg. *Hegisippus* and *Iraeneus*) held these to be heretical fabricated narratives of Gnostic sects used to justify the claims of the Gnostics. Many of these were Alexandrian and most of these were in the 4th to 6th centuries (such as the much later second Gnostic 'Gospel of Thomas' which Islamic scholars in Egypt said was the true record of Jesus used to justify the claims of Islam).

There were attempts by *proto Gnostics* to circulate these writings even in the first century by giving them a counterfeit Apostolic attribution. Paul the Apostle makes mention of writing his epistle in his own hand to verify his authorship (1 Corinthians 16:21) and used his standard introductory salutation to identify his letters as authentic...

Continued on page 3

In this issue

GOSPEL OF JUDAS ▶ WORKSHOP IN MALAYSIA ▶
WHO WROTE HEBREWS? ▶ IS THE BIBLE INSPIRED ▶
GNOSTICISM ▶ MEDIA RESOURCE HIGHLIGHT

◀ EDITOR'S NOTE ▶



DEAR FRIENDS & CO-LABOURERS,

This issue will feature some articles pertaining to the controversial "Gospel of Judas" and Gnosticism from which the "Gospel of Judas" was derived. The faith of some has been shaken as many have little or no understanding of the real issues at stake. However such heresies have always been present since the founding of the church at Pentecost, with the Apostle Paul warning of some whose faith was shipwrecked as a result of such heretical teachings (see 1 Timothy 1:19).

These articles have been written to address the concerns of believers without going into the intricate details that scholars go into. For those interested in the basic beliefs of Gnosticism, please visit our website: http://www.2tim2-2.com/bs_notes/nt/col/P1L02.pdf. John also dealt with this heresy, "incipient Gnosticism," in 1 John.

The things that cause the shipwreck of some people's faith reminded me of our Lord's parable of the Sower where some seed fell on rocky places, and were unable to grow deep roots. Thus when the storms come, they were uprooted easily.

To prevent this is one reason why our ministry aims at grounding people in the Word in order that their faith may not fail in times like these. I shudder whenever I ponder on how easily the faith of some "believers" are shaken by issues like these, and I thank God constantly for His help in keeping us dependent on Him and His Word.

Our ministry will be involved in quite a number of events in the second half of 2006 with the Trainer's workshop, Ruth workshop in PJ, India End Times Conference and Philippines workshop. Another workshop in the planning stage is the workshop on finance and money. We're also planning an anniversary cum fund-raising dinner in November 2006. With so many things going on, it is imperative that we seek the Lord for His direction in all these and ask you to help us with your prayers as well.

His bondservant,
Jeffrey Loh

◀ H2, 2006 ~ TEACHING SCHEDULE ▶



Cecilia's Schedule

MONDAY EVENINGS:

- ⌚ Time: 8 pm to 10 pm
- Bukit Panjang Gospel Chapel
- 12 Galistan Ave, S669686
- **Plumbing the Depths of Revelation (Part 2)**
- Commencing 10 July 2006

TUESDAY EVENINGS:

- ⌚ Time: 7:45 pm to 10:00 pm
- Hakka Methodist Church
- 1B Evelyn Road, S309298
- **Plumbing the Depths of 1, 2, 3 John** - commencing Aug 1, 2006

WEDNESDAY MORNINGS:

- ⌚ Time: 9:15 am to 12:15 pm
- Hakka Methodist Church
- 1B Evelyn Road S309298
- **Plumbing the Depths of 1, 2, 3 John** - commencing Aug 2, 2006

WEDNESDAY EVENINGS:

- ⌚ Time: 8:00 pm to 9:45 pm
- Joy Fellowship Church
- 21A Keong Saik Road
- **Meandering through Deuteronomy**
- Commencing 11 July 2006

THURSDAY EVENINGS:

- ⌚ Time: 8pm to 10:00 pm
- Bethesda (Frankel Estate) Church
- 4 La Salle Street, S456930
- **Diving into the Book of Ruth (5 lessons)**
- Commencing 6 July 2006

FRIDAY MORNINGS:

- ⌚ Time: 9:30 am to 12:30 pm
- Bukit Panjang Gospel Chapel,
- 12 Galistan Ave, S669686
- **Plumbing the Depths of Hebrews Part 1 (11 Lessons)**
- Commencing 23 June 2006

OVERSEAS ENGAGEMENTS



Cecilia will be conducting a Ruth Basic IBS workshop in PJ on Aug 12-13 2006. She will be speaking at two conferences in Bangalore from 7-13 September 2006.

Cecilia and Jeffrey are planning to go to the Philippines from 14-17 October 2006 to teach a series of workshops.

Do pray for God's leading as we plan for the workshops and conferences.



Jeffrey's Schedule

THURSDAY EVENINGS

- ⌚ Time: 8 pm to 10 pm
- Condominium Clubhouse
- Kellock Road (off River Valley Road)
- **Daniel Part 1**
- Commencing 6 July 2006

Strictly by registration.

Kindly refer to the website for more details.



SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

Kindly refer to the website for our speaking engagements at www.2Tim2-2.com

Correspondence address:

2Tim2-2.com
c/o Bukit Panjang Gospel Chapel;
12 Galistan Ave,
Singapore 669686

Email address:

jeffrey@2Tim2-2.com



**AUDIO TEACHING
MATERIALS OF
JACOB PRASCH
(AUDIO CD FORMAT)**

- Jacob Prasch 2004 \$15
- Jacob Prasch 2005 \$15
- Biblical Revival \$10
- Christian Cults \$10
- Ephesus Autopsy \$10
- Burning Bush, Hinini \$10
- Mezuzot - Door Posts \$10
- Spirit of Truth & Error \$10
- Devil's Algebra - Part 1 & 2 \$20
- The Reign of Asa \$10
- The Spirit Of AntiChrist \$10
- Theology Of Conversion \$10
- Twin Pillars Of Madness \$10
- Those Who Drift \$10
- What Reformers Forgot \$10
- When God Writes \$10



*Jacob will be in Singapore
26-27 August 2006!*

*Do reserve a copy of the CD!
More details will be made
known later via email.*

Continued from page 17

At the end of the day, our prayer is that we have done what the ministry has been set up to do - 'Entrusting the Word to faithful who will be able to teach others also'. Pray along with us for those who have attended that they will continue to hone their skills and will be able to teach others also. May God use a workshop like this in other countries to touch more individuals and spur them to carry on upholding the true gospel of Jesus Christ in their churches!



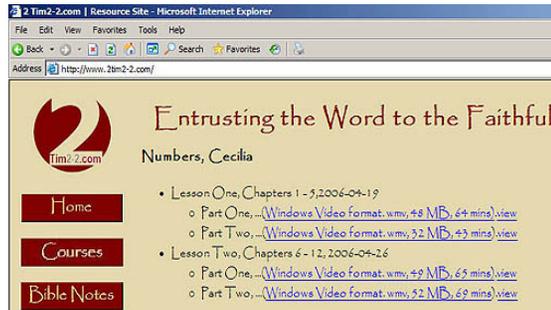
◀ MEDIA & RESOURCES ▶

🔑 JUST A CLICK AWAY....

The lessons and conferences conducted by 2Tim2-2.com are now made available on the internet!

The location is @

www.2tim2-2.com/video/index.htm



- Browse to the page and save the files to your local hard disk! All you have to do is right-click on the topic with your mouse and select "**Save As Target!**".
- If you want to view it via video streaming, right-click on the topic with your mouse and select "**Open in New Window!**". This will trigger the opening of another browser with the media player in place.

Note: These links are provided **free-of-charge**. By downloading the videos, you hereby agree that the information is for your own private use. All right(s) reserved to 2Tim2-2.com.



Continued from front page

Paul also warned the Galatians of those who preach another Christ. These later Gnostic forgeries became prolific in the early centuries of the church after the apostles were no longer alive to debunk them personally and were one reason *Iraeneus* wrote "*Contra Heresium*" ("Against All Heresies") having obtained the original apostolic tradition of Jesus from Polycarp and his contemporaries who received it from the Apostle John in Ephesus.



Yet, the Gospel of Judas is devoid of any such calligraphic verification, identifying idiosyncratic salutations, patristic attestation, essential historical consistency with other earlier Christian records, or any other viable criteria establishing a demonstrable authenticity. It is a document in the wrong language with an ontogeny from the wrong century whose content is *prima facie* (at first sight) incompatible with the documents in the correct languages of the correct century. There is not a single first or second manuscript to be found in any scriptorium in the world that provides The Gospel of Judas with a solitary speck of sustainable historical credibility fueling the thesis that Jesus put Judas up to betraying Him.



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(II) The bogus 'Gospel of Judas' is very obviously one such Post Apostolic forgery.

- The original Gospels were written in Greek not Coptic and even existing Aramaic/Syriac manuscripts were translated from earlier Greek ones. This Gospel of Judas is in Coptic (a manuscript language of later Alexandrian deviancy).
- Even liberal scholars like *JAT Robinson* were finally forced to agree that the writers of the canonical gospels had too much familiarity with Second Temple Period Israeli Judaism to be products of a post apostolic gentile literary embellishment (see "Christ and Palestinian Judaism" by E.P. Sanders).

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- We have the *Thiessen* fragment and the first century portion of John (currently preserved in Manchester, England), so earlier first century documents in Greek testify to an early authorship of the accepted gospel accounts. The earliest copy of The Gospel of Judas is an early 4th century manuscript written in Coptic and it cannot even be verified as certain that it is a later and accurate copy of the same late Second Century Gospel of Judas denounced as a heretical and historically inaccurate forgery in the Patristic Era of the late Second Century because, as with the Gnostic Gospels of Thomas, two or more variant documents from differing places and times (even centuries difference) may have had the same name.
- While we may have over 10,000 gospel manuscript documents (supplemented by an avalanche of later codexes), we have only 420 of Julius Caesar and *one* of The Gospel of Judas. To lend any credibility to non-Greek/ non-Hebrew/ non-Aramaic account written over 260 years after the time of Jesus on earth (which at best may be based on an earlier document written 150 years after the time of Jesus) is absolutely ludicrous in contrast to contemporary 1st century eye witness accounts. This is particularly true where the fundamental accounts in the content are at categorical variance from the massive body of much earlier manuscripts. It is implausible to ascribe historicity to such a document as The Gospel of Judas in view of the overwhelming mountain of manuscript evidence firmly stacked against it.
- Rabbinic Jewish scholars who have investigated the gospels as history and Jewish literature all independently testify to the accuracy of the “*Sitz im Leben*” of the established gospel narratives as first century Jewish literature. These include *Rabbi Dr. Pinchas Lapide* (Professor, Hebrew University), the late *Rabbi Dr. David Flusser* (Professor, Hebrew University), *Rabbi Dr. Jacob Nuesner* (former Professor Brown University), *Dr. Gezer Vermes* (Professor, Oxford University and member of the Dead Sea Scrolls Commission, and arguably the world’s leading Jewish expert on ancient Christianity), *Rabbi Dr. Larry Schiffman* (Professor, New York University and also a member of the Qumran Commission), and the late *Dr. Haim Macoby* (Spiro Institute, London) . Most of these Jewish scholars are Orthodox rabbis (except *Gezer Vermes*) and the leading experts in the modern world in academic Judaism, and have no pro Christian prejudices. *Jacob Nuesner* maintains that the original gospels are the pivotal first century Jewish religious literature between the inter-testament apocrypha and the early *midrashim*. Their findings are supported by Christian scholars who made the same investigations such as the late *FF Bruce*, *Dr. James Chareleston*, (Professor, Princeton University), ancient Semitic linguistic expert *Dr. Siam Bhayro*, (University College London and formerly of Yale University), and also *Dr. R N Longenecker*, the famed German critical scholars *Bilderbeck & Strack*, and *Dr. R T France* (former Principal of Wycliffe Hall, Oxford who dismantled the Bultamarian “Criteria of Dissimilarity” by Perrins).

