

A U T U M N 2 0 0 2 P R E M I E R E I S S U E

SOLA SCRIPTURA

AFFIRMING THE AUTHENTICITY, ACCURACY, AND AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE

the question of Authority



Martin
Luther's
Stand

Backtrack to
the Truth

Why
Another
Magazine?

Prophecy: Nostradamus,
Bible Codes, or Scripture?

CONTENTS

SOLA SCRIPTURA MAGAZINE : AUTUMN 2002, ISSUE 1

6 **Sola Scriptura**

Martin Luther and the Question of Authority : *On April 18, 1521, in Worms, Germany, a young Augustinian monk stood before a council that had been convened to determine the orthodoxy of his teachings.*

BY DR. HERBERT SAMWORTH

10 **Backtrack**

Correcting Our Course for the Twenty-First Century : *When dealing with perilous times brought on by a corrupt culture, the answer for the apostle Paul was to go back to godly living and the Word of God.*

BY DR. DAN HAYDEN



14 **The Authority of Biblical Prophecy**

Do Nostradamus and the Bible Code Measure Up? : *Is it permissible for us to look for additional prophetic truth outside of the Bible?*

BY GARY VATERLAUS

20 **Why Another Magazine?**

A Voice in an Era of Postmodernism : *The subtlety by which the world has caused many who acknowledge Jesus as Savior to abandon His name in public is of great concern.*

BY REV. CHARLES COOPER

DEPARTMENTS

3 Opening Thoughts : ***Feast or Famine?***

5 Letters & Feedback : ***An Open Invitation***

25 The Van Kampen Collection : ***The Martyr's Bible***

26 A Word From the Word : ***The Breath of God***

27 Final Thoughts : ***God Has Spoken Through His Son***



SOLA SCRIPTURA

Founder	Robert D. Van Kampen (1938-1999)
Publisher	Sola Scriptura
Executive Director	Scott R. Pierre
Editor-in-Chief	Dr. Dan Hayden
Managing Editor	Dirk Eichhorst
Creative Director	Scott Holmgren
Contributing Writers	Dr. Herbert Samworth, Dr. Dan Hayden, Rev. Charles Cooper, Gary Vaterlaus
Contributing Editors	Dean Tisch, Stu Kinniburgh, David Ettinger

Sola Scriptura magazine is a publication of Sola Scriptura, a non-profit ministry that is devoted to affirming the authenticity, accuracy, and authority of the Bible—the standard for truth.

The pages of **Sola Scriptura** are designed to be evangelistic and pastoral in nature: evangelistic in that the magazine is dedicated to proclaiming and defending the historic gospel of Jesus Christ; pastoral in that the magazine is committed to equipping and encouraging believers through sound, biblical doctrine.

"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness..." (2 Timothy 3:16)

"In pointing out these things to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following." (1 Timothy 4:6)

"Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints." (Jude 3)

Sola Scriptura magazine is published four times a year and is copyrighted © 2002 by Sola Scriptura, P.O. Box 617677, Orlando, FL 32861-7677 USA, (800) 844-9930. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted without publisher's written permission. Unless noted, Scripture is taken from the New American Standard Bible, ©1977, 1987, 1988, The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. Periodicals postage paid at Orlando, FL and additional mailing offices. The annual US subscription price is \$12, a two-year subscription is \$20. Printed in the USA.

Postmaster: Send changes of address to Sola Scriptura, P.O. Box 617677, Orlando, FL 32861-7677 USA.

Visit our website at www.solagroup.org
or email magazine@solagroup.org

OPENING THOUGHTS

Feast or Famine?

Scott Pierre, Executive Director



In the eighth chapter of Amos we see that, because of disobedience, God caused a famine to fall upon the people of Israel. Only this famine was not one characterized by the lack of bread, but rather by the lack of hearing the Word of God. Throughout the centuries, there have been other nations which seem to have been “deaf” toward the very Word of God—even in a state of starvation—while simultaneously others have appeared to be feasting graciously. The obedience of hearing the Word of God is a feast of delight, and the disobedience of the lack of hearing can only bring excruciating famine. So, what will it be for our nation in the Twenty-First Century? Feast or famine?

Today, in America, we see a strong movement away from absolutes. There are no longer pure spiritual or moral standards. We have begun to abandon truth for what is being defined as *postmodern* thinking. The core values of our nation are under attack and the family unit is failing miserably. There is little regard for human life or for the very giver of life Himself. It is as though we are recklessly driving down a busy one-way street in the wrong direction. As believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, we must take a hold of the wheel to prevent our nation from a fatal collision. We must be called back to absolutes. We must again raise our standards. The Word of God is the absolute and must be our highest standard.

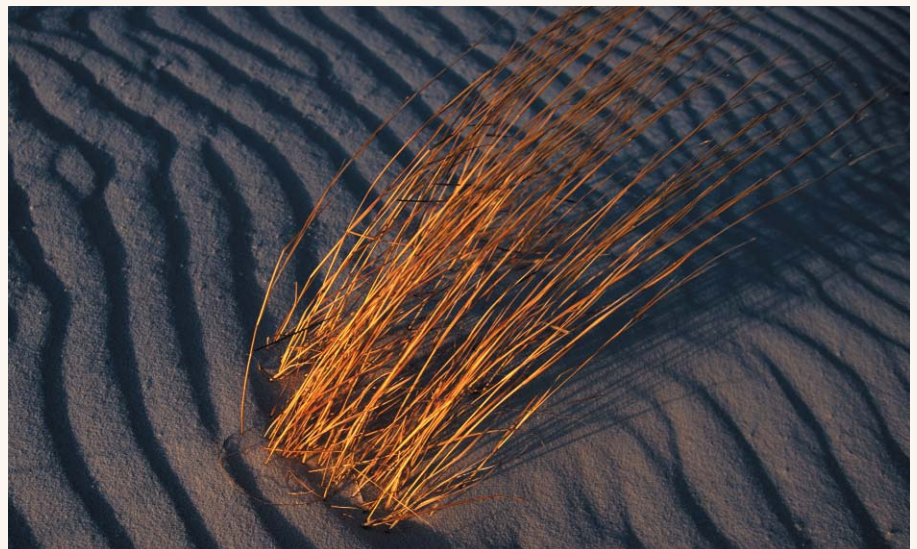
Sola Scriptura is a ministry devoted to affirming the authenticity, accuracy, and authority of the Bible—the standard for truth. This standard is enormously under attack in

our day, and one that needs reaffirming. One doesn't have to read many newspapers or watch much television to witness the blatant humanistic, existential, and evolutionary worldviews that are being propagated today—views that run completely contrary to the ultimate truths of Scripture. Sadly, this type of thinking is beginning to saturate the pulpits and the pews of our churches as well. In fact, many church leaders are even straying from the very absolutes that make up the authority of the Scriptures. For Sola Scriptura, this is our primary concern. It is our desire that through the vehicle of *Sola Scriptura* Magazine we might challenge God's people to stand up and initiate change. Let us, by His grace, be a people who, no matter what the cost, call our nation back to the standard of truth known as the Word of God—the Bible.

In this premiere issue of *Sola Scriptura*

magazine we will examine many themes, such as the Reformation, living in perilous days, prophetic phonies, and postmodernism. This and future issues will include *A Word from the Word*, presented by Dr. Dan Hayden. And, of course, we want to introduce you to items from The Van Kampen Collection, a unique compilation of Bibles and biblical manuscripts, which is the centerpiece of Sola Scriptura's ministry.

We hope you will enjoy this publication and that it will be a profitable reference for you in your spiritual walk. Please share it with your friends and family, and if we can be of any assistance to you please don't hesitate to contact us. May God, in His infinite mercy, grant to you grace and peace in fullest measure.



The wise man built his house upon the Rock.



Construction. Foundational to a missionary's plans for reaching the world with the Gospel message is the solid truth contained in the Word of God. Without the solid bedrock of Scripture, a missionary might as well be building his house upon the sand.

The Master's Mission provides a unique and comprehensive year of training for missionary candidates. Doctrinally grounded and technically equipped, they are **READY** for ministry, **SET** for missionary life, and prepared to **GO** into all nations with the Gospel. To find out more about TMM, call **1-800-419-8618** or visit www.mastersmission.org.



THE MASTER'S MISSION
READY. SET. GO.™

LETTERS & FEEDBACK

An Open Invitation

Gary Vaterlaus

Sola Scriptura exists to affirm the authenticity, accuracy, and authority of the Bible. We believe the Bible to be the Word of God, the standard for all truth, and the believers' sole authority in life. We claim to know where to go to find truth—that is, the Bible—but we do not claim to have the corner on the truth, or that we give full coverage to all there is to know about the Holy Bible. Thus, we are not so arrogant that we believe that we cannot learn and grow.

We see you, our readers, as a vital part of our ministry. We invite and urge you to correspond with us. We want to hear your responses, favorable or otherwise, to what we have written. We want to know if you agree or disagree. We want to know what is on your heart and mind—if you've seen something in these pages that has clarified a difficult issue for you, or if you believe us to be in error in some areas. We want to know if you've been challenged, if you have been encouraged, if you've been equipped. And we want to know what topics are of interest to you, in order that we may consider your suggestions for future articles as they relate to our overall purpose.

In our magazine we strive to present articles that demonstrate the authority and relevancy of the Scriptures. Our aim is to challenge you with thought-provoking articles that not only deepen your understanding and appreci-

ation for God's Word, but also your devotion to Him. The practical application of your understanding of God's Word is what really matters in the long run.

In this and future issues you will see articles that deal with the history of the Bible, its inspiration, transmission, and translation. You will be exposed to information that substantiates the claims of the Bible to be the Word of God. You will interact with material that discusses the theological and practical implications of taking Scripture at face

value. And it is our hope that you will be changed as a result of having invested your time with us.

So, please feel free to contact us. In each issue we will publish excerpts from your letters on this page. We trust that the publishing of your thoughts and comments will be a blessing to us and to your fellow readers. Thank you for participating.

The following comments were received in regards to other aspects of our ministry, including our teaching seminars, over the past few months:

An unexpected gift

Your participation at the Zion's Hope seminar [at The Holy Land Experience in Orlando, Florida] was truly a gift that we did not expect. Thank you so much for your interest-

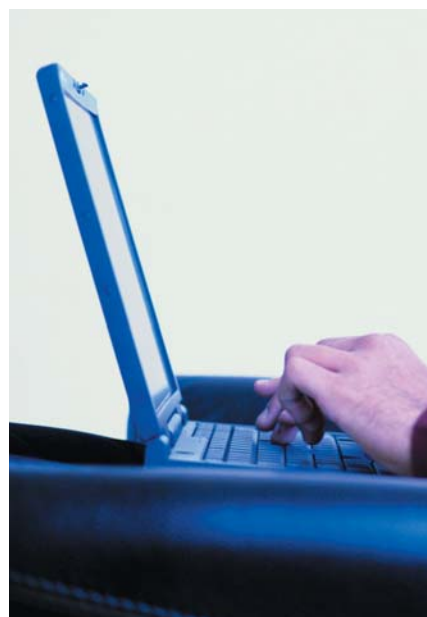
ing and thought-inspiring segment on how the English Bible was translated. After my return home, I was telling our minister about it all, and I wished I could have done justice to what you talked about and The Scriptorium that is being built [at The Holy Land Experience].

