

# **THE BATTLE OVER GENESIS—FROM WITHOUT AND WITHIN**

by

**Bert Thompson, Ph.D.**

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## INTRODUCTION

It has been over seven decades since the beloved G.C. Brewer stood in the pulpit in Fort Worth, Texas in the fall of 1927 to present his famous “Lecture on Evolution.” Anyone who has heard or read the text of that powerful presentation cannot help but have their soul stirred by its contents. Interestingly, just two years later, in 1929, George Klingman would publish his small-but-powerful booklet, *God Is*, which represented a masterful response to, and refutation of, several publications authored by Charles Smith, founder and first president the American Association for the Advancement of Atheism. Not the least among these was Smith’s booklet, “Godless Evolution,” which Klingman answered in its entirety. One hundred years before, Alexander Campbell likewise had been busy meeting the atheists’ arguments, but this time in public debate. On April 13-23, 1829 in Cincinnati, Ohio, Campbell debated the famed infidel, Robert Owen. The debate, which dealt with the veracity of the Christian system, became a classic and remains in print to this very day—which no doubt is a great compliment to Mr. Campbell’s adroitness in “rightly dividing” the Word of God.

Such presentations as these have become, in their own right, precious pieces of restoration history to those of us in the churches of Christ. And rightly so, for they represent valiant, fruitful attempts on the part of faithful men to press the battle against atheism and its godless system of origins—organic evolution.\* Numerous others since then have “fought the good fight” (1 Timothy 6:12) because they were “not ashamed of the gospel” (Romans 1:16). They understood—as we today eventually must—that the price of tolerating false doctrine, the price of not defending the Truth, is apostasy.

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\* The word “evolution” is used here to refer to the “General Theory of Evolution,” which suggests that “...all the living forms in the world have arisen from a single source which itself came from an inorganic form” [Kerkut, G.A. (1960), *The Implications of Evolution* (London: Pergamon), p. 157].

The battle of which I speak—and which was fought a generation or two ago by such men as G.C. Brewer, George Klingman, Alexander Campbell, and others—has not ended. Nor has its intensity waned. This battle, however, is not fought with guns or bombs, but rather with the Word of God which is the “sword of the Spirit” (Ephesians 6:17). It is, by its very nature, a **spiritual battle** for the hearts, minds and souls of men. For this reason, it is a far more important battle than any that could be fought within earthly confines and with earthly weapons. This battle—in which some of us today find ourselves engaged—is the same kind of battle the apostle Paul described when he wrote:

Though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but mighty before God to the casting down of strongholds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ (2 Corinthians 10:3-5).

Truly, we today who are engaged in this most crucial of battles find ourselves using spiritual weapons “mighty before God” in order to cast down “strongholds” and “imaginations” that have exalted themselves “against the knowledge of God.” The battle we are fighting today is essentially the same one fought a generation or more ago. That battle, in general terms, is the battle against atheism, agnosticism, and infidelity. More specifically, the battle concerns atheism’s godless system of origins (organic evolution) pitted against the Bible’s system of origins (special creation). I know of nothing that is “exalted against the knowledge of God,” nothing which is a greater “stronghold,” and nothing based more on men’s mere “imaginations” than the concept of evolution as taught in the twentieth century! Paul spoke of those who, in the first century, had “exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator” (Romans 1:25). Today, the people of whom Paul spoke are legion, and their tribe is increasing.

But, why is this battle so fundamental? Why is this battle ultimately so important? Why have all of these from generations long since gone expended such effort? Why are some among us today so intent on continuing to the battle? Simply put, our response to such questions is this. The great message of Christianity is that “the just shall live by faith” (Hebrews 10:38) “to the saving of the soul” (Hebrews 10:39). But what exactly is this **living** faith—this **saving** faith? It must be faith in something, or someone, else it

has no substance and thus may be relegated to little more than naive sentimentality.\* Fortunately, we are not left to our own devices to discover the origin or nature of such a faith, which is discussed in detail in the very next chapter, Hebrews 11 (the great “hall of fame of faith” in the Bible). It is the faith of Abel as he offered an acceptable sacrifice. It is the faith of Enoch as he pleased God through obedience. It is the faith of Noah as he believed and acted upon God’s Word. It is the faith of Abraham as he stepped out on God’s promises.