Wan Tan mee, Yong Tau Foo, Chee Cheong Fun, Mui Fan, all these tasted so differently from those back home in Singapore. So rich and full of taste, but how can we tell? Well, the fact that we eat this food here in Singapore gives us that ability to tell this difference. The same holds true with the study of the Bible. The more we ‘eat’ of it in its original state, the more we can tell the difference.

This trip to Kuala Lumpur (KL), Malaysia, we shared on how to ‘eat’ the Bible in its original ‘taste’. The church we visited was a Brethren Church in a suburban town just at the outskirts of KL. The people who attended the workshops are from different denominations and from various levels of the church. There were 42 participants for the Saturday’s Basic Inductive Bible Study (IBS) Workshop & 17 for the facilitators training.

The workshop began with an introduction of Jeffery and the ministry. This was followed by a brief synopsis of this little Old Testament book which touches on spiritual apathy and misplaced priorities in the Book of Haggai.

The basics of the IBS method was reading, marking, listing and repeating the whole process for every key word that we find. The reading, marking and listing was the easy part, after the listing comes the analyzing part which is a little more difficult to grasp. Since the participants were only exposed to this method of studying for the first time, it took a while to warm up and get used to the method.

As everyone did their own marking, listing and analyzing, some of their eyes were opened as they found that they could not only find hidden truths this way, but also study deeply into the Bible in its original setting. By the end of the session, ‘Read the text’, ‘Mark the text’, and ‘Make a list’ were imprinted on the minds of the participants!

As the IBS workshop sessions ended, the participants had picked up the basic skills. To ensure that they grow in their Biblical understanding, they need constant practice. “Practice makes perfect?” No, practice only makes permanent, it is *good* practice that makes perfect!

On Sunday, we began the Facilitators sessions with 17 participants, and Jeffery ran through the whole workbook with them so that they could make effective use of the workbook to start their own IBS groups. He gave them as much necessary background information pertaining to the workbook as is possible, trusting God to help them as they take their first steps in teaching, using the Haggai workbooks..

▲
IBS
WORKSHOP

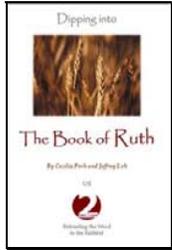
▼
HAGGAI
WORKSHOP AT
BPGC

By Hans Cheong



Word-hungry participants were awed by the relevancy and applicability of the Book of Haggai in modern times.

DIVING INTO THE BOOK OF RUTH

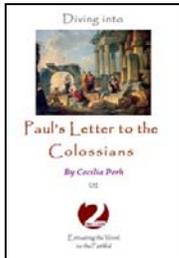


The Book of Ruth is a beautiful love story which reflects the grandiose Biblical theme of love - God is love, and God loved with such an intensity and depth that He gave His only begotten Son to die for a world of sinners (Romans 5:8).

The redemptive love of God is seen very clearly in the book of Ruth through the beautiful typology of the Kinsman-Redeemer portrayed by Boaz, a man of great wealth, who loved a Moabite widow of humble circumstances and married her. The great blessing that came from this union is understood only generations later: the one we call our Messiah; Yeshua Ha Mashiach will be born (Matthew 1:1, 18-25).

Cost: S\$ 15

DIVING INTO THE BOOK OF COLOSSIANS



Paul's letter to the Colossians is a very challenging intellectual letter to people in love with Greek wisdom and rhetoric. It is a profound and priceless treasure right from the heart of God to ours. Here our Father speaks about His Son, so that we may enter into the "fullness" and completeness of being "in Christ", "in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:2).

There were philosophies and man-made religions that were challenging the faith of God's people, seeking to put them into bondage and rob them of their "prize". Paul ably defends Christ Jesus, His Person and His Work of Creation and Redemption in Chapters 1-2. In Chapters 3-4, he shows what kind of life a person who submits to Christ Jesus will live - holy, blameless, and beyond reproach. Paul gives us many ways by which all who claim to be believers in Christ Jesus, can know whether they belong to Him or not - the proof is in your life. What type of fruit are you bearing? Good fruit or bad fruit? That will determine your final destiny.

Cost: S\$ 25

TEACHING MATERIALS

WORKBOOK HIGHLIGHTS



If you have the ability to write or love to do research, and is drawn to our ministry, you can begin by getting in touch with Cecilia at Cecilia@2Tim2-2.com

Do pray for Cecilia as she seeks the Lord for more revelation and insight to live, study, teach and write more books this year and next!

Books to be released in the second half of this year...