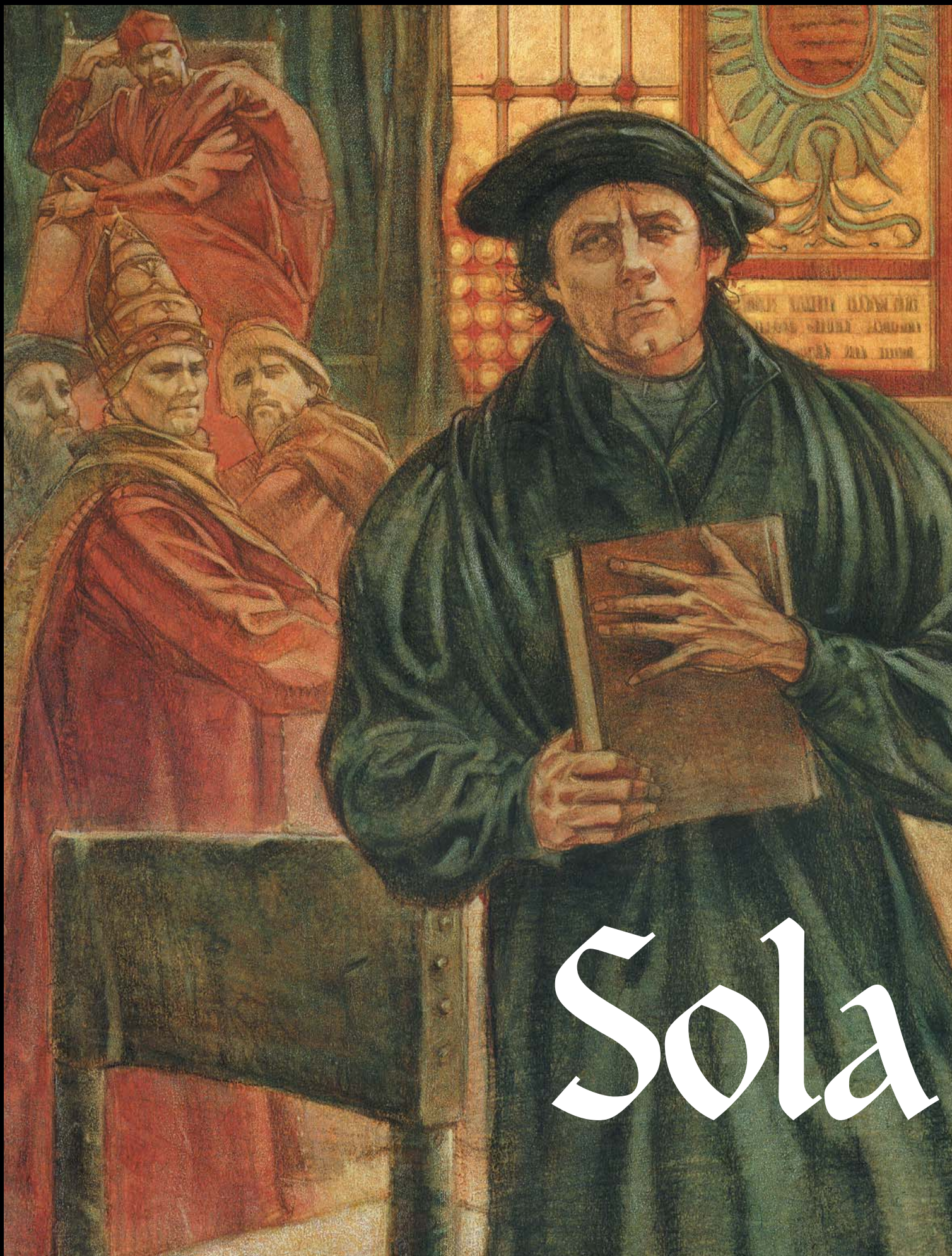
—LINDA ROBERTS
Murfreesboro, Tenn.

Wealth on the web

Your website is a blessing to me. Thank you for providing such a wealth of information! God bless you and your work!

—BOB EDMUNSON
Portland, Ore.





Sola

by Dr. Herbert Samworth

Illustration by Ron Mazellan



On April 18, 1521, in Worms, Germany, a young Augustinian monk stood before a council that had been convened to determine the orthodoxy of his teachings. Indeed, his teachings had already been declared heretical, and a Papal bull, an official document of the Papacy, had been issued against him, calling for his recantation. If he renounced his teachings, he could safely return to the fold of the church. On one side of the Council were arrayed Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor, Jerome Aleander, the Papal Legate, and various German officials including Duke George of Saxony. On the other side stood the accused, and while not without friends and supporters, he alone was on trial. After two days of debate, the fateful question was put directly to him. Being admonished to answer candidly and without evasion, would he renounce his books and the errors that they had been judged to contain?

There are moments in history when time itself appears to stand still, and this was such an occasion. His answer would not only impact his life, but the church, and even the history of Christianity itself. In a voice ringing with conviction, he gave his response:

Since then your Majesty and your lordships desire a simple reply, I will answer without horns and without teeth. Unless I am convicted by Scripture and plain reason—I do not accept the authority of popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other—my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. Here I stand, I can do no other. God help me. Amen.

The speaker was Martin Luther, and he was defending his teachings at the Diet of Worms in April 1521. It was the climax of a series of events that had begun when Luther nailed the Ninety-five Theses on the door of the Castle Church in

Wittenburg on October 31, 1517. While the historical events that led to the posting of the Ninety-five Theses and the subsequent response to them are very interesting, the purpose of this article is not to review those events, but to note the implications contained in Luther's answer to Charles V and their application to our circumstances today.

Defining clearly the major issue in the dispute between Luther and the church is crucial to our understanding. Some Church historians define the major issue as a dispute over the sale of indulgences, payments made to the church to reduce the time spent in Purgatory. Purgatory is wrongly believed to be the place of temporary punishment where deceased persons were purified from their venial sins. However, subsequent events reveal that the major issue was one of authority. The issue at hand was the locus, or seat, of authority of the Christian religion. Some were persuaded that the locus of authority was found in the Bishop of Rome, in his office as the supposed successor of Peter. Others believed the supreme authority rested in Church councils that were convened to settle controversial issues. However, Luther rejected both of these positions and declared that the supreme authority of the Church was located solely in the Word of God.

Technically this should not have been a matter for dispute because high regard was ascribed to the Sacred Writings. The problem occurred when the word *sola* (alone) was linked with Scripture. Over the course of centuries additional books called the Apocrypha had been added to the Bible and the unwritten tradition of the apostles had been elevated to a position of equal authority with Scripture. Teachings and practices of the Medieval Church, including the doctrine of Purgatory and the power of indulgences to free souls from it, were based on these additional writings. When the teachings contained in these doctrines could not be located in the books recognized as Scripture from the earliest times, the truthfulness of Medieval religion was called into question. This is what caused Luther to question the power of indulgences and led to the Reformation of the sixteenth century.

Scriptura

Sola Scriptura

FIVE LATIN PHRASES

In the study of this period of Church history, historians have singled out five Latin phrases that distilled the essence of Reformation teaching. These five are *sola fide* (faith alone), *solus Christus* (Christ alone), *sola gratia* (grace alone), *solus Deo gloria* (glory to God alone), and *sola scriptura* (Scripture alone). It is critical to note that these are not five isolated statements, but when combined, give us truths that the Reformation sought to recover. The understanding of each one is essential to the understanding of the others and to the Reformation as a whole. The goal of the Reformation was to bring the Church back to what the Scriptures taught and to reform it from any teachings or practices that were not in agreement with the Word of God. Of the five *solas* or statements, a strong case can be made for the primacy of *sola scriptura* (Scripture alone). It is this topic of *sola scriptura* that we wish to address, while reminding the reader that *sola scriptura* is not an isolated concept but exists in conjunction with the other teachings.

In every belief system, there are, by definition, two principles: the formal and the material. Christianity, as a belief system, is no exception. The formal principle establishes boundaries, determines procedural methods, and validates truthfulness. The material principle encapsulates or summarizes the basic teaching. Thus, for the Christian faith, the formal principle is the authority of the Word of God and the material principle is salvation by grace. As this is applied to the five *solas* of the Reformation, *sola scriptura* would be the formal principle and the other four could be combined to form the material principle.

Before we proceed, it is important to understand what we mean by *sola scriptura* and, just as critical, what this principle does *not* mean. Let us begin with the negative. The principle of *sola scriptura* does not teach that we merely quote the Scriptures to people and leave it at that. It is essential to understand accurately what the Scriptures teach and to apply these teachings to specific situations. We can say, with some justification, that it is just as important to interpret the Scriptures correctly as simply to know them. If our interpretation of the Scriptures is not correct then it is impossible to apply their teachings in a manner that is ultimately helpful. However, we are convinced that the Scriptures themselves provide the guidance to interpret them correctly.

Sola scriptura also does not mean that we have no interest or concern for what the Church has taught in past ages about the meaning of Scripture. We can gain great insight by the study of the writings of those who have been used by God as teachers of His Word in previous generations. But it is necessary to evaluate these teachings against the standard of the Word of God. As a result we do not make an “infallible church” or “infallible teachers” our authority.

In summary, we can say that the positive meaning of *sola scriptura* is the conviction that the canonical Scriptures are the

ultimate authority in all matters of belief and practice and are the sole reliable source of information concerning God and His work of salvation through Christ. *Sola scriptura* stands over and against any additions to the Scriptures, which have been given canonical status or the declarations of men who claim to be infallible interpreters of what the Scriptures teach. Luther was saying that *sola scriptura* guarantees the liberty to have our consciences captive to God and to His Word and not to the teachings of fallible and sinful men.

When we study the life and career of Luther, it is apparent that he came to the truth of *sola scriptura* gradually. We must remember that he was a member of the Augustinian order and had been well schooled in Medieval theology and what was called Scholasticism, or the method to acquire and arrange knowledge. Upon receiving a doctorate in theology, he began to teach at the University of Wittenberg as a lecturer of the Bible. We know that he lectured on the Psalms in 1513 and on Romans two years later. During this time, he was forced to deal with the text of Scripture in the source languages of Hebrew and Greek and not just in the translation of the Latin *Vulgate*. As a result his mind became saturated with the truth of the pure Word of God in the original languages.

We also know that Luther struggled with his own sins and his uncertainty as to whether or not he was accepted by God. These concerns forced him to search the Scriptures with great diligence. Opinions differ as to the time when Luther came to embrace the knowledge of salvation by grace through faith. We read of what he called his “tower experience,” the occasion when he realized that the “righteousness of God” spoken of by Paul in Romans 1:17 did not refer to the unattainable standard to which a holy God holds sinful men, but rather to a gracious gift bestowed in Christ by a merciful God. Students of Luther’s life are divided as to when this occurred and exactly what he meant by “tower.” However, there does not appear to be any



Luther was saying that sola scriptura guarantees the liberty to have our consciences captive to God and to His Word and not to the teachings of fallible and sinful men.

uncertainty as to the historical event that prompted the posting of his Ninety-five Theses questioning the Medieval teaching of repentance and the sale of indulgences.