But most important of all, it is the foundational faith of Hebrews 11:3—the faith by which “we understand that the worlds have been framed by the word of God, so that what is seen hath not been made out of things which appear.” In such an affirmation, we are told that any meaningful faith must be founded, first and foremost, on God’s special creation of all things—not out of things already in existence, but solely by His omnipotence. This fundamental doctrine of biblical creation at the hands of God cannot be overemphasized. Discard Genesis 1-11 (the aptly named “creation chapters”) and try building the remainder of the Bible without them! The great Bible themes of justification, sanctification, redemption, a past and coming destruction of the world, a risen and ascended Savior, and a multitude of other such doctrines fade into utter insignificance in the absence of Genesis 1-11. The nature of this battle, then, has to do with what is at stake in these first eleven chapters of the English Bible. I am aware, of course, that some would like us to believe otherwise. Their arguments, however, are unconvincing.

They tell us not to “waste time on peripheral controversies such as the evolution creation question—just preach the gospel,” not realizing that the gospel includes creation and **precludes** evolution! They say we should simply “emphasize saving faith, not faith in creation,” forgetting that the greatest chapter on faith in the Bible (Hebrews 11) begins by stressing faith in the *ex nihilo* creation of all things by God’s word (verse 3) as preliminary to meaningful faith in any of His promises (verse 13). They advise us merely to “preach Christ,” but ignore the fact that Christ was Creator before He became the Saviour, and that His finished work of salvation is meaningful only in light of His finished work of creation (Hebrews 4:3-10). They may wish, in order to avoid the offense of the true gospel, to regard creation as an unimportant matter, but God considered it so important that it was the subject of His first revelation. The first chapter of Genesis is the foundation of the Bible; if the foundation is undermined, the superstructure soon collapses. (Morris, n.d., p. 2, emp. in orig.)

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\* One of the most insightful and helpful studies I know on the topic of biblical faith is the book, *Faith and Reason*, by Dick Sztanyo [(1989, Montgomery, AL: Apologetics Press)].

Indeed, the first chapter of Genesis is the foundational chapter of the Bible. If one compromises the first chapter, there is nothing to prevent the compromise of every other chapter. It is concerning the compromises of Genesis 1-11 that I now write.

### **THE BATTLE FROM WITHOUT**

One of the most important assaults on Genesis has arisen from outside the religious community in general. Charles Darwin led the assault in 1859 with the publication of his book, *The Origin of Species*, and that assault has not abated to this very day. Opposition to creationism is at an all-time high and, in fact, anti-creationism is rampant both in the United States and in other countries, especially in educational circles. Little wonder. Evolutionists realize that ultimately there are only two alternatives in regard to origins. Douglas J. Futuyma, a renowned anti-creationist, wrote:

Creation and evolution, between them, exhaust the possible explanations for the origin of living things. Organisms either appeared on the earth fully developed or they did not. If they did not, they must have developed from pre-existing species by some process of modification. If they did appear in a fully developed state, they must indeed have been created by some omnipotent intelligence (1983, p. 197).

Dr. Futuyma has been joined by numerous others [not the least of which is Nobel Laureate George Wald of Harvard (1958, p. 100)] in the observation that there are two, and only two, possibilities—creation or evolution. And such evolutionists have made it abundantly clear that they have absolutely no intention of accepting creation. As one writer stated concerning the issues surrounding creation:

Such questions are in one sense irrelevant because what is really in dispute is the effort of an aroused religious movement, whose leaders have made a deity out of a book, to make the larger society bow down before their totem.... The short answer is, yes, you're right, it is nonsense... (Skow, 1981, p. 60).