- Daniel Parts 1 and 2
- 1, 2, 3 John



In the age of sensationalized nonsense such as 'Bible Codes' and 'Da Vinci Codes'... we should not be surprised that wild conjectures about the Gospel of Judas are already being hawked by religious connivers with bogus and fanciful theories and silly people willing to hand over their money



It is interesting in itself that it is non-Christian orthodox Jewish scholars of late who have been at the forefront of debunking myths manufactured by the dying breed of higher critical academics such as the televised response of Dr. Larry Schiffman to the nonsense of Barbara Thierring of the so called "Jesus Seminar". If such Jewish academics were to have a bias, it would be logically assumed to be anti Christian. But rather it lends forceful credence to New Testament orthodoxy and must be considered objective.

The Gospel narratives emerged from a First Century Israeli Judaism, and while Jewish scholarship (as well as Christian scholarship) affirms the authenticity of their Judaic content as first century source documents both form critically and source critically, this can clearly not be said for the later 'Gospel of Judas'.

In the age of sensationalized nonsense such as 'Bible Codes' and 'Da Vinci Codes' (and a naïve biblically ignorant public helping the innovators of nonsense to make a quick buck), we should not be surprised that wild conjectures about the Gospel of Judas are already being hawked by religious connivers with bogus and fanciful theories and silly people willing to hand over their money.

The pseudo scholarly biases of the declining liberal theological establishment notwithstanding, we must ask why a first century copy of a Greek document like the *Thiesson* fragment affirming biblical orthodoxy did not receive the same publicity as a 4th Century Coptic one that is not supported or corroborated by any complimentary manuscript evidence?

Indeed, logic & common sense, serious and objective comparative document scholarship, and academic integrity are quickly thrown out the window in favor of sensationalism, an unsubstantiated and academically abject attack on Judeo-Christian orthodoxy, and an abandonment of factual reality in a world that as Jesus said is a world that is truly "in the power of the wicked one" ■

Jacob Prash

Every man must have a basis of authority on which he thinks and acts -- for the Christian, it is the Bible, a book which is uniquely different from all others, written over a period of 1,500 years by about 40 authors, speaking of things past, present and future, things and persons knowable and unknowable and absolutely accurate in whatever it speaks.

The means by which God reveals Himself is both general and specific. General revelation includes all means apart from Christ and the Bible which is specific revelation. The reason why the Bible is the absolute Word of God is because its Author is God (see Ps 138:2b for its authority). The Bible is God-inspired (2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:20-21), i.e., God spoke and wrote through the human authors, using all their experiences and culture and personalities and individual styles. This Bible has often been called the plenary verbal, infallible, inspired Word of God.

There are many who hold partial and limiting views of the inspiration of the Bible -- mostly due to their own presuppositions, through not letting the Bible define what the Bible claims for itself, and through trying to understand inspiration in the light of the times they themselves live in, rather than primarily the Biblical culture first and then finding the principles which the culture/practices express and which can then be expressed in our own cultures.

◀ BIBLIA ▶ IS THE BIBLE INSPIRED?

by Cecilia Perh



It is essential to let the Bible speak for itself. It claims to be God-breathed (2 Tim 3:16), to be inspired by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21)...yet without negating the individual personalities of the human authors used (note the various styles of different writers of Biblical books). It claims inerrancy for itself (e.g., Mt 5:18), but that does not exclude the use of ordinary human language, figures of speech and the need for research before writing. Admittedly, there are minor textual problems with the available texts we have, because inerrancy was only with the original autographs which have long since disappeared. The choice is for each one of us to make: would you believe in man's fallible opinions or in the infallible Word of God which has proved true again and again?



**The Bible has often been called
the plenary verbal, infallible, inspired
Word of God.**

Because of the very high view of Christ presented in Hebrews, it is fitting that even the human writer himself would be effaced. Notice how even the Old Testament human writers were deliberately not mentioned (except once in Heb 4:7), while the divine Author was substituted in its place. Hebrews 2:6 says "But one has testified somewhere, saying..." Does he not know who wrote Psalm 8? Of course, he does. But it was God who inspired him to emphasize the divine writer. This is in keeping with the subject matter, the exaltation of the Son of God, who is God's final Word to us (Heb 1:2). Thus when a human writer of Scripture was providentially led to hide his identity, there is no need to try, and possibly little or no hope of success in trying, to discover it. It is wiser to be content not to know.

My conclusion is that the Holy Spirit wrote Hebrews and that the message of Hebrews is directed to Christians of every age, although its message must be interpreted in the light of the historical context of its original readers who were Jewish. Through this Epistle God unquestionably has spoken, and still speaks, by His Spirit to His people. Ultimately this is what matters. ■

? *Do you agree or disagree with what I've written? Why or why not? Write to us with your view!*

Bibliography

1. *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, 1983, Hebrews by Donald Guthrie, pp16-31.*
2. *Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia, Edited by Charles F Pfeiffer, Howard F Vos, John Rea, 1983, Hebrews by Wallace A Alford, pp 773-774.*
3. *Word Pictures in the New Testament, Volume V, 1932, Hebrews by A T Robertson, pp 327-331.*
4. *New Bible Commentary, Third Edition, 1970, Edited by D Guthrie, J A Motyer, A M Stibbs, DJ Wiseman. Hebrews by A M Stibbs, pp 1191-1192*
5. *Jensen's Survey of the New Testament by Irving L Jensen, 1981, pp 406-408.*
6. *Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History, translated by Isaac Boyle, 1990, pp 244-247.*
7. *Scriptures quoted are from the New American Standard Bible.*

◀ TEACHING MATERIALS ▶

PLUMBING THE DEPTHS OF HEBREWS ~ PARTS 1, 2 & 3



When doubts assail you, when trials encompass you, when failure plagues you, when you're weary of running the race, there is only one answer! It is found in drawing near to the throne of grace, to Jesus your High Priest who can be touched with the feelings of your infirmities.