A proclamation had been issued by Pope Leo X to permit Archbishop Albrecht to sell indulgences in the territory of Mainz, located close to Wittenberg in Saxony, the city where Luther taught. Many of Wittenberg's citizens traveled to Mainz to purchase these indulgences. Luther responded to this by posting the Ninety-five Theses on the door of the Castle Church. By so doing, he was not calling for a general rejection of indulgences, but for an academic discussion to determine what the Scriptures taught on the matter. There is little or no evidence to believe that he was protesting against indulgences themselves. Rather, Luther was incensed that the German peasants were contributing to the building of St. Peter's Church in Rome by the purchases of indulgences. He believed that the concern the German people had for their loved ones, whom they believed were in purgatory and wished to have liberated, was being used as a means to extort funds from them. However, once committed to the fray, he was forced to justify his actions. In other words, he had to justify his protest against a decree given by the highest official in the church of which he was a monk and a member.

All of this caused Luther to examine the Word of God more diligently. He studied the Scriptures thoroughly and was unable to find Scriptural justification for the Church's teaching on purgatory and indulgences. Gradually he came to the position that without Scriptural justification, the church's teaching on these subjects was in error. Possibly without recognizing its ramifications Luther adopted an implicit position of *sola scriptura*. As we noted previously, tacit recognition had been given to the Scripture's authority, but the Church had departed from it in its teachings on indulgences and purgatory. The locus of authority had shifted from the canonical Scriptures to the Bishop of Rome and his authoritative interpretations of the Scriptures as defined by the Church. The practical effect of this was that his word carried more authority than the Word of God.

The stage was thus set for the clash of the two authorities. Only one of them could be correct. Luther was concerned that the Church's teaching be in agreement with what the canonical Scriptures taught. There is no evidence to believe that he had set out deliberately to challenge the authority of the Church. To the contrary, there is every reason to believe that Luther was convinced that Pope Leo X sincerely desired the reformation of the Church but was being hindered by other church officials in Rome. He remained confident that when Leo saw the truthfulness of what he had protested against, he would take the lead in bringing about reform.

However, rather than heeding Luther's protest, the Pope demanded that Luther recant. Through a period of nearly three



years, including preliminary discussions held in the cities of Heidelberg and Leipzig, Luther remained convinced that reform would come from the Papal seat. We can imagine his crushing disappointment when a Papal bull was issued against him demanding that he renounce his teachings. His response was to burn the Papal bull and continue writing against the abuses of the Church. In 1520, Luther penned three of his most influential tracts that outlined his beliefs: *The Address to the German Nobility*, *The Freedom of the Christian Man*, and *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*. In each of them he reinforced the principle that only the pure Word of God is authoritative for matters of faith and practice.

THE SHOWDOWN

With the Papal bull issued against Luther and his refusal to withdraw his teachings, the stage was set for the Diet of Worms. Arrayed against Luther was the combined power of the Holy Roman Empire and the Church as represented by Charles V and Jerome Aleander. It is no wonder that Luther hesitated before he gave his final answer. Perhaps he alone foresaw the consequences of his response. While he recognized that his life hung in the balance, it was the authority of the Word of God that stirred his heart the greatest.

The implications of his answers were earth shattering. "I do not accept the authority of popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other." Here Luther rejected the authority of the Medieval Church. He then went on to explain what he

continued on page 23

BACK



TRACK

by Dr. Dan Hayden

Recently I was lost. I had made a wrong turn and was making great time, but in the wrong direction. After almost an hour of feeling good about the progress I was making, I suddenly realized that I was approaching Fort Wayne, Indiana, instead of Indianapolis. I thought I was going south, but instead I was heading east; and there I was – where I didn't want to be.

CORRECTING OUR COURSE FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

The only way to correct the problem was to back-track. I lost two hours on that trip—one going in the wrong direction, and one getting back to where I should have been. The good news, however, was that I had realized my mistake, had turned around, and had gone back. Who knows where I might have ended up if I had insisted on my own sense of direction. Only the Atlantic Ocean would have stopped me. Going back was an act of wisdom. I'm so glad I did.

Our culture has long been going in the wrong direction. We have made great progress in technology, but we have not paid attention to our humanness. Existentialism has taught us to indulge ourselves. So we have sacrificed our souls on the altar of self-fulfillment, and we've ended up where we should not be. The only problem is, we don't realize it.

Our indebtedness is staggering, and relationships are strained and fractured. A new generation is emerging that doesn't know the meaning of self-sacrifice and has never experienced a stable environment. Terrorism is the topic of the day and economics, rather than character and integrity, continues to be our greatest concern. We've gone a long way down the wrong road.

The events of September 11 stopped us dead in our tracks, however. Nothing moved—literally.

The whole world was in shock, and people began to reevaluate their priorities. Over the past four decades we had told God to get lost – to get out of our courtrooms and classrooms. Suddenly, we watched the Congress singing with heartfelt devotion, “God Bless America.” We were inviting God back into public life. Bibles began to sell again, and people rediscovered their churches. It was a new day for conservatism, and evangelicalism was no longer the villain. It was like we all woke up.

But one year later we’re drifting back to our old ways. It seems like all of our good intentions were merely a knee-jerk reaction. Not for everyone, of course. Yet culturally there is once again a yearning for the good life of yesterday. Congress is bickering over economics again, and for many God has again been moved to the back burner – still available if we need Him, but no longer a priority.

So it appears that we are at a point of indecision. We realized for a while we were going in the wrong direction, stopped the car, and turned around. Yet we’re not so sure we want to go *all* the way back to where we went wrong. Our existentialism has encouraged us to simply appreciate the moment – so we’re not all that upset about our situation. After all, this is a nice road, too. What does it matter that we’re going in the wrong direction?

Well, if you don’t care where you end up – go for it, and have as much fun as you can along the way. But if destination is important, then decision and commitment are crucial. Going back is essential – all the way back, for as long as it takes.

For the apostle Paul this was a “no-brainer.” When dealing with perilous times brought on by a corrupt culture, the answer for him was to go back to godly living and the foundation of truth as found in the

Word of God. This was his counsel to Timothy in 2 Timothy, Chapter 3.

Timothy was facing perilous times (v. 1) in a culture that was self-indulgent and morally skewed (vv. 2-9). Therefore, Timothy needed to refocus on godliness as a way of life (vv. 10-13) and get back to the Word of God as the basis for truth (vv. 14-17). Such a message is important for us to hear. We live in similar times and 2 Timothy 3 is the map to point us in the right direction. Its message is unmistakable – go back, go back!

BACK TO OUR ROOTS

Once I asked a man what I should do about a matter, and he simply said, “Just keep on keepin’ on.” Sometimes that is good counsel. In a day when creativity, innovation, and imagination are the stuff of life, staying with the tried and true by remaining faithful and steady can be a breath of fresh air. Why does it always have to be bigger and better, and new and different, and entertaining and exciting? Like a good cappuccino, it seems that we are reveling in the froth with very little concern for substance. Just give *me* a good cup of coffee.

Timothy was living in desperate times, and the apostle Paul’s advice was to simply “keep on keepin’ on.” It’s so encouraging to hear him say, “You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them” (2 Tim. 3:14). Like many of us, Timothy was most likely tempted to cast around for some new method of ministry that would connect better with his modern culture. Even though people were religious, they had lost all sense of genuine godliness (v. 5) and the old ways of reaching them probably didn’t seem effective anymore. It was a challenge that had brought tears to Timothy’s eyes (1:4).

Yet, Paul insisted that the old ways were still the best ways. The words “You... continue” are reflective of a Greek verb in the present tense and the imperative mood – which simply means that Timothy was to continue on perpetually and with all seriousness of intent. It was important that he stay steady and keep one eye on the past as he looked to the future.

This portion of Scripture, 2 Timothy 3, is set in the context of the last days – “This know, also, that in the last days perilous times shall come” (v. 1 – KJV). Actually, the “last days” are the entire church age from Pentecost to the rapture. It is just that Timothy was living in the beginning of the last days, while it appears that we are living in the end of the last days. The conditions are similar, however, and the temptation to leave the lessons of the past is no less intense. Therefore, what was good counsel for Timothy is equally good advice for us as well.

Today, our existential approach to religious education has led us to be more infatuated with the innovators of the present, than reflective of the giants of the past. My father was a pastor who was committed to the exposition of God’s Word in his ministry. This is what he had learned from the great men of God who had fought the fundamentalist-modernist controversies in the early years of the twentieth century. They in turn, stood on the shoulders of men like B.B. Warfield and J. Grescham Machen, who had carried the torch passed on to them by the likes of George Whitefield and Jonathan Edwards. Furthermore, the writings of these men resonate with the voices of the Reformers, who built on the foundation of the early church fathers, who were a mere echo of the apostles.

“Go back,” Paul continues to tell us today, “don’t forget your past.” The essence

The way of the future is not to forget the past. The wisdom of the elders should not be shunned for the infatuations of our peers.

In our desire to fit into our culture, we have done people a disservice; we have not told them about their sin.

of ministry has always been the Word of God in the power of the Holy Spirit. This is what Paul was referring to when he admonished Timothy not to forsake the great doctrines of the faith in favor of stories that merely entertain (4:2-4). For us today, Paul is pinpointing a contemporary problem—where some have been more interested in entertaining the masses than in feeding the flock. As a result, it seems that modern believers are virtually illiterate with regard to biblical doctrine, and know very little of the great events of church history.

The way to the future is to not forget the past. The wisdom of the elders should not be shunned for the infatuations of our peers. Like Timothy, we need to continue in the things which we have learned and have been assured of, knowing from whom we have learned them.

BACK TO THE CENTRALITY OF SCRIPTURE

One of the benefits of going back to our roots after the events of September 11 is that we become less self-centered and more focused on meaningful relationships, including our relationship to God. What had been taken for granted is suddenly given a renewed priority. Family and friends are now the important thing, and an appreciation for God and country is greatly increased.

In like fashion, as those of us in the Christian community go back to our roots, the Scriptures begin to emerge out of the dust of neglect to be reinstated on the pedestal of honor. When we read the Reformers and early church fathers, we discover that the Bible was not just important, it was central and sufficient for all matters of faith and life. So for us, too, the Scriptures have been reinstated as the source of our comfort and inspiration. It is as though they speak to us with a new clarity and urgency. We want to know them as never before because we are drawn to the truth they proclaim. The Bible is no longer a convenient luxury, it is an absolute necessity.

The apostle Paul instructed Timothy to go back to his roots and realize, “that from childhood” he had known the Holy Scriptures, which were able to make him wise (2 Tim. 3:15). Wisdom is personified in the Word of the living God. It was the authority of Scripture to which Timothy was instructed to return. Also, Paul told Timothy that when he ministered he was to “preach the word” (4:2). There is nothing that can surpass the wisdom of the Scriptures for leading a perilous culture out of the swamp of self-indulgence into the liberating arms of a loving Savior. “It is the Scripture,” Paul, in essence, told Timothy. It is the Scripture, twenty-first century Christian!

Throughout the past several decades, though we have *not* devalued the Scriptures theologically, we have certainly diminished their importance in our practice of them. In many worship services, the 45-minute Bible sermon has given way to the 20-minute devotional, stuck into a full schedule of music, drama,

and personal sharing. Christian counseling has argued for the synergism of the Bible and psychology, with psychology taking the lead. The role of science in our Christian schools and churches has triumphed over the story of Creation, as evolutionary theory sits in judgment over the Holy Scriptures. We in the Christian community have become culture pleasers, not culture challengers. It appears that we prefer the sophistication of secular erudition to the simple truth of God’s Word. But, all of that has led us down the wrong road. If we are truly to go back to where we made a wrong turn, we must return to the authority of Scripture.