The late evolutionist, Isaac Asimov, while serving as president of the American Humanist Association, went on record as calling creationists “an army of the night,” among other colorful pejoratives (1984, p. 183). And that has been one of the kindest references to those of us who are creationists. Evolutionist Richard Dawkins went even further when he wrote: “It is absolutely safe to say that if you meet somebody who claims not to believe in evolution, that person is ignorant, stupid, or insane (or wicked, but I'd rather not consider that)” [1989, p. 34].

The battle remains so heated because of the stakes involved. Evolutionists fully understand that if creation is correct, there must be a Creator. If there is a Creator, the obvious question then becomes: “What does He expect of me?” Rather than acknowledge the existence of a Creator, they have “refused to have God in their knowledge” (Romans 1:28). “Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools” (Romans 1:22), ignored the witness God provided for them (Acts 14:17; Romans 1:19-21), and opted to defend evolution.

Space prohibits an in-depth discussion of the assault that has been mounted as a part of the evolutionists’ defense of their godless system of origins. Such a discussion, however, is available.\* The first frontal assault (in recent times) on creationism came in 1967 with the publication by H.J. Muller, the Nobel Laureate in genetics, of a manifesto that was signed by 177 of the world’s most famous scientists and scholars. First published in the pages of *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* (February 1967), it affirmed that evolution was “as well established as the rotundity of the earth.” The entire document, complete with a listing of those individuals who signed it, may be found in James D. Bales’ book, *Forty-Two Years on the Firing Line* (n.d., pp. 71-77). The next salvo was fired ten years later by the American Humanist Association in a 1977 manifesto affirming that evolution is an “accepted fact of science” (1977, pp. 4-5,23). That same year, atheistic sociologist Dorothy Nelkin of Cornell University authored the first of what would become a long list of anti-creationist books (1977). Since then, over fifty different anti-creationist volumes have issued from the presses, including, but not limited to, the following: (1) *Abusing Science: The Case Against Creationism*, by Philip Kitcher (1982); (2) *Scientists Confront Creationism*, edited by Laurie Godfrey (1983); (3) *Science on Trial: The Case For Evolution*, by Douglas J. Futuyma (1983); and (4) *Science and Creationism*, edited by Ashley Montagu (1984). In 1980, the humanists published *A Secular Humanist Declaration*, and since then numerous scientific societies have lent their support in efforts to oppose creationism. Included in that number are the following: National Science Teachers Association, American Institute of Biological Sciences, American Association for the Advancement of Science, Na-

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\* See: (1) Thompson 1982; (2) Thompson 1985; (3) Morris 1984, pp. 307-327; and (4) Morris 1985, pp. 99-116.

tional Association of Biology Teachers, American Geological Institute, National Cancer Institute, National Academy of Sciences, and others.\*

The intensity of the battle grows day by day, and with it the vehemence of the evolutionists. For example, on May 23, 1985 (on the “Tracy Larkin Show” on Alabama Public Television), I debated Delos B. McKown, chairman of the philosophy department at Auburn University, on the creation/evolution issue. As the televised debate drew to a close, Mr. Larkin stated that it seemed to be common knowledge that creationists were making headway in their efforts, and asked Dr. McKown (a former Christian Church/Disciples of Christ preacher-turned-atheist) how he felt about the matter. Dr. McKown exploded in a burst of inflamed rhetoric and stated that creationists **were** making a good deal of headway—but due only to the fact that our nation is filled with (and this is a direct quote from the video tapes) “logical illiterates and scientific simpletons” (see Thompson, 1985). So much for fair play or logical arguments from the opposition! But one thing is for certain; Dr. McKown fairly well expressed the way he and his colleagues view creationists. Anyone who would accept creation is, in their estimation, a “logical illiterate” or a “scientific simpleton.” That should tell us at least two things: (1) the opposition in this battle has little true ammunition, as is evident from the fact that they must resort to name-calling; and (2) the opposition intends to press the battle, regardless of how that task has to be accomplished. Little wonder Paul urged us to “take up the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench the fiery darts of the evil one” (Ephesians 6:16), and to “put on the whole armor of God” (Ephesians 6:11ff.). He knew the serious nature of the battle. The question is, do we?\*