This study on Hebrews 1-4 will look at the Son, at angels, and at our great salvation. We will see what God has spoken through our merciful and faithful high priest, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The study on Hebrews 5-8 will lead you into an intimacy with our Lord Jesus Christ, an intimacy that will hold you in the worst of all circumstances. If these truths can hold the believers who are facing certain martyrdom, surely they can hold us who have lesser problems than they!

In this final study of Hebrews, we will be looking at the superior sacrifice and superior benefits our Lord has won for us and learn to live in the light of these truths. This is the only way to endure the persecutions and troubles and distresses that colour our world today.

Each Part Cost: S\$ 25

C) THE DESTINATION

The suggestion which is supported by most internal and external evidence is Rome. It was at Rome that it was first known and quoted, and since this was during the last decade of the first century, it shows that the epistle must have reached there at a very early stage in its transmission. Also, Hebrews 13:24 would have more point if it was addressed to a destination somewhere in Italy rather than elsewhere. This however is not conclusive.

Other suggestions include the church at Jerusalem (W Leonard, A Ehrhardt), Colossae (T W Manson), Samaria (J W Bowman), Ephesus (W F Howard), Galatia (A M Dubarle), Cyprus (A S Nell), Corinth (F Lo Bue, H Montefiore), Syria (F Rendall), Antioch (V Burch), Berea (Klostermann), Caesarea (C Spicq). This list is sufficiently varied to show that we should not be dogmatic over the destination of the epistle.

D) THE DATE

Several statements indicate that the epistle was written during the second generation of the apostolic period, eg, the process of transmission (Heb 2:1-4), time for growth (Heb 5:12), "former days" (Heb 10:32), past leaders dead (Heb 13:7), Timothy imprisoned (Heb 13:23). Yet the Jewish institutions were still in operation and the temple still standing (Heb 10:1f; 8:13; 13:10-11) although they were soon to be gone (Heb 12:37) and persecution was imminent (Heb 10:32-34; 12:4). Since Paul was put to death before Nero's own death in June 8, AD 68, and the Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed by Titus in AD 70, there is left only the years 67 to 69 AD as probable or even possible. It is thus the last of the New Testament books before the Johannine Writings all of which come towards the end of the first century AD and after the destruction of Jerusalem.

E) HIS STYLE

"In form the Epistle appears more like a sermon than a letter. The style is oratorical, the argumentation logical, the literary structure elaborate. There are periodic exhortations." "It is called an epistle and so it is, but of a peculiar kind. In fact..., it begins like a treatise, proceeds like a sermon, and concludes like a letter. It is...more like a literary composition than any other New Testament book,... more definitely artistic (with) more literary language. There is in Hebrews more of 'a studied rhetorical periodicity' (Thayer), but with many 'parenthetical involutions' (Westcott) and with less of 'the impetuous eloquence of Paul.' Chapter eleven reveals a studied style and as a whole the Epistle belongs to the literary *Koine* rather than to the vernacular. Moulton thinks that the author did not know Hebrew but follows the Septuagint throughout in his abundant use of the Old Testament."

...the very high view of Christ presented in Hebrews, it is fitting that even the human writer himself would be effaced

CONCLUSION

The impossibility of answering with any certainty who the author of Hebrews really is does not prevent us from rightly understanding it nor does it minimize the spiritual and theological value of this document which has, from the first, commended itself as authoritative by its own intrinsic worth. While possible answers have been suggested and to some extent reasonably supported, the simple truth is that we do not know who wrote this Epistle.

We can be sure that we have the accurate word of God because of the stringent tests which the Church used in determining which books are canonical. The canon of the Old Testament as the thirty-nine books we know today, was completed by about 400 B.C. when Malachi, the last prophet spoke. The New Testament canon consisting of the twenty-seven books we have was completed by about 397 A.D. The selection was a process that went on until each book proved its worth by passing the tests for canonicity. Not only that, the wealth of early manuscripts attesting to both Old and New Testaments ensure that the Bible is the best-attested document in all ancient writings.

A proper understanding of the Bible depends on the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit and the interpreting work of the reader. Illumination does not always guarantee automatic understanding and there are certain principles of interpretation we neglect to our own peril.

IBS WORKSHOPS

The ministry will be planning Inductive Bible Study (IBS) workshops during public holidays and weekends. If your church is interested in hosting, kindly get in touch with us through Jeffrey.

INTRODUCTION TO IBS SKILLS

Those with no knowledge of IBS

- 101 Psalm 1 (1.5 hr)
- 102 1 Thessalonians 1 (2 hr)
- 103 Matthew 6:24-34 (2 hr)
- 104 1 Corinthians 12 (2 hr)

BASIC IBS SKILLS

Those with some knowledge of IBS

- 201 Overview of Haggai (5 hrs)
- 202 Overview of Obadiah (4 hr)
- 203 Overview of Philemon (4 hr)
- 211 Overview of Jude (1.5 days)
- 212 Overview of 2 Peter (2 days)
- 213 Overview of 1 Thessalonians (2 days)

INTERMEDIATE IBS SKILLS

Those proficient with basic IBS skills

- 301 Structuring Philippians (2 days)
- 302 Structuring Colossians (2 days)

ADVANCE IBS SKILLS

Handling controversial passages and topics - teachers and leaders

- * *Mandatory homework to be submitted 1 month prior to course*
- 401 Handling a Controversial Passage - Hebrews 6:4-8
- 402 Handling a Controversial Passage - Romans 7
- 411 Handling a Controversial Topic - *Once saved, Always saved?*
- 412 Handling a Controversial Topic - *What Rapture? Which Rapture?*



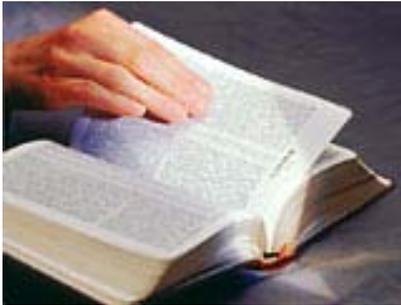
The canon of the Old Testament as the thirty-nine books we know today, was completed by about 400 B.C. when Malachi, the last prophet spoke.