For Timothy, the Scriptures were the source and standard of truth. He had known them since he was a child (v. 15), and Paul was simply reminding him of their supreme importance—for him personally, and as the basis of his ministry. There’s no doubt about the fact that the authority of Scripture is Paul’s answer to the perilous times of the last days.

BACK TO SALVATION THAT SAVES

In our desire to fit into our culture, we have done people a disservice; we have not told them about their sin. “Come to Jesus and find relief from your fears... a new capacity to love... real meaning for your life... etc.” This is the contemporary jargon of the existential gospel. Yet these things are the byproducts of salvation, not the essence of it.

When we get back to the authority of Scripture, we discover that mankind is “dead in... trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1). Man doesn’t just have problems—he *is* the problem. There is no release from fears until the sinner reconciles with the God who is “a consuming fire” (Heb. 12:29). A new capacity to love cannot be realized until the incredible mercy of God that saves sinners is truly grasped. Real meaning for life is only possible for those who have life through the process of the “new birth.” Man needs to be saved from his “lostness”—he does not need to be saved from his problems.

This is the wisdom of the Gospel to which Paul was reminding Timothy. It is the Gospel of the Scriptures, not the gospel of a sanctified psychology. Paul said, “...you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 3:15). There is wisdom concerning the true nature of salvation that can only be known through the authority of Scripture.

First of all, salvation is “*through* faith,” not “*by* faith.” It is a fundamental aspect of the Gospel that we are saved “*by* grace,... *through* faith” (Eph. 2:8). Grace is the essence of salvation. Grace is God taking the initiative to save lost sinners who are condemned to an eternal damnation apart from His incredible benevolence. Salvation is theocentric (God-centered) not anthropocentric (man-centered). It appears that we have diverged from that somewhere back down the road.



BACKTRACK

Secondly, salvation is “in Christ Jesus,” not in the quality or quantity of our faith. Faith is merely our positive response to the Gospel. Faith simply receives salvation—it is only the means by which we recognize a great opportunity. Salvation is Christ—who He is and what He has done. You see, salvation is not only by the grace of God, it is also Christocentric (Christ-centered). In Scripture, the spotlight is on Jesus Christ, the Savior. He is the only One worthy of all glory.

As we once again acknowledge the authority of Scripture, it will make us wise to the true nature of salvation—a salvation that is by the grace of God “through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 3:15).

BACK TO A CHRIST-LIKE SPIRITUALITY

Perhaps the greatest text on the authority of Scripture is found right here in this context—“All scripture is inspired by God and profitable...” (2 Tim. 3:16). All scripture is the breath of God (*theopneustos*—see “A Word from the Word” in this issue), having taken form on the pages of the Bible, like the condensation of our breath on a cold glass surface. God has spoken in the Scriptures, and it seems almost redundant for Paul to also say, “and profitable.” Of course it is profitable (*ophelimos*—a word that means beneficial and useful). It is God’s Word!

Yet this is not a verse to simply prove our doctrine of Inspiration. It is Paul’s answer to Timothy’s quest for an effective ministry in “difficult times” (v. 1). Where do we turn when the culture is on the brink of self-destruction (vv. 2-9)? What is the answer for religious people who have lost all sense of godliness (v. 5)? For Paul, the answer is obvious. You go to the source of truth, the one divinely authoritative voice in the world. You open the pages of the Bible.

In the early verses of 2 Timothy 3, Paul describes the perilous condition of the last-days society with no less than 19 sordid characteristics (vv. 2-5). It was a description of the indulgent culture of the Roman Empire in Timothy’s day, but it is also an accurate reflection of our twenty-first century world. As it was then, so it is now—only worse. And there is only one thing that is able to meet this for-

midable challenge—the inspired Word of the living God.

Paul says that the Scriptures are profitable in four ways (v. 16). First, to teach us the ways of God. Second, to show us where we have gone wrong. Third, to get us back on the right track. And fourth, to train us in the ways of righteousness. And all of this is for the grand purpose of making us mature in Christ (v. 17). Now, isn’t that exactly what we need?

Here again we have taken a wrong turn, and are heading in a wrong direction. We have lost touch with the authority of Scripture and are therefore confused about how we should live in an ungodly world. People are generally not impressed with Christianity, primarily because they are not impressed with Christians. If we are not self-righteous snobs smothered in hypocrisy, then we are meaningless religionists blending in with the society. We are either an offense or a disappointment—and either way, we lose.

What people are yearning for is authenticity. They don’t want words, they want action—a lifestyle of genuine godliness that cannot be ignored. We say we know God, but all the world sees is a “form of godliness,” which is void of reality (v. 5). However, if the world could see a truly transformed life that mirrors the qualities of Christ’s life (vv. 10-11), it would be attracted to our Savior through us. That is the point Paul is making as he encourages Timothy to strive for authenticity. What is needed is a return to Christ-like spirituality, which is produced by an authoritative Word.

CONCLUSION

This great chapter from 2 Timothy begins with the words, “But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come” (v. 1), and it ends with the answer to that dilemma, “All scripture is inspired by God and profitable...” (v. 16). As we begin the twenty-first century, perhaps we need to backtrack to the point where we are once again committed to the absolute authority of Scripture. It is the source of all truth and the only means of speaking a word from God to our culture. Thus, the urgent need of our times is “*sola scriptura*”—Scripture alone. ■



Do Nostradamus and the Bible

שם אלהים כבודו
הוא שם אלהים
הוא שם אלהים
הוא שם אלהים
הוא שם אלהים

THE AUTHORITY OF BIBLICAL PROPHECY



Code measure up?

BY GARY VATERLAUS

Since the terrible events of September 11, 2001, and their widespread effects, there has been an increased interest in prophecy. Indeed, whenever a major world event takes place, such as a war, an assassination, a military coup, a major natural disaster, or the turn of a century, interest in prophecy peaks.

Just three days after the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington, D.C., Amazon.com reported on its website that three of its top 10 selling books were on the prophecies of Nostradamus, a sixteenth century seer who many claim prophesied events of our modern era. During times like these, people look for answers to life's uncertainties and often turn to those who claim to have prophetic powers.

Christians, too, sometimes look to modern-day prophets or other phenomena to help them understand the events of their lives and to give them direction for the future. As Christians we must ask, What does the Bible say about other prophetic sources? Are they credible, and is it permissible for us to look for additional prophetic truth outside of the Bible?

In this article, I want us to consider these questions and examine two popular non-biblical sources of prophetic information, comparing them with the prophecies laid out in God's Word, the Bible.



NOSTRADAMUS

Michel De Nostredame (more commonly known by his Latinized name, Nostradamus) was a French physician-astrologer who flourished in the sixteenth century. Nostradamus' family was Jewish, but converted to Catholicism by threat when Louis VII ordered all Jews to be baptized. Following his formal education, Nostradamus became famous for his astrological activities and for his ability to heal with herbal medicines. In 1555, he published a book of prophecies under the title *Centuries*, which is a collection of 100 quatrains (rhyming verses with four lines each) containing predictions from Nostradamus' time to the end of the world. In all he published 10 volumes, containing nearly 1,000 prophecies.

Many believe Nostradamus to have been an accurate seer of the future, predicting such events as the plague of London in 1665, the London fire of 1666, the French Revolution, World War II, the rise of Adolf Hitler, the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and even the 1969 lunar landing. The following is an examination into some of these predictions.

Nostradamus' *Centuries* is written in a combination of French, Latin, Greek, Italian, and Provençal. His prophetic verses are littered with anagrams, obscure images, and even words the seer apparently invented. Nostradamus later wrote that he deliberately confused the time sequence of the prophecies so that their secrets would not be easily revealed. Given the confusing nature of his writings, it is difficult to comprehend how one is to understand them.

The Bible's prophecies, on the other hand, are written in a clear, understandable way. Rather than hiding its meaning, the Bible was written so that all could understand it. The apostle Paul wrote, "For we write nothing else to you than what you read and understand, and I hope you will understand until the end" (2 Cor. 1:13).

Below are three quatrains from *Centuries*. See what you can glean from them, and then read the interpretations from the "experts":

The great swarm of bees will arise
But no one will know from whence they have come.
An ambush by night, the sentinel under the vines;
A city handed over by five tongues, not naked.
(Century 4, verse 26)

According to Erika Cheetham, author of *The Prophecies of Nostradamus*, this is a "very accurate" description of "Napoleon's coupe d'état in 1799!"¹

At a nearby place not far from Venus,
The two greatest ones of Asia and Africa,
Will be said to have come from the Rhine and Hister,
Cries and tears at Malta and the Ligurian coast.
(C. 4, v. 68)

Many interpreters of Nostradamus see this quatrain as referring to a treaty that Adolf Hitler signed in Venice with Italy and Japan. The problem is that Hitler is not specifically mentioned here, but rather the word "Hister," which was a region of the lower Danube. Apparently, a little spelling anomaly doesn't seem to deter the experts. Also, while Japan is in Asia, Italy is certainly not in Africa. And Venus is far from Venice, in both spelling and distance.

The young lion will overcome the older one,
In a field of combat in a single fight:
He will pierce his eyes in their golden cage;
Two wounds in one, then he dies a cruel death.
(C. 1, v. 35)

Allegedly, this is a reference to the death of France's King, Henry II, who was wounded in a jousting contest in 1557, dying 10 days later. This particular prediction of Nostradamus, fulfilled just two years after the publishing of his *Centuries*, is what propelled him to fame as a prophet.

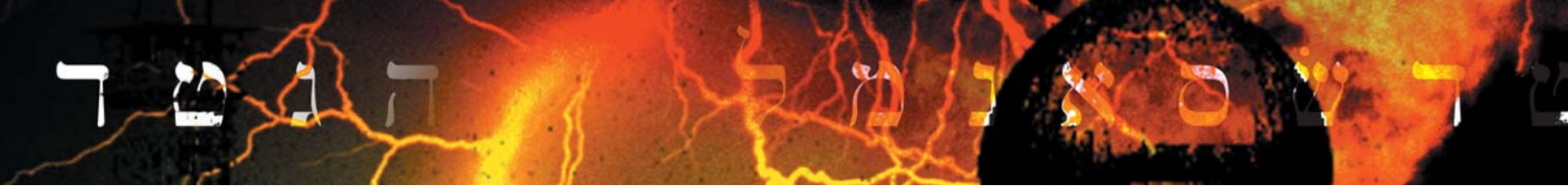
However, as one studies the actual historical facts surrounding the death of Henry II, we find the following: Only seven years separated the ages of Henry and his opponent in the tournament—it was hardly a contest between the young and the old; the accident occurred during a friendly sporting event, not on a battlefield; there is no evidence that Henry was wearing a gilded visor (cage) of gold; and the king's eyes were not damaged—a splinter from the lance pierced his skull and entered his brain.²

As anyone can see, these verses of Nostradamus are so vague and obscure that they could be applied to many historical events. However, for the sake of argument, let us say that this was a fulfilled prophecy. We then must wonder about the source of Nostradamus' prophetic visions. Can we as Christians embrace these prophecies?

Nostradamus was known to practice astrology, witchcraft, and divination. In addition to this he was familiar with the Bible and Jewish apocalyptic writings. While Nostradamus certainly obtained some of his material from biblical sources, it is clear that he did not foretell events through the biblical gift of prophecy. He relied heavily upon horoscopes, astrology, and other occult methods of divination. Thus, we must conclude that if a supernatural power was responsible for any accurate prophecies, that power was not of God.