### **THE BATTLE FROM WITHIN**

One might well expect opposition to the Genesis account of creation from humanists, skeptics infidels, and others of like mind. And, to a somewhat lesser degree, one might expect a milder form of oppo-

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\* For a more complete listing of professional societies that have aligned themselves against creationism, see: Morris (1984), p. 322.

\*\* For a brief treatment of the seriousness of the current battle between advocates of creation and advocates of evolution, see: Morris (1984), pp. 327-335.

sition from those in the religious community who have little regard for the principle of biblical authority and who long ago abandoned what God's Word has to say, not only in the area of creation, but in other critical areas of biblical interpretation as well.\* However, one hardly would expect the levels or intensities of compromise regarding the Genesis account of creation that we are experiencing currently amidst some of our own congregations and/or educational institutions. Those of us in the churches of Christ have long opposed the teaching of both organic and theistic evolution because such concepts strike at the very heart of the biblical message and are part and parcel of the humanistic message that is so popular in modern society.

Suddenly, however, it seems that in many instances the church's opposition to evolution, theistic evolution, progressive creationism, and their counterparts, has become practically non-existent. In its place, we are seeing not just a lackadaisical attitude toward such false teaching, but in some instances an outright defense of the false doctrines that those in the churches of Christ once opposed. Statements made by some among us in recent years show that the late, beloved Gospel preacher, J.D. Tant, was correct when he said, "Brethren, we are drifting." Were he alive today to see what is happening among us, he might be justified in rephrasing his statement to affirm, "Brethren, we **have drifted!**"

One hardly needs the wisdom of Solomon to see what is happening among us. In large part, the strong stance we once took against evolution (and all its allied forms) has softened—at least in many quarters. And while there are still isolated pockets of resistance and opposition to these ungodly teachings, it is becoming increasingly evident that some among us no longer feel the need, or the desire, to uphold the Genesis account of creation and stand firm against evolutionary teachings. As proof of this statement, I offer the following.

Neal Buffaloe, while an elder in the church and a professor of biology at the University of Central Arkansas in Conway, penned an award-winning article for *Mission* magazine. In that article, titled "God

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\* When I refer to compromises in "other critical areas of biblical interpretation" besides creation, my reference is to such compromises as appear in denominationalism regarding: (a) the worship of the church; (b) the name of the church; (c) the organization of the church; (d) the work of the church; (e) etc.



or Evolution?,” Dr. Buffaloe stated: “The concept of evolution is neither degrading to man, detrimental to human dignity, nor in conflict with the Bible” (1969, p. 17). He even went so far as to state: “What do we care that man the animal is a product of evolution as long as man the spirit is begotten of God?” (1969, pp. 20-21) While some may be shocked by such statements, let me quickly point out that Dr. Buffaloe was merely stating in a religious context what he had stated seven years earlier in a biological context. In his book, *Principles of Biology* (published by Prentice-Hall in 1962), Dr. Buffaloe made his position clear when he suggested that evolution need not be abandoned by practicing Christians. We hardly should be surprised, then, that eventually he grew bold enough to suggest such to his own brethren. Interestingly, not long after he made the above-mentioned statements, Dr. Buffaloe apostatized from the church and joined himself to the Christian Church/Disciples of Christ movement. Then, in 1981, he co-authored (with N. Patrick Murray, an Episcopal “priest”) *Creationism and Evolution*, a small booklet that was an all-out attack upon the credibility of the Genesis record. In fact, Dr. Buffaloe and his co-author even went so far as to state concerning the events of Genesis 1-11:

...the mainstream of Biblical scholarship rejects the literal historicity of the Genesis stories prior to Chapter 12, and finds the literature of parable and symbol in the early chapters of Genesis (1981, p. 5).