One is to interpret plainly, recognizing the use of figures of speech where it occurs, to interpret in context, recognizing the process of revelation and the use of phenomenal language as well as the different types of literature. ■

WHO WROTE HEBREWS?

by Cecilia Perh



Any attempt to deal adequately with Scripture involves not only a careful exegesis of the Greek text, but also a study of the historical and cultural backgrounds of the book. However, as in the case of Hebrews where the author is unidentified, and early Church Fathers and historians and many theologians are not able to agree on who he is, it behooves us to not make too definite a claim as to our own convictions of who he might be.

If God had not chosen to reveal him to us, who are we to dogmatically claim sure knowledge? However, since curiosity is inbuilt in man, and we have this curious urge to straighten out in our own minds what we personally believe, let us start our search.

📖 A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE EPISTLE

The earliest quotation of Hebrews is found in the letter of *Clement of Rome* to the Corinthian church (c AD 95). *Marcion*, a heretic in the second century, did not include Hebrews among his collection which was supposed to represent the teachings of Paul. Near the end of the second century, *the Muratorian Canon* which represented the canon of the church in Rome contains no reference to Hebrews, although it includes all the letters of Paul by name.

However in the third century, *Clement of Alexandria* quoted his teacher *Pantaenus* as maintaining the Pauline authorship of this letter. He continued the tradition of Pauline authorship. *Origen*, although he held to Pauline authorship in the beginning, had doubts later on about its Pauline authorship, although not about its canonicity. He and others in his time, considered the thoughts to be Paul's, but not the style. He himself concluded that no one but God knows who the author was.

His successors were convinced that Paul was the author, and this soon became the opinion of the Eastern church. Undoubtedly, it was belief in its Pauline origin which secured its universal acceptance. In the *Chester Beatty Papyrus* of the Pauline letters, Hebrews was included and placed after Romans.

In the western church, acceptance was more delayed. At the close of the second century, *Tertullian* regarded Barnabas as the author, and clearly did not regard this epistle as on par with Paul's letters. *Eusebius*, an early church historian, said that the church at Rome did not accept Hebrews as Pauline. *Cyprian*, in the mid-third century, did not accept the epistle too.

📖 OTHER SUGGESTIONS

As has already been discussed, we know that Pauline authorship was accepted first in the eastern church and then later on in the western church, although the early Church Fathers had no absolute certainty. With the coming of the Renaissance, these doubts were voiced by *Erasmus*, while *Luther* and *Calvin* challenged Pauline authorship.

A) MOST LIKELY AUTHOR

Luther first suggested Apollos. He is the apostolic character whose biblical description (Acts 18:24-28; 1 Cor 1:13; 3:4) comes closest to the type of man it would take to write an epistle like Hebrews. He was an Alexandrian Jew who was "an eloquent man," well grounded in the Old Testament, as well as an enthusiastic teacher-preacher (Acts 18:24-26). He worked closely with Paul toward the end of Paul's ministry (Tit 3:13). (7)

B) LESS LIKELY AUTHORS

Tertullian said that Barnabas wrote it. This is unconfirmed, though the man whose name means "Son of Encouragement" (Acts 4:36) might well have written this "word of exhortation" (13:22). As a Levite he would have an uncommon interest in the sacrificial rituals, while as a Cyprian Jew he is familiar with the Hellenistic and philosophical teaching of Alexandrian Judaism with which both the author of Hebrews and his readers seem to have some acquaintance.

(7) *This has become the position of an increasingly great number of scholars which include T W Manson, W F Howard, C Spicq, Alford, F W Farrar, and Hugh Montefiore. Yet this still does not account for omission of his name, and it seems strange that the Alexandrian church did not know and eagerly acknowledge Apollos as the author.* W Alford, p 774

Also suggested as authors are Philip the deacon, Priscilla (but the masculine participle in 11:32 "*me diegoumenon*" disposes of that theory) and Aquila, Aristion, Silas, Mark, Jude, and *Clement of Rome*. "The oldest Greek MSS (Aleph A B) have simply "*Pros Hebraious*" as the title, but they place it before the Pastoral Epistles, while the *Textus Receptus* puts it after the Pastoral Epistles and Philemon."

📖 ANY OTHER CLUES?

A) HIS NATIONALITY

One clear fact agreed upon by all is that he must be Jewish. This is clearly seen from the abundance of Old Testament quotations used. His very familiarity with the Old Testament, albeit the Septuagint, shows us that he not only was Jewish, but probably an orthodox one who was deeply devoted to the Old Testament.

B) THE RECIPIENTS

"The title attached to this letter in the earliest extant manuscript is '*To the Hebrews*.'" There are no manuscripts of the letter, in fact, which do not bear this title. As early as *Clement of Alexandria* and *Tertullian* the epistle was known by this title." The word "Hebrews" most likely means Jews, (Christian as well as professing Christian Jews), whether Aramaic or Greek speaking, who were in a local church somewhere.