While Satan is not omniscient, it is conceivable that because of his great intellect he could accurately predict certain events. It is also possible that he could exert his power over man to cause previously predicted events to come to pass. These types of events and occurrences could serve Satan's purposes by lending credibility to those who practice such things.

The Bible is very clear, however, that the people of God must



have nothing to do with psychics, seers, fortunetellers, or any other type of occultic divination:

There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, one who uses divination, one who practices witchcraft, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who casts a spell, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. For whoever does these things is detestable to the LORD... You shall be blameless before the LORD your God. (Deut. 18:10-13)

Dabbling in the occult is strictly forbidden. We must avoid those who claim supernatural foreknowledge of events, whether it be from Nostradamus, horoscopes, astrologists, or the “900 psychic line.” Not only does God forbid such involvement, but warns that it may take us down a path that leads to increased involvement in occultic practices. It is simply unwise to put our faith in anything apart from God’s Word.

BIBLE CODES

Since the late 1980s, there have been numerous books published that have extolled the so-called “Bible Code.” Some of these have come from popular Bible prophecy teachers.

Bible Code researchers claim to have found significant related words in the text of the Bible by combining letters that are spaced in intervals. Using today’s high-speed computers and sophisticated software, researchers are able to search the entire text of the Hebrew Masoretic text for supposedly significant words and phrases within chains of letters that are spaced at equal intervals. These researchers are able to explore a host of ranges, for example every five letters, every seven letters, and numerous other intervals as they seek to find words. According to proponents of the Bible Code, the application of this Equidistant Letter Sequencing (ELS) to the text of the Bible has

uncovered hidden prophecies of events thousands of years in the future. This, in the words of one popular prophecy teacher, “reveals a staggering level of mathematical design and intelligence that could only have been produced by a supernatural mind, providing unshakable mathematical proof that the Bible was truly inspired by God.”³

Bible Code proponents give numerous examples of these “significant words” they find encoded in the Hebrew scriptures. Some of the prophecies located in the Bible, according to these researchers, include references to the French Revolution, Hitler and the Holocaust, the assassination of Anwar Sadat, the Gulf War, AIDS, and the September 11 terrorist attacks.

Are we to believe that God encoded hidden prophecies of these events in the Bible thousands of years before they occurred? Jesus said, “An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign” (Mat. 12:39). We must be very careful to not place our faith in a “mathematical proof” of the Bible. We must question whether computers are needed to authenticate the Bible’s message. What if other books claim the same kind of “unshakable” proof? Are we to accept them as inspired as well? The answer is clearly, “no.”

Over the past few years, other researchers have demonstrated that this Equidistant Letter Sequence phenomenon is a random occurrence that happens in all literature. Dr. James Price, professor of Hebrew and Old Testament at Temple Baptist Seminary, has shown in his ELS research that in addition to the “prophetic” words and phrases found by the original Bible Code studies, derogatory phrases about God and Jesus can also be found. Dr. Price found the following phrases encoded in the Old Testament: “I lust after treachery, Jesus is my violent name,” “YHWH is a detestable thing,” and “God is an abomination and a diviner.”⁴ Obviously, these messages do not provide us with “unshakable mathematical proof that the Bible was truly inspired by God.” And that is because God did not encode them in His Word.

TALKING IN CODE?

This illustration of the Hebrew text of Deuteronomy 10:17-22 is taken from Grant Jeffrey’s book *The Signature of God* (Toronto: Frontier Research Publications, 1996).

The letters highlighted in yellow are at 22-letter intervals and spell out the name “Hitler” in Hebrew. This is actually a phenomenon that occurs in all literature.

17 כִּי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם הוּא אֱלֹהֵי הָאֲרָצִים
הָאֵל הַגָּדֹל הַגִּבּוֹר וְהַנּוֹרָא אֲשֶׁר לֹא יֵשָׁא פָנָיו וְלֹא יִקַּח
שָׁחַד: 18 עֲשֵׂה מִשְׁפָּט יָתוֹם וְאַלְמָנָה וְאַהֲבָה גֵר לְתַתְּ לּוֹ
לֶחֶם וּשְׂמֵלָה: 19 וְאַהֲבַתֶּם אֶת-הַגֵּר כִּי-גֵרִים הֵייתֶם בְּאֶרֶץ
מִצְרַיִם: 20 אֶת-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיךָ תִירָא אֹתוֹ תַעֲבֹד וּבּוֹ תִדְּבֹק
וּבְשִׁמּוֹ תִשָּׁבַע: 21 הוּא תִהְלֹךְ וְהוּא אֱלֹהֵיךָ אֲשֶׁר-עָשָׂה
אֹתְךָ אֶת-הַגָּדֹל וְאֶת-הַנּוֹרָא הָאֵל אֲשֶׁר רָאוּ עֵינֶיךָ:
22 בְּשִׁבְעִים נֶפֶשׁ יִרְדּוּ אֲבֹתֶיךָ מִצְרִימָה וְעַתָּה שִׁמְךָ יְהוָה
אֱלֹהֵיךָ כְּכֹכְבֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם לִרְבּ:



Dr. Brendan McKay, professor of computer science at Australian National University, searched the text of the novel *Moby Dick* to prove that the ELS phenomenon is common to all pieces of literature. He looked for and found significant related words which could be interpreted to refer to the assassinations of Indira Gandhi, Martin Luther King, John F. Kennedy, and Yitzhak Rabin as well as the war on terrorism.⁵ Obviously, Herman Melville is not an instrument of divine revelation, nor did he intentionally hide encoded prophecies of future events in the text of *Moby Dick*. Rather, McKay has demonstrated two things: 1) This is a phenomenon that occurs in all literature; and 2) A person can find almost anything if he looks hard enough.

In stark contrast, God's Word, every word, is inspired and to be trusted. The Bible declares:

The sum of Thy word is truth, And every one of Thy righteous ordinances is everlasting (Ps. 119:160).

Every word of God is tested; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him (Prov. 30:5).

The Bible Code researchers, however, authoritatively pick and choose which words and phrases are significant. Man becomes the judge of what is true and what is not. Man decides which words God intended to put in the Bible Code and which words He did not.

There are some grave implications for one who is a strong believer in the Bible Code and/or Nostradamus. I see several potentially dangerous possibilities. He could easily be deceived when a world leader appears and "proves," using one of these sources, that he is the promised Messiah—that he is God and deserves the worship of the world (see Revelation 13). Those who have placed their faith in the prophecies of Nostradamus or the Bible Code may be more apt to accept him. If a believer in Jesus Christ is comfortable consulting these sources, the next step could very well be a tarot reading or séance.

Our faith and confidence must be in God and His Word alone. Placing our faith in anything else exposes us to deception, and puts our faith on shaky ground.

THE BIBLE

J. Barton Payne, in his book *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy*, states that 27 percent of the Bible is prophetic or predictive in nature.⁶ When examined, we discover that approximately two-thirds of these prophecies have been fulfilled with one-third relating to yet future events.

The Bible declares itself to be the Word of God and claims divine inspiration:

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness (2 Tim. 3:16).

But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God (2 Pet. 1:20-21).

As you read the prophecies of the Bible, you can see that they are most often given in a straightforward way, using unambiguous language. Unlike the hidden prophecies of the Bible Code, which require a computer and imagination, or the vague wording of Nostradamus, which must be interpreted by the "experts," the Bible's prophecies are clear and concise.

In addition to the manuscript and archeological evidence supporting the accuracy of the Bible, the fulfillment of biblical prophecy is one of the strongest pieces of evidence that authenticates its claim to be the Word of God.

God taught the Israelites that the test of a true prophet is whether or not his prophecies come true:

But the prophet who shall speak a word presumptuously in My name which I have not commanded him to speak, or which he shall speak in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die. And you may say in your heart, 'How shall we know the word which the LORD has not spoken?' 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 (Deut. 18:20-22).

God uses fulfilled prophecy to authenticate His messengers. In the same way, by pointing to fulfilled prophecy, we can authenticate the message of the Bible.



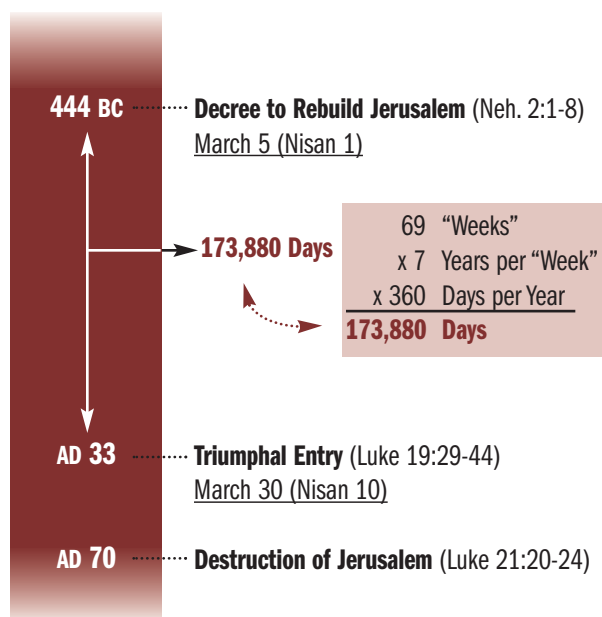
AS YOU READ THE
PROPHECIES OF THE
BIBLE, YOU CAN SEE
THAT THEY ARE MOST
OFTEN GIVEN IN A
STRAIGHTFORWARD WAY,
USING UNAMBIGUOUS
LANGUAGE.

In order to see the exacting nature of biblical prophecy, let's look specifically at one prophecy and its fulfillment from the book of Daniel. In approximately 538 BC, Daniel received a visit from the angel Gabriel. The angelic messenger revealed to Daniel a chronology of future events, including the rebuilding of the Jewish temple, which had been destroyed by Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar, the coming of the Messiah (Jesus Christ), and the destruction of this future temple by Roman armies. Here is the text of this message to Daniel:

So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress. Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined (Dan. 9:25-26).

In the book of Daniel, the Hebrew word *Shabuim* has been translated as “week” in the New American Standard version. Literally, it means a period of seven. The context of the passage tells us if it is referring to seven days, weeks, months, or years. In the book of Daniel, we find that a “week” represents a period of seven 360-day years.⁷ So, the time period intervening between the decree to rebuild Jerusalem and the coming of “Messiah the Prince” was prophesied to be 69 “weeks,” or 483 (69 x 7) prophetic years, totaling 173,880 days.⁸

FULFILLMENT OF DANIEL 9:25-26



Let's look at the three elements of this prophecy and their fulfillment:

1. There would be a decree to rebuild the city of Jerusalem, which the Babylonians had destroyed years earlier. This was fulfilled in 444 BC by Artaxerxes, king of the Medo-Persian Empire (465-424 BC), nearly a century after this prophecy was given to Daniel. See Nehemiah 2:1-8 for the account of how Nehemiah asked Artaxerxes for the permission and the means to rebuild the ruins of the city of Jerusalem.

2. From the giving of this decree to rebuild Jerusalem until the Messiah would be 69 “weeks” of years (7 plus 62) after which the Messiah would be cut off (killed). This was fulfilled when Jesus Christ came into Jerusalem at the triumphal entry, presenting Himself as Messiah. But He was rejected and crucified just four days later.