One of our main purposes here, in fact, is to show that the vast mainstream of Theistic interpretation has long ago assimilated the concept of evolution into its faith-perspective, along with modern astronomy, the atomic theory, and other scientific findings.... If God chose to use the process of evolution over a span of billions of years, isn't that his prerogative as sovereign Creator? The long eons of evolutionary meandering can be viewed as a kind of expression of the creative “playfulness” of God (1981, pp. 11-12).

Buffaloe and Murray went on to say that Genesis 1 “is closely related to an earlier Babylonian creation account, known as the *Enuma elish*” and that it is their feeling that “the Hebrew writer adapted the well-known Middle Eastern story for his purposes” (1981, p. 7). Then, with one fell swoop of their literary pens, these two writers stated that the early chapters of Genesis are “creation **epics** or **poems**. They were imaginative creations, in poetic language” (1981, p. 8, emp. added). Continuing, the authors wrote:

In other words, the Genesis poems are significant not because they tell us how things **were**, or the way things happened long ago. Rather, they are talking about man's situation **now**—the eternal importance of man's relationship to God, and the primordial disruption of that fellowship that lies at the root of human nature and history. When we read the ancient Hebrew accounts of the creation—Adam and Eve, the Garden of Eden, man's “fall” by listening to the seductive words of a serpent, and God's Sabbath rest—we must understand...that these things never were, but always are.... The stories are told and retold recorded and read and reread not for their **wasness** but for their **isness** (1981, p. 8, emp. in orig.).

The end result of accepting such thinking has been disastrous, as I will document at a later point in this manuscript.

Shortly before Buffaloe and Murray performed this hatchet job on the inspired text of Genesis 1-11, others had begun to rally 'round the same cause. For example, since 1969 John N. Clayton of South Bend, Indiana has presented seminars and produced materials on the creation/evolution controversy. He is both widely known and frequently used, and his views on these issues are well documented. In the 1976 edition of his book, *The Source*, for example, Clayton went on record as stating: "If we look carefully at the issues about which we are talking, however, we can find that evolution and the Bible show amazing agreement on almost all issues and that one is not mutually exclusive of the other" (p. 130). During a May 1981 seminar in Endwell, New York, he went on record as stating: "Evolution is a fact of biology; I believe in evolution. It is not the purpose of Genesis to give us a historical record for the existence of everything" (as quoted in Francella, 1981). Clayton's reference to Genesis not being a "historical record" was not his first. In the March 1979 issue of the *Rocky Mountain Christian*, he wrote a letter to the editor in which he stated: "I have been accused of not believing Exodus 20:11. What I have pointed out is that Exodus 20:11 is a quote from Genesis 2, and **Genesis 2 is not a historical account**" (1979, p. 3, emp. added). It is not surprising, then, to find him ultimately stating:

I do not contend that it can be conclusively proven to 20th Century Americans that the Bible is inspired, because the Bible writings have been written over a period of 4,000 years, in at least three languages and several cultures. This variability of background leads to cultural and linguistic difficulties that allow differences of opinion to creep in. There are countless examples of such difficulties (1976, p. 89).

A more erroneous statement would be difficult to find. First, the Bible was not written over a period of 4,000 years, but 1,600. Second, the charge that "differences of opinion" have crept into the inspired text is blasphemous. Faithful translation does not destroy inspiration! The Lord Himself quoted from the Septuagint, and even called it "scripture" (John 19:36). Elsewhere (John 10:35), our Lord noted that "the scripture cannot be broken." The Bible's claims for its own inspiration (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21; 1 Corinthians 2:12-13) are supported by the weightiest type of evidence, while the so-called "countless examples" of Clayton's "differences of opinion" have yet to come to light.