The author was probably in Italy when he wrote (Heb 13:24), although "they of Italy" (*hoi apo tes Italias*) can mean those who have come from Italy. He has personal knowledge of his readers (cf Heb 13:18,19,23). He knows their history and background, that they have been abused for their faith and have reacted well to the plundering of their property (Heb 10:33, 34). He is aware of their generosity (Heb 6:10), their present state of mind (Heb 5:11ff; 6:9ff), their attitudes to their leaders (Heb 13:17) and the problems of money and marriage (Heb 13:4, 5). The specific mention of Timothy (Heb 13:23) confirms this, for Timothy must have been known to the readers.

📖 THE ARGUMENTS AGAINST PAULINE AUTHORSHIP

The fact of the anonymity of Hebrews is an immediate difficulty for Pauline authorship, since nowhere has Paul ever written anonymously. On the contrary, he who meticulously claims authority in the introduction of the New Testament epistles, is not likely to have sent a letter without reference to the special authority vested in him(3). Also, there is no suggestion in Hebrews of the same dramatic experience Paul underwent at his conversion, which is never far from the surface in his letters.

With regard to the argument of tradition, it is clear to see that there was no certainty anywhere in the early centuries. Although *Origen* first held to Pauline leadership, he later changed his mind. *Origen* held that the thoughts were Paul's while he felt that *Clement of Rome* or *Luke* may have written the book. *Clement of Alexandria* thought that Paul wrote it in Hebrew while *Luke* translated it into Greek. No early writer apparently attributed the Greek text to Paul.

The reason was because of the difference between the Greek of Paul's epistles and that of Hebrews. *Origen* says that Hebrews lacked the apostle's rudeness of expression," that it "is more idiomatically Greek in the composition of its diction."(4) Moreover the writer knows precisely where his argument is going. If he pauses to exhort the readers, he resumes his train of thought. He does not go off at a tangent as Paul sometimes does. The internal evidence of the Epistle itself, its language, style and contents are regarded as conclusive against Pauline authorship (eg contrast Heb 2:3 with Gal 1:12; 2:6).



As biblical scholarship developed from the time of the Reformation, fewer and fewer scholars have held to Pauline authorship so that very few seriously defend it today. However, it continues to be homiletically convenient and is often so asserted uncritically.(5) The language is a good literary style in *Koine* Greek and it certainly contains fewer irregularities of syntax than Paul's epistles.(6)

(3) See Rom 1:1; 1 Cor 1:1; 2 Cor 1:1; Gal 1:1; Eph 1:1; Phil 1:1; Col 1:1; 1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:1; 1 Tim 1:1; 2 Tim 1:1; Tit 1:1; Phm 1.

(4) D Guthrie, p20. Eusebius, in p246, says that the style of Hebrews has not the vulgarity of diction which belongs to the apostle, who confesses that he is but common in speech, that is in his phraseology."

(5) Even though Eusebius is against Pauline authorship, yet he kindly commends others who would think otherwise. "I would say, that the thoughts are the apostle's, but the diction and phraseology belong to someone who has recorded what the apostle said, and as one who noted down at his leisure what his master dictated. If then, any church considers this epistle as coming from Paul, let it be commended for this, for neither did those ancient men deliver it as such without cause. But who it was that really wrote the epistle, God only knows." p 246-247

(6) D Guthrie, in p20, says that ME Thrall in *Greek Particles in the New Testament*, (Leiden, 1962), p9, considers that Hebrews may be more typical of cultured Greek than any other documents in the New Testament

The first patristic writer in the West to accept Hebrews was *Hilary*, followed soon after by *Jerome* and *Augustine*. *Augustine's* acceptance of Hebrews was probably on the grounds of Pauline authorship. His opinion was decisive in causing others to accept Hebrews. It is interesting to note that in his earliest works, *Augustine* cites Hebrews as Pauline, but in his latest works as anonymous, with a period of vacillation in between. He was not unlike *Origen* in this. Thus it was not until the end of the fourth century that this epistle to the Hebrews came into its own among those churches.

✧
Near the end of the second century, the Muratorian Canon which represented the canon of the church in Rome contains no reference to Hebrews, although it includes all the letters of Paul by name.

✧
This brief history shows us that it was generally believed that Hebrews was written by an apostolic authority, even though no specific name can be attached to it. Though it was slow to gain admission into the New Testament Canon, its ultimate acceptance in spite of serious doubts testifies to the intrinsic power of the epistle itself.(1)

(1) An interesting footnote to this is that during the Reformation, when Martin Luther suggested that Apollos would make a more probable author, the Council of Trent, in order to settle this question, used its ecclesiastical authority to declare most emphatically that Paul wrote the epistle



📖 THE ARGUMENT FOR PAULINE AUTHORSHIP

Among the evidence presented by proponents of Pauline authorship is Peter's mention of a letter Paul wrote, possibly to Jews (2 Pet 3:15-16), association with Timothy (cf Heb 13:23) and Rome (cf Heb 13:24), an ending not unlike Paul's, and many points of theological agreement.

The most frequently offered evidence, probably the strongest and not to be dismissed without reason however, is simply tradition(2). The fact is that Paul was the first widely suggested candidate, and he has been accepted by more people over a longer period of time than any other.

Another argument was that brought forth by *Clement of Alexandria* who explained the absence of a personal name in the text of the letter on the grounds that Jesus Himself was the apostle of the Almighty to the Hebrews, and that therefore, out of humility, Paul would not have written to the Hebrews in the same vein as he did to Gentiles.

(2) W Alford regards tradition to be one of the strongest arguments for Pauline authorship, but D Guthrie throws it out without any discussion whatsoever. He says, "The ancient view of Pauline authorship is not supported by any reference to Paul in the text of the letter. It is, however, included in the superscription, which is clearly a reflection of the traditional view and carries therefore little importance" p19.