Harold W. Hoehner, professor of New Testament at Dallas Theological Seminary, detailed the calculations that show the accuracy of the fulfillment of this prophecy.⁹ Using internal biblical evidence and historical documents he determined the date of the decree to rebuild Jerusalem given to Nehemiah as March 5 (Nisan 1 on the Hebrew calendar), 444 BC. He also fixed the date of the triumphal entry of Christ into Jerusalem (Luke 19:29-44) as March 30 (Nisan 10), AD 33. He then concludes:

Using the prophetic year the calculation would be as follows. Multiplying the sixty-nine weeks by seven years for each week by 360 days gives a total of 173,880 days. The difference between 444 BC and AD 33 then is 476 solar years... or 173,855 days. This leaves only 25 days to be accounted for between 444 BC and AD 33. By adding the 25 days to March 5 (of 444 BC), one comes to March 30 (or AD 33) which was Nisan 10 in AD 33. This is the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem.¹⁰

3. The people of the prince which is to come will destroy Jerusalem and the temple. This was fulfilled by Titus and the Roman Empire in AD 70. In the war with the Jews, the Roman army besieged and destroyed Jerusalem, burned the temple, and killed more than one million Jews.

When we see the precision with which God fulfilled this and the other prophecies in the Bible, it should cause us to have full confidence in the Scriptures and in the God who breathed them.

Here are just a few other examples of fulfilled prophecies in the Old and New Testaments that have been confirmed by archaeology or historical documents:

Nineveh's destruction — Isaiah 10:5-34; 14:24-27 (612 BC)

Babylon's destruction — Isaiah 21:1-10; 47:1-15; Daniel 2-5 (539 BC)

Edom's destruction — Isaiah 21:11-12; Jeremiah 49:7-22 (550 BC)

Tyre's destruction — Isaiah 23:1-18; Ezekiel 26 & 27 (332 BC)

continued on page 23

Why Another Magazine?

By Rev. Charles Cooper



Having recently moved, it's been nice to receive only first-class mail. However, we at Sola Scriptura know that it is just a matter of time before all that “special” mail will find us. Also, we have not yet received one telephone call from a telemarketer that knows and calls us by our first names, but has never met us. We know they will eventually find us as well. In our modern world, it has become a way of life—more letters, magazines, newsletters, coupons, and telephone calls than the average person has time for. So, why another magazine? We realize that you may be asking this very question. We understand and are glad you asked! Sola Scriptura fully intends this publication to be an educating, affirming, and encouraging addition to your reading list.

Robert Van Kampen's Dream

Sola Scriptura came into existence in 1994 because of Robert Van Kampen's love for the Word of God. Mr. Van Kampen (a successful Chicago businessman) committed his life and resources to the advocacy of

God's Word—the Bible. Early in his life Van Kampen, a man with an extremely analytical and logical mind, allowed a doubt to be planted in his mind concerning the reliability of the Bible in the area of science. After wrestling for a number of years with the biblical position on Creation, Van Kampen came to understand the supremacy of Scripture in matters of science. After years of studying Scripture, Van Kampen became convinced that many believers like himself had been slowly moved away from a firm commitment to God's Word by well-meaning men who simply did not take Scripture at face value. He saw the return to an absolute commitment to Scripture alone—the arbiter of truth—as the only solution for the problems of the modern church as well as society as a whole.

The more Van Kampen studied Scripture at face value the more he became convinced of the principle of *sola scriptura* (Scripture alone). Because of that commitment, he set in motion several courses of action. First, he began to purchase English Bibles, ancient manuscripts, and other artifacts that give historical validation to the

Bible as God's communication to man. Those Bibles and artifacts are now on display at The Scriptorium: Center For Biblical Antiquities, located at The Holy Land Experience, in Orlando, Florida. Van Kampen's second step was to found the organization known as Sola Scriptura and to assign to it the purpose of *affirming the authenticity, accuracy, and authority of the Bible—the standard for truth*. Through a variety of ministries, products, and publications, Sola Scriptura hopes to educate God's people concerning the rich treasury God has given to us in His Word—the Bible. Unfortunately (humanly speaking), Robert Van Kampen went to be with the Lord before the full realization of his dreams.

The next step in the journey to fulfill Robert Van Kampen's vision is the vehicle by which to disseminate this truth; thus, the birth of this new magazine. It is our intent that this magazine will educate, affirm, and encourage God's people concerning the authenticity, accuracy, and authority of the Bible—the record of God's communication to man. “Why?” you might ask. Well, for two millennia, the Holy Scriptures have been under attack by one group

or another. Although the attack has come from many different directions, the strategy for this attack has always been the same: the denial of the authority of God's Word. The subject of this debate is clear: the Bible is or is not the Word of God. However, in recent years a clever twist to this age-old debate has taken shape. The twist is the result of a new viewpoint that has taken over the academic and media gurus. This new viewpoint is attempting to change the strategy of attack and in so doing win the battle for the hearts and minds of humanity. We are fully convinced that God's people must be educated concerning this new strategy. However, before we look intensely at this new twist, let's first look at some historical background that will help clarify the situation.

Three Eras of Human History

Human history can be divided into three eras: *premodern*, *modern*, and *postmodern*. Each era is characterized by two components: (1) a basic belief and (2) a succession of philosophical outlooks. The basic belief is the umbrella, which has underneath it a succession of philosophical outlooks that attempt to explain man's relationship to the world around him.

The Premodern Era

The premodern era saw man ruled by a spectrum of philosophical outlooks ranging from mythological paganism (made-up gods that related to man's natural fleshly desires) and classical rationalism (human reason is the test of all things) to biblical revelation (a miracle proving God communicated with man). The basic belief of the premodern era was supernaturalism. "But for all of its diversity one commonality that most [premodern era] outlooks shared was a strong belief in the supernatural, and that there existed absolute truth."¹ In other words, man needed a god(s) to survive and to be happy.

The Modern Era

The end of the premodern era and the beginning of the modern era cannot be

determined dogmatically. Most historians would date the beginning of the modern era with the Enlightenment. Capitalism (open, competitive markets where the goods are owned by the individual), secularism ("the uncoupling of church from society"²), communism (closed markets where the goods are owned by the State in the interest of the individual), secular humanism (autonomy of the individual), and existentialism (emphasizes the uniqueness of the individual and his freedom of choice) are but a few of the many philosophical viewpoints of this era. Like the premodern era, the modern era is also marked by a common belief. It is called rationalism. Rationalists rejected the supernatural and saw reason and science as ultimate deliverers of mankind. Man did not need a god, but only to believe in himself.

The Postmodern Era

The transition from the modern era to the postmodern era also cannot be clearly determined. However, that we are in the postmodern era would receive little debate. As postmodern refers to an era, the length of which is unknown, postmodernism refers to the first philosophical viewpoint of this new era. Simply stated: postmodernism is the rejection of objective Truth. The basic belief of the postmodern era may be characterized as individualism. Each individual man must determine for himself what he needs. In other words, man may or may not need a god. What is god for one man may or may not be god for another man.

As a term prevalent among academics and media gurus, postmodernism has only recently begun its evolutionary trek into the highways and byways of Americana. As a philosophical viewpoint, postmodernism is still forming. However, it is the tenets of postmodernism and their implications that believers must guard against. The individual tenets have been around for decades, but are only now coalescing into a philosophical viewpoint.

*Although the attack has
come from many different
directions, the strategy for
this attack has always been
the same: the denial of the
authority of God's
Word.*

The Tenets of Postmodernism

Like the frog in the beaker, believers unaware of the subtle changes around them can be easily deceived. We may be actually participating in the undermining of God's Word and not even know it. Earlier, I wrote of a new twist to the age-old question. The twist consists of a change from resolving the debate to dissolving the debate. It is satanic brilliance. Thus, believers beware! While peace, tolerance, and democracy are worthy goals, commitment to God's Word as the final authority in faith and practice cannot be sacrificed on the altar of humanistic utopianism.

There are four components of postmodernism. For the sake of clarity, we shall think of postmodernism in terms of a walnut. Postmodernism is the walnut. At the core of postmodernism is the rejection of an objective basis for Truth. The idea is that there is nothing in the universe that can demand that every person must do or think anything. Wrapped around the walnut seed is a hard shell—deconstructionism. The deconstructionist argues that the reason there is no absolute truth rests on the fact that language is inherently incapable of objectivity. In what some have called "the language game," postmodernists argue that words only refer to other words, which is an endless cycle. Since one can never get to the end of the cycle, objective meaning can

Why Another Magazine?

never be attained. The logical conclusion (in their thinking) is that objective truth does not exist. D.A. Carson illustrates this thinking in his book, *The Gagging of God*. He writes,

In the strongest form of deconstruction, not only is all meaning bound up irretrievably with the knower, rather than with the text, but words themselves never have a referent other than other words... Words refer only to other words. If after hearing the sentence "The car across the street is blue," someone were to ask, "Which car?" the answer might be, "The vehicle just behind the panel truck," or "That one" (pointing with the finger). Strictly speaking, then, "car" in the first sentence now refers to the word "vehicle" with its modifiers, or to the words that constitute the demonstrative expression "That one." One simply cannot escape the inability of language to refer outside itself.³

This is a very good example of "the language game" deconstructionists play.

Outside the hard shell that encases the eatable seed is a third layer of the walnut—pluralism. Pluralism holds that there are many equally valid answers to the question: which god is true? The correct answer is correct only for the individual. Your correct answer and my correct answer may be diametrically opposed, but that's okay. Pluralism makes all religions valid.

The outermost shell of the walnut is the final piece of the puzzle—we call it existentialism, the religion of feelings. That is, one can only know truth by personal experience. To be sure, your feelings and my feelings may be different, but we both have experienced truth.

What the postmodernist has done is change the rules of the game. Prior to this era, man fought to resolve the question: does or does not one need gods? The postmodernists dissolved the debate by insisting "both/and." Some men need a god and some men do not. For those who need a

god, there are infinite possibilities. All gods are created equal. In other words, tolerance brings harmony to the world.

At the outset, no thinking believer would overtly buy into the postmodern belief system by name. However, the critical area most susceptible to postmodernism is behavior. In the ensuing days after September 11, America began a move towards "godliness." Wounded, dismayed, disillusioned, frightened, and angry, Americans began to call out to "god." Americans mourned the terrible events of September 11 with memorial services across the nation. One of the largest gatherings occurred in New York City. Sally Jenkins of *The Washington Post* writes,

A Muslim cleric and a rabbi swayed hand in hand with a cardinal as they listened to the gospel anthem "We Shall Overcome,"... This was the spirit imbuing the Prayer for America, a ceremony that for one afternoon turned Yankee Stadium into a world's fair of faith. The legendary old baseball diamond was transformed into an altar for the interfaith service...⁴

Speaking at that service, cleric Iman Izak-El Pasha stated,

So let those of you who are here today, take this word out, that we are one America made up of all beautiful faiths, and beautiful persons and beautiful colors and that is what makes us unique in the world and we will not change.

In association with the September 11 attack, John Watne (a lay brother) writes,

I am a Christian... As such, I can take comfort in finding expressions of grief for the present... from these and many other texts from this sacred book. For those of other faiths who might read these pages, I invite you to read them, take from them what you can, and see if they provide a new way to express your relationship with your god.⁵

The depth of pain and anguish experienced by the loved ones of those killed on September 11 as well as the loss and damage to the nation of two of its most powerful symbols called for a special response. It was in the best interest of the nation, many believed, that her peoples come together in unity in the face of great tragedy. Given these factors, one should clearly understand the de-emphasizing of religious differences. Many people who describe themselves as "Christians" see nothing wrong with an interfaith prayer service held in remembrance of the September 11 terrorist attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

Phrases like "interfaith prayer service," "world's fair of faith," and "beautiful faiths," have behind them a philosophical viewpoint that is inherently dangerous. Biblical faith is not an exercise in positive thinking. Faith demands an object. The object of biblical faith is Jesus Christ and the Father who sent Him. Prayer is not an exercise for emotional cleansing. Prayer is the recognition of man's limitations and his need for help—help that only the one true God can provide.