In view of these erroneous statements, it hardly is surprising to hear Clayton state that he “does not identify with any one theology” (as quoted in Francella, 1981). That statement was made in May of 1981. Four years earlier, in July of 1977, he had made a similar statement in his monthly bulletin, *Does God Exist?*: “In recent months, I have come to a point in my life where I have to question my association with the ‘Church of Christ’ as it exists in the United States” (1977, pp. 6ff.). Perhaps it was such “questioning” that allowed him, on November 26-27, 1982, to participate in the Indiana Christian Youth Convention in Indianapolis. This “convention” was organized and supported by the Christian Church/Disciples of Christ and featured, among other things, women prayer leaders, women Scripture readers, and instrumental music in “worship” services.\* Of course, if John Clayton’s pronouncements are correct, evolution is not the only thing compatible with the Bible; instrumental music in worship may be as well. He is on record as stating: “The New Testament passages which deal with the question of music all refer to singing (see Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16) **although some passages might be able to be done with an instrument, especially if the instrument supplements singing instead of replacing it**” (1978, p. 8, emp. added). Because of the many erroneous positions that Clayton advocates, and because of the many scripturally unsound practices in which he has become involved, efforts have been made time and again by faithful Christians to meet with him and to help him to see his error so that he might repent.\*\* But to no avail.

One of the most significant controversies in recent times among the churches of Christ concerning the teaching of evolution as factual and the Genesis account of creation as mythical centered on two professors in the biology department at Abilene Christian University. Due to space limitations, I cannot rehearse here all that transpired in this particular instance. The scenario covered well over a year and involved mountains of evidence gathered from a variety of sources. In fact, a 200-page book, *Is Genesis Myth?*, was required to present and discuss the documentation which established that these two professors

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\* See Indiana Christian Youth Convention (November 26-27, 1982) written program which listed, besides John Clayton as one of the featured speakers, “Scripture Reading: Nancy Carter, Hammon, Indiana; Prayer: Mary Confer, Portland, Indiana.”

\*\* See Jackson and Thompson (1979).

had taught that evolution was a fact and that Genesis 1-11 was a myth (see Thompson, 1986). In the brief synopsis that follows, I will discuss a few of the major pieces of evidence surrounding this unfortunate series of events in order to document the striking parallel between the situation at Abilene Christian University and an almost identical situation that occurred at the College of the Bible in Lexington, Kentucky in 1917.

On February 22, 1985, a 26 year-old biology student at Abilene Christian University, Mark Scott, wrote me a letter complaining about two professors in ACU's biology department (Kenneth Williams and Archie Manis) who allegedly were teaching evolution as fact in their classes. One of the professors (Dr. Manis) even had gone so far as to pass out a photocopied page of Genesis 1-2 from his personal Bible on which he had written (in his own handwriting) the words "hymn, myth." Shortly after Scott's initial letter, additional corroborative materials arrived (class notes, handouts authored by the professors, copies of overhead transparencies used in class, etc.). And, additional letters from both current and former ACU students began to arrive as well. The evidence was overwhelming. Evolution **had** been called a fact, and Genesis **had** been labeled as a myth.

Because I am a graduate of the biology department at ACU, on March 27, 1985, I wrote the two professors and asked for an explanation of such happenings. Although my letters were sent by certified mail in order to guarantee their safe arrival, one of the letters never was delivered; Dr. Manis refused it and had it returned to me unopened. Dr. Williams received his letter, but never answered it. Over the next several months, I wrote Dr. John Little, chairman of the biology department, and Dr. Perry Reeves, dean of the College of Natural and Applied Sciences, but received no response from them either. Eventually, however (due to pressure from influential, outside sources), ACU representatives agreed to meet with me to discuss the situation. In fact, I met with University officials on two different occasions—September 23 and November 17, 1985. The late James D. Willeford, a highly respected elder of the Fifth and Grape Street Church of Christ in Abilene (and a neutral, independent witness), wrote a summary of the first meeting that was reprinted in the book, *Is Genesis Myth?* (see Thompson, 1986, pp. 74-85). The second meeting,

held in Dallas, Texas, was tape recorded, with both parties making and retaining possession of their own copies of the copies of the tapes.