Continued on page 12

The book, 'The Da Vinci Code' by Dan Brown and the recent discovery and translation of the previously lost 'Gospel of Judas' have stirred interest among Christians and non-Christians alike. At the heart of much of the controversy lies a religious system known as *Gnosticism* which flourished from the early years of the Christian era and was eradicated from church beliefs by the 5th century, or so we are told.

The title Gnostic is from the Greek *gnosis*, meaning knowledge. As a general statement, Gnostics believe that salvation comes not through our redemption by Jesus' death on the cross, but by possession of special knowledge. Gnosticism is not a single set of beliefs as we will see later, but a series of competing and sometimes contradictory attempts to explain the universe. Much of our knowledge of the Gnostic influences on the early church comes through a series of writings in the church period before the council of Nicaea in the year 325 AD. Noteworthy among them is *Ireneus*, the bishop of Lyons, France who wrote extensively around the year 180 and whose works have been largely preserved for us. In his major work remaining to us, titled '*Against Heresies*' he analyzed the belief system of the Gnostics in light of Christian understanding of the Old Testament Scriptures and the known writings of the early church and he played an important role in rejecting many of the pseudo-Christian beliefs of the Gnostics.. Many of the leaders of the Gnostics in the first two centuries after Christ came from the fold of believers who felt that they were in possession of a more perfect interpretation and knowledge.

The church ordered the burning of Gnostic documents in around the year 390 and much of what had been written was lost, or was only available in fragments to us until the discovery of a large number of original manuscripts which had been buried near Nag Hammadi in Egypt. The more recent discovery of the Gospel of Judas also came from near the same area. It is believed that these documents were buried by a nearby monastery in response to the order to destroy them.

What, then, did the Gnostics believe that was considered heretical to the early church, to the point where heresy came to have its modern meaning, rather than the original milder meaning of a different 'point of view.'



The origins of Gnosticism can be traced back to the Babylonian belief systems. When Babylon was defeated by the Persians, Persian mystical beliefs and Zoroastrian beliefs of dualism and the struggles of Good vs Evil, were grafted on to it. The Greeks readily added on their Pantheon of Gods onto the belief system and later, the beliefs of the Jews and Christians and were re-interpreted in light of the Gnostic beliefs.

Gnostics believed in a pantheon of gods, of whom Bythos is the supreme God. With his consort, Sige, he gave rise to Sophia (aka Achamoth) who created the world known to us as well as another high level deity, the Demiurge. These, in turn gave rise to a group of others deities, known generically as Archons and Aeons. The Archons are the rulers of the planetary world, while the Aeons rule the spiritual world. For Gnostic beliefs deriving from Christianity, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit were styled as the latest addition to the Aeons, bringing their number to 30. Aeons generally occurred in pairs having both a male and female form. Spirit and body were two distinct parts of mankind and many Gnostics taught that what you do with the body has no impact on your spirit. This was used to justify all kinds of deviant behaviour. The world and mankind with it are considered a failed creation by Sophia and the Demiurge.

Many Gnostic belief systems also believed that the soul migrated from body to body, which we would call reincarnation today. Gnostic beliefs also placed an emphasis on the mystical role of numbers, words and expressions. Another belief held by Gnostics was that salvation belongs only to the soul and not to the body; therefore what is done with the body is of no consequence in salvation. This was carried to excess by many offshoots of Gnosticism, and often, wrongly attributed to Christianity.

Much of this activity resulted from the inability to conceive of any part of the Bible or persons depicted in it as having the simple literal meaning of what it says. This was a problem for many in the early days of the church and you can still find the tendencies in modern man to try to bring New Age beliefs into the church. This is just another form of Gnostic belief.

Starting even before the birth of Christ, Old Testament scriptures were reinterpreted in light of the Greek and Gnostic views of the heavens and the earth. The Greek names given to the Archons and Aeons coincide with many terms used in the New Testament and so deceiving a gullible and largely illiterate people was not a difficult task. Much of this re-interpretation centred on Alexandria, Egypt, and Philo of Alexandria (50BC-40AD), a Jew, is credited (if credit is due) with being one of the earliest to try to explain the God of the Jews to a Greek audience, drawing on Gnostic illustrations.

Alexandria remained a hotbed of Gnostic beliefs and writings for several centuries after Philo. The growth of Gnostic beliefs in the Christian world was not easy to characterize as there were a number of proponents, each offering their own, sometimes contradictory, explanations. Foremost among them were Basilides (ca 132AD) Valentinus, (120-160AD) and his disciple Marcus. Gnostics also argued vehemently among themselves as to who had the most correct interpretation. Adherents of each also followed their own rituals and practices.

It is fair to conclude, that any ancient document dealing religion or beliefs using the terms Archons or Aeons can be attributed to the Gnostic system of beliefs. This includes the recently translated 'Gospel of Judas', whose main claim is that Judas was the only disciple who had developed a correct understanding of the universe from secret knowledge given to him by Jesus.

Gnosticism, which the church attempted to banish from Christianity early on, is still a living set of religious beliefs, as an internet search on Gnosticism will show. There are Gnostic societies, Gnostic churches and many who espouse Gnosticism in this day and age. Many of the tendencies to (re) introduce 'New Age' beliefs and practices into our churches is only an attempt to revive Gnostic beliefs. New Age is not so new after all.

It is incorrect to speak of Gnostic Christianity, as Gnosticism believes all the fundamental beliefs of the Old and New Testaments. ■

By David A. Kriner