Prayer and faith when employed in connection with the God of the Bible must flow from a heart that recognizes His exclusivity. Scripture declares, "You shall have no other gods besides Me... for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God..." (Exod. 20:3-5). His jealousy forbids those who follow Him from worshipping or serving any other god. The God of Scripture forbade alliances between Israel and her neighbors because such alliances might lead to the recognition of the false gods (Exod. 34:15). This argues strongly against any notion of an "interfaith prayer service," because, by definition, each must accept the validity of the gods of those who join in the service. As one prays to his god, others pray to their gods.

Conclusion

For those believers who clearly understand the issue, history has taught our opponents that those who claim Jesus as Savior are prevented from joining "a world's fair of

faith.” We simply cannot get along. We are intolerant. We are monotheistic. We accept the Bible as God’s authoritative instructions to believers in matters of faith and practice. For the discerning Christian, the absence of the name *Jesus* during the prayer memorial was conspicuous and offensive. The “world’s fair of faith” seems to have forgotten to invite everyone.

The subtlety by which the world has caused many that acknowledge the name of Jesus as Savior to abandon His name in the public arena is just one concern this magazine will address. Along with the many fine organizations and individuals who are championing the Bible as God’s authentic, accurate, and authoritative communication to man, we join our voice. *Sola Scriptura* magazine is our songbook. Won’t you take it and sing along with us? ■

ENDNOTES

1. D. Martin Fields, “Postmodernism” (Premise: volume II, Number 8 / September 27, 1995)
2. William Edgar, “No News Is Good News: Modernity, The Postmodern, and Apologetics,” *WTJ* 57 (Fall 1995) p. 365.
3. D.A. Carson, *The Gagging of God*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996) p. 73.
4. *The Washington Post*, September 24, 2001, p A03.
5. These comments can be found on the home web page of Mr. John Watne, which is:
www.geocities.com/bmw328driver/index.html

SOLA SCRIPTURA

continued from page 9

believed was the supreme authority. “Unless I am convicted by Scripture... my conscience is captive to the Word of God.” In these words, the principle of *sola scriptura* was enunciated with clarity and passion. It was this conviction, and his willingness to hazard his life in defense of it, that gave us the Reformation.

Perhaps you may be convinced that more is being read into Luther’s declaration at the Diet of Worms than is truly there, but we must respectfully dissent from that opinion. This was the moment of crisis that called for a decisive answer. Was Luther’s

conscience to be in submission to political and religious authorities, e.g. human authority, or not? His answer was an uncompromising “no.” His conscience was captive to the Word of God. It is important to clarify that Luther did not reject the principle of authority. However, his authority was the Word of God and not the word of man. His submission was to the revealed will of God preserved in the Sacred Scriptures and not to the decrees of fallible and sinful men.

This account of Luther’s stand at the Diet of Worms is far more than just an interesting journey into the past. There are important lessons for us today. These lessons are vital because we face the same question that demands a response. In many ways the circumstances that exist in our world can be reduced to matters of authority. This issue confronts us at every turn and we are required to make choices even if we wish we could avoid them.

For example, we live in a pluralistic society that believes all competing religious claims are equally valid. Thus, many are persuaded that there is the possibility of various means of salvation from sin. The crucial issue, in their thinking, is not the object of belief but the sincerity of the individual in the expression of that belief. We strongly disagree with this point of view. Scripture is absolutely clear on the issue of multiple saviors. Without equivocation, the Word of God states in Acts 4:12, “And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved.” The Lord Himself stated to His disciples in John 14:6, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.” The Word of God has spoken to this issue, and its authority is final; there is no other authority to which an appeal can be addressed.

Many people today consider themselves to be their own authority. Their confidence is in their ability to determine what is true and what is false. There are others who put their trust in an institutional church, and what that church teaches they accept as

truth. However, one of the great legacies of the Reformation is the freedom to place our trust in the written Word of God and what it proclaims.

This should not be interpreted to mean that the precious truth of *sola scriptura* should be reduced to a meaningless cliché. The Scriptures must be interpreted correctly and applied to daily living in a consistent manner. However, in these days in which we are once again confronting a crisis of authority in many areas of life, we unashamedly take our stand on the principle of *sola scriptura*. ■

AUTHORITY OF BIBLE PROPHECY

continued from page 19

- Jesus’ sacrificial death — Isaiah 53
- Judah’s captivity begins — Jeremiah 1:13-16, 5:14-19 (605 BC)
- Judah destroyed by Babylon — Jeremiah 6 & 7 (586 BC)
- Rebuilding of Jerusalem — Jeremiah 31:38-40 (currently fulfilled)
- Judah’s return from captivity after 70 years — Jeremiah 29:24-32, 32:1-40 (536 BC)
- Babylon’s invasion of Egypt — Jeremiah 43:1-13, 44, 46 (605 BC)
- The future empires of Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome — Daniel 2 & 7
- The fall of Medo-Persia — Daniel 8:1-8, 20-22 (334 BC)
- The rise of Antiochus Epiphanies — Daniel 8:9-14 (178 BC)
- Judas’ betrayal of Christ — Matthew 26:21
- The disciples’ desertion of Christ — Matthew 26:30
- Peter to disown the Lord — Matthew 26:33-34
- Jerusalem’s destruction — Luke 21:6, 20-24 (AD 70)
- Jesus predicts His resurrection — John 2:13-22
- Jesus predicts His crucifixion — John 3:14-16
- Peter’s martyrdom foretold — John 21:15-19

Though not giving us a complete blueprint for the future, God has chosen to reveal

AUTHORITY OF BIBLE PROPHECY

some of His plans in His Word. Speaking through Isaiah the prophet, God said:

I am the LORD, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another, Nor My praise to graven images. Behold, the former things have come to pass, Now I declare new things; Before they spring forth I proclaim them to you (Isa. 42:8-9).

In Isaiah's day God had revealed "former things" through His prophets that had come to pass—the people could verify them and know that God does not lie. God was also revealing "new things" which would be fulfilled in the future. As these future prophecies were realized, they provided further authentication of God's veracity and His sovereignty.

The same holds true for today. We can look back at fulfilled prophecy to authenticate God's Word and increase our faith. We can also look forward to the fulfillment of all that God has said will happen, and we can be assured that it will play out just as He has said it will (Mat. 5:17-18).

God did not hide His message to us, encoding it in the Bible to be ferreted out only by those with great theological know-how or modern technology. No, He communicated His truth to us clearly, that we might understand and obey. "But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may observe it" (Deut. 30:14). You don't need a mathematical for-

mula to search for prophecies in the Bible or to authenticate its message. All you must do is read the Bible—God's Word. It is complete and sufficient.

Unlike the vague prophecies of Nostradamus, or the random ELS occurrences of the Bible Code, only the Bible is clear, authoritative, and accurate in all its prophecies. It must be our sole standard for truth, not only for prophecy, but in all areas of life. Rather than looking to men, tradition, or the church as our authority, we must return to God's Word as our authority and standard for truth. We must embrace *sola scriptura*—Scripture alone! ■

ENDNOTES

1. Cheetham, Erika. *The Prophecies of Nostradamus* (Perigee: New York, 1973), p. 177.
2. Facts taken from *Nostradamus: Prophet or Pretender?* by Wayne Jackson (Courier Publications, 1998).
3. Jeffrey, Grant R. *The Signature of God* (Frontier Research Publications, Inc.: Toronto, 1996), p. 204.
4. As quoted in *Code Breaker* by Guy Cramer (Trinity Consulting, 1998).
5. McKay, Brendan. *Scientific Refutation of the Bible Codes*, website: <http://cs.anu.edu.au/~bdm/dilugim/torah.html>
6. Payne, J. Barton. *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy* (Baker Books: Grand Rapids, 1973), p. 13.
7. Harold Hoehner gives several reasons for this conclusion: 1. Daniel had been considering Jeremiah 25:11 and 29:10 regarding the 70-year captivity. The captivity was a result of violating the sabbatical year, which was to have been observed after every six years (2 Chron. 36:21; cf. Lev. 26:34-35, 43). Each year of captivity represented one seven-year

cycle in which the seventh or Sabbath year had not been observed. Thus it is clear that the context refers to years, not days. 2. It was common during at least some parts of the histories of Egypt, India, Assyria, Babylon, and Greece to have twelve 30-day months making a total of 360 days for the year. 3. A covenant will be confirmed for the seven years of the Seventieth Week (Dan. 9:27), but it will be broken in the middle of the week. In the last half of the week, or for 3½ years, there will be the terrible persecution. This coincides with the persecution mentioned in Daniel 7:24-25 and 12:7, which will last for "a time, times, and half a time," or 3½ years. However, it is not until one comes to the New Testament that the duration of the year is known. John uses the same terminology of time, times, and half a time in Revelation 12:14. Speaking of the same situation within the same chapter, John says that the persecution will be for 1,260 days in 11:3 and 12:6. That period is also listed as being 42 months in 11:2 and 13:5. Thus the 42 months equals the 1,260 days, and that equals the time, times, and half a time or 3½ years, which in turn equals the half week in Daniel 9:27. Hence the month is 30 days and the year is 360 days.

8. The Hebrew calendar was based on a 360-day year.
9. See also Sir Robert Anderson's calculations in his book, *The Coming Prince*.
10. Hoehner, Harold W. "Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ: Daniel's Seventy Weeks and New Testament Chronology," *BSac* 132 (Jan.-Mar. 1975), p. 64.

REFERENCES

- Comfort, Ray. *The Secrets of Nostradamus Exposed* (Living Waters Publications: Bellflower, CA, 1996).
- Miller, Elliot and Craig Hawkins. "Nostradamus," *Christian Research Newsletter* Vol. 1, Num. 3, 1988.

In the Next Issue: Winter 2003

Word of Life—A proper understanding of *Sola Scriptura* must include *Solus Christus*. Avoiding the ditch of *bibliolatry*, John 5:39-40.

The Shape of Sola Scriptura—A review article that examines the recent book by Keith A. Mathison and offers a missing perspective.

THE VAN KAMPEN COLLECTION

The Martyr's Bible

Dr. Herbert Samworth

“**N**ever judge a book by its cover” is a warning against premature judgments. The truth of this proverb has never been reinforced more aptly than when one gazes at the cover of an English Bible printed in 1537 in Antwerp. The leather cover is discolored and torn, with nothing attractive about it. One is almost tempted to set it aside. But this would be a grave mistake because there is a fascinating history associated with it.

William Tyndale arrived in Antwerp sometime before 1530, after he had printed the first complete English New Testament in Worms, Germany in 1526. He came to Antwerp for three principal reasons: the relative safety of the English Merchants’ House, the numerous printing houses located in Antwerp, and the access to ships taking cargo to England in which he could conceal copies of his Bibles. But in May 1535, Tyndale was arrested.

While Tyndale was in prison, Miles Coverdale, one of Tyndale’s trusted helpers, completed Tyndale’s translation and printed it as the first complete English Bible. This Bible, known as the Coverdale Bible, had to be smuggled into England because the English clergy had banned vernacular translations of the Bible.