By way of summary, since all of these details are provided at great length in the book, *Is Genesis Myth?*, let me say simply that all efforts to correct the false teachings failed miserably. University officials made it clear that no “outsiders” would influence what happened on the ACU campus (Thompson, 1986, pp. 151-152). During the 1986 annual ACU Lectureship, the Board of Directors of the University met, and was presented the written report of a three-man committee (composed of Board members W.C.”Dub” Orr, Roy Willingham, and W.E. “Bill” Young) that had been appointed to investigate the charges. The Board of Directors unanimously approved acceptance of this committee’s report and appointed another committee, chaired by Board member (and former Texas Supreme Court justice) Jack Pope, to draft a statement that would be signed by all of those present. On February 17, 1986, ACU’s “Institutional Statement,” attached to its “Investigative Report” was released, completely exonerating the two professors.

On Monday evening, February 17, ACU’s president, William J. Teague, spoke at the end of the lectureship keynote address on that evening and announced the availability of the investigative report, while at the same time comparing ACU to the biblical character, Nehemiah, and likening those who had called ACU into question to Nehemiah’s detractors, Sanballat and Geshom. During the following months, ACU’s “investigative report” (which was originally a nine-page document) was typeset and made available in a format that filled a longer-than-legal-size sheet of paper, front and back. According to a May 22, 1986 letter from President Teague, ACU had mailed out, up to that point in time, over 80,000 of these investigative reports to friends and supporters of the University, including the entire mailing list of the Herald of Truth radio and television programs (overseen by the elders of the Highland Church of Christ in Abilene).

Since the publication of *Is Genesis Myth?* in January of 1986, I have received both written and oral reports from current and former ACU biology students, affirming that indeed, evolution **was** taught to them as **fact** (see Jackson, 1986b, p. 7). Interestingly, two former ACU biology department students (one a medical doctor at the renowned Scott and White Hospital in Temple, Texas; one a chief executive officer for a communications company in San Angelo, Texas) wrote to state that as a direct result of the

teachings they received at ACU, they graduated as **theistic evolutionists!** I even received anonymous notes from students at ACU who affirmed such teachings, but who were afraid to sign their names for fear that they, like Mark Scott, would be expelled.\* Also of interest was the comparison between what ACU officials affirmed throughout the controversy (“Mark Scott is the only student causing the trouble, and we never before have been challenged for the teachings presented in our biology department”) and the actual facts of the case. For example, the following items now have come to light. (1) Shortly after his graduation from ACU in 1972, Dale Burleson (an ACU biology department graduate then living in Oskaloosa, Iowa) wrote the ACU biology department to complain about the way evolution was presented—with no alternative or mention of the biblical doctrine of creation; (2) In 1980, Kevin McLeod (an ACU biology department graduate and a medical doctor then living in Temple, Texas) wrote the ACU biology department to complain about the way evolution was presented—with no alternative or mention of the biblical doctrine of creation. (3) In 1984, Mrs. Jerry Loblely of Texline, Texas wrote to ACU officials to complain about the way evolution was presented as fact to her daughter, Brenda, during the 1984 biology seminar class under Dr. Archie Manis. How, then, could ACU officials claim that they “never before had been challenged” on the teaching of evolution? And how many **more** former biology department students like these are “out there” somewhere? [ACU’s charge that Mark Scott was the “only student” causing the trouble is ludicrous. *Is Genesis Myth?* documents numerous others, and ACU’s own “investigative report” noted that “other” students disagreed with the way evolution was presented—i.e., without any refutation.]