In 1537, an English clergyman named John Rogers, who had come to true faith in Christ through his contacts with Tyndale, undertook a revision of the Coverdale Bible. Rogers completed the revisions and published the revised edition under the name of Thomas Matthew. Copies of this Bible, known as the Matthew’s Bible, were sent to Thomas Cramner, Archbishop of Canterbury, and Thomas

Cromwell, Lord Chancellor, who favored the distribution of the English Bible. They showed a copy to King Henry VIII. When assured by his officials that it was an accurate translation, Henry replied with these stirring words, “Then let it go forth to the people!”

Henry’s order reversed the 130-year ban against vernacular translations of the Scriptures. For the first time since Wyclif, an individual could legally own a copy of the Scriptures in English. Tyndale’s prayer, uttered at his execution, “Lord, open the King of England’s eyes,” had been gloriously answered.

But how did the Van Kampen Collection’s copy of the Matthew’s Bible come to be known as the Martyr’s Bible? In 1982, Robert and Judy Van Kampen were shown a stained copy of the Matthew’s Bible. The discoloration was apparent on nearly every page. Adding to the drama was a note, written early in the nineteenth century, stating, “This book was probably owned by one of the early martyrs.” Because it was printed in the sixteenth century, the note was an allusion to the persecution and martyrdoms carried out during the reign of Queen Mary (1553-58).

We learn from Church history that it was common practice to put a copy of the Scriptures in the hands of those who were executed for heresy. This was done to associate heresy with ownership of the Bible. Frequently, those who would witness the executions would snatch these Bibles out of the hands of the martyrs. Consequently, it has been surmised that the stain on the Matthews’ Bible was caused by the owner’s blood!



The Van Kampens were so moved by this testimony that they determined to assemble a Bible collection to honor those who paid the ultimate price. The Martyr’s Bible was the first acquisition of the Van Kampen Collection.

Wouldn’t it be interesting to know the exact details of how the stains came to be on this book? Unfortunately, much of that history still remains hidden. However, there are facts that can be stated with certainty. Of the first five translators of the English Bible, three of them—Tyndale, Rogers, and John Frith—sealed their testimony with their lives. We also know that more than 300 persons, many of whose names have not been preserved, were executed during the Marian persecution.

Perhaps we may never know definitively what fate the owner of this particular copy of the Matthew’s Bible endured, but we can state with conviction that in some sense every English Bible is a “Martyr’s Bible” because every page witnesses to the blood of those who paid for its dissemination with their lives.

The Martyr’s Bible is part of **The Van Kampen Collection**, one of the world’s largest private collections of Bibles, artifacts, and biblical manuscripts in the world. The Collection is the centerpiece of Sola Scriptura’s ministry, and is housed at **The Scriptorium**, an interactive museum at **The Holy Land Experience** in Orlando, Florida.

A WORD FROM THE WORD

The Breath of God

Dr. Dan Hayden

My glasses had gotten too dirty—even for me. Usually I don't even notice the smudges and film of dirt that accumulates periodically on my lenses, so someone has to tell me, "Why don't you clean your glasses?" This time, however, I was trying to read the posted menu at a fast food counter, and all I saw was a blur.

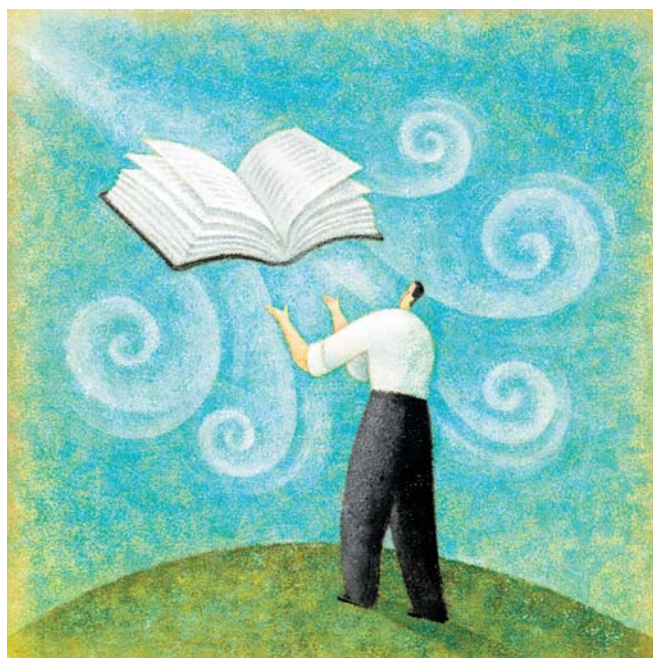
At first I thought my eyes were getting worse; but soon the real problem dawned on me. I had been sweeping out our garage that morning and the dust in the air had coated my glasses. It was bad. Well, I did what I usually do in that situation. I stuck one side of the glasses at a time up to my mouth, and exhaled. My breath condensed on the glass surface and provided the moisture that was needed to remove the dirt. Then I began rubbing the lenses with a handkerchief, and soon they were clean again. It's a common procedure, and all of us who wear glasses know how to do it.

Actually, there are a number of common ways in which we see our breath. Our glasses fog up when we breathe on them. On a cold day, our warm breath will condense in mid-air as an evidence of how cold it really is. Breathe on a cold pane of glass and it will immediately become cloudy with the condensed moisture fogging the surface. You can even write your name with your finger on that glass—(or maybe a heart, if you're in the mood). In all of these situations our breath takes form. What could not be seen, now becomes visible.

This is what the Bible says concerning itself. It states that Scripture is God's breath, having taken form—the invisible Word of God systematically condensed on the scrolls of prophets and apostles, as God inscribed His truth on the pages of Scripture. All Scripture is *God-breathed*.

This is the truth that is expressed in 2 Timothy 3:16: "All Scripture is inspired of God and is profitable..." The phrase "inspired of God" is the Greek word *theopneustos*. This is a compound word where the noun for "God" (*Theos*) is combined with the word for "breath" (*pneuma*). In English, we observe this Greek word in our word "pneumonia"—a disease of the lungs that affects our breathing. Actually, the Greek word *pneuma* can also mean "wind or spirit," depending on the context. It is indeed the word used for the Holy Spirit—*Hagios Pneuma*.

When used in a compound, such as *theopneustos*, however, the translator is challenged to catch the meaning that is being expressed by the compound nature of the word. Here the King James Version translates this word by "is given by inspiration of God," whereas the New



American Standard says simply "is inspired by God." The New International Version may be closest to the real meaning, though, when it says, "is God-breathed." All Scripture is the breath of God having taken form on the pages of a book.

This is certainly an astonishing truth. The Bible is not just claiming for itself that it is a collection of writings by prophets and apostles *about* God. Rather, it is saying that the Bible is really the *Essence* of God Himself who breathed on holy men, so that what they wrote was actually His breath condensing through their pens. Because of this the Bible is literally "the Word of God." All Scripture is *theopneustos*.

FINAL THOUGHTS

God Has Spoken Through His Son, Who Sat Down

Marvin Rosenthal

The author of the epistle to the Hebrews began with these words, “God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son (Heb. 1:1-2).”

Throughout the centuries of the Old Testament, God communicated to His people through the prophets. He did so in a variety of ways, which included dreams, visions, writing on clay tablets, angelic visitation, and direct oral communication. Whatever the method and whoever the messenger, the end product was the inspired, or “God-breathed,” Word of God.

In these last days (the New Testament age) God has spoken through His Son. That is, Jesus communicated the message of His Father both through the way He lived as well as through what He taught.

The contrast is between the law, which came through Moses and the prophets, and grace, which came by Christ and His disciples. Yes, God is a God of holiness, justice, and truth. But He is also a God of love, grace, and mercy.

The point is that God communicated to

mankind the messages of both the Old Testament (covenant of law) and the New Testament (covenant of grace). Both were equally from God and both were good. The difference is that the law told men what God required, but did not provide men with the enablement to obey the law—the law was “weak through the flesh” (Rom. 8:3).

The law was a comprehensive whole made up of civil, moral, and ceremonial requirements. To break it at one point was to break it in its totality. Since man cannot measure up to the law’s lofty demands, it brings him face to face with his sin.

In marked contrast to the law, grace is God’s unmerited favor. Through Christ, God provides for man what he could not provide for himself. Jesus came to pay a debt He didn’t owe because man owed a debt he couldn’t pay.

Whether it was the Old Testament of law or the New Testament of grace, God has spoken. That in itself is an astounding and humbling reality. God was not obligated to speak. He was not our debtor. Man surely did not deserve a word from heaven. After all, we were sinful, disobedient, and at enmity with God.

God has spoken with finality through His Son. It is a completed and perfect message. Nothing has to be added and nothing has to be changed. It simply has to be understood and obeyed. Here are four compelling reasons for listening to His message.

First, “He is the heir of all things” (Heb. 1:2). The universe and all therein belong to Him. Therefore, listen to Him.

Second, He made the world. When God the Father spoke the world into existence *ex nihilo*

(out of nothing), God the Son was present and participated in that creation. “All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being” (John 1:3). Therefore, listen to Him.

Third, “He is the radiance of His (God’s) glory and the exact representation of His nature” (Heb. 1:2). The intrinsic, eternal perfection of the Father is equally the intrinsic eternal perfection of the Son. If men want to know what the invisible God is like, they can see Him in the visible Son. Therefore, listen to Him.

Fourth, when Christ had by Himself, as priest and sacrifice, purged our sins, He sat down (Heb. 1:3). The priests of ancient Israel served at the Temple. But the Temple, as costly and beautiful as it was, had no chairs. It had no chairs because the priest never sat down. The priest never sat down because his work was never done. His work was never done because the blood of bulls and goats could never take away sin (Heb. 10:4). Jesus, by way of contrast, offered a sacrifice that was infinite in worth and eternal in duration. It never has to be offered again. And so He sat down—enthroned on the right hand of the majesty on high (Heb. 1:3). The work of redemption was forever finished. Therefore, listen to Him.

God has spoken through His Son. Because He has spoken, there is an answer to our questions. Because He has spoken, there is a solution to our problems. Because He has spoken, there is hope for our end. God has spoken through His Son, who sat down.

Marvin Rosenthal is the Executive Director of Zion’s Hope and The Holy Land Experience in Orlando, Florida.




SOLA SCRIPTURA
P.O. Box 617677
Orlando, Florida 32861-7677

C O M E E X P E R I E N C E T H E W O R D O F G O D

THE BIBLE

VERSE BY VERSE DRAMATIC PRESENTATIONS

Performed by **MARQUIS LAUGHLIN**



"...REMARKABLY GIFTED!"

Max McLean
Fellowship for the Performing Arts

"...MAGNIFICENT!"

Dr. R.C. Sproul
Ligonier Ministries

MARQUIS LAUGHLIN is an actor whose life's work is enabling his audiences to hear, see, and feel the God of the Bible, through the words of the Bible. He maintains an active touring schedule across the country, and can be seen performing regularly at the Holy Land Experience in Orlando, Florida. Marquis is the voice of Tyndale Publisher's *Illumina* Bible, and the English Standard Version Bible published by Crossway Books.

Genesis • Ecclesiastes • Daniel
John's Gospel • Revelation

To find out how to make one of these inspiring presentations the next event for your church, school, or conference, contact Sola Scriptura.

1-800-844-9930 • www.solagroup.org