The remainder of what needs to be said regarding the ACU controversy is best stated in the context of a controversy that, although it occurred over eight decades ago, was almost identical in scope and outcome. A word of explanation is in order.

During the lifetime of J.W. McGarvey, Isaiah B. Grubbs, Charles L. Loos, and Robert Graham (the “Old Guards” at Kentucky University and the College of the Bible), classrooms were free from the teaching of evolution and other forms of liberalism. But, no sooner had they passed away than their stand be-

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\* See Jackson (1986b), p. 38. [Mark Scott, the student who first exposed the teaching of evolution as fact, and Genesis as myth, was expelled from ACU, effective January 1986.]

gan to be undermined. The complete story is found in chapter seven of *The Christian Scholar: A Biography of Hall Laurie Calhoun*, authored by Adron Doran and J.E. Choate (1985). The joint boards of Transylvania University and the College of the Bible appointed a liberal president, R.H. Crossfield, who quickly moved to appoint four new faculty members who had been trained in the “new theology” of higher criticism. Only Hall L. Calhoun, a Harvard-trained Ph.D., remained as a vestige of the “old guard.” Calhoun had been trained by McGarvey himself as his protégé. But the appointment of Crossfield demolished any hopes Calhoun might have had for the future of the College of the Bible.

On March 12, 1917, an “older student” (in his late thirties) at the College of the Bible, Benjamin F. Battenfield, began his quest to see that evolution was not taught as fact, and that the Bible was not presented as myth in the classrooms of the school he loved. Little did he know what was about to happen! He had come to study at the College of the Bible in 1910 because he wanted a Christian education at the feet of men who revered God and His Word (see Doran and Choate, 1985, p. 117). As fate would have it, he was not to receive such an education. Rather, the College of the Bible was to be racked by controversy over the teaching of evolution by four of its faculty members, and eventually was to apostatize completely. Today the College of the Bible is no longer. It presently is known as Lexington Theological Seminary, and is an arm of the restructured, liberal Disciples of Christ movement (Gibson, 1986, pp. 321-322). I strongly urge interested readers to secure a copy of *The Christian Scholar* and to examine the chapter dealing with these events. In addition, the following bibliographical references will be of invaluable assistance in assessing this tragedy: (1) “Satan Has Done It Before,” by Adron Doran (1986, pp. 4,10); (2) “How Evolution Captures a College,” by Steve Gibson (1986, pp. 321-322); and (3) “How the Liberals Won the Battle with the Disciples of Christ,” by John Waddey (1986, pp. 131-136).

For purposes of comparison, and to document the similarity of what happened at the College of the Bible in 1912-1917 with the events at Abilene Christian University in 1985-1986, I have placed the events in these two circumstances side-by-side in chart form. The following comparison will allow the reader to see exactly what occurred in 1912-1917, and how history repeated itself seventy years later.

[Please note that where necessary, each item is fully documented so that the reader can check for accuracy].

**COMPARISON OF EVENTS SURROUNDING THE CONTROVERSY OVER  
THE TEACHING OF EVOLUTION AT THE COLLEGE OF THE BIBLE (1912-1917)  
AND ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY (1985-1986)**

March 12, 1917, Benjamin F. Battenfield, student at the College of the Bible (COB), writes letter to those outside the College, complaining about teaching of evolution as fact and Genesis as myth by COB faculty members (Doran and Choate, 1985, p. 103).	February 22, 1985, Mark Scott, student at Abilene Christian University (ACU), writes letter to those outside the University, complaining about teaching of evolution as fact and Genesis as myth by ACU faculty members (Thompson, 1986, p. 3).
Ben Battenfield is an “older student” in his late thirties, not of an age where some might refer to him as merely an “impressionable young student” (Doran and Choate, p. 117).*	Mark Scott is an “older student” in his late twenties, not of an age where some might refer to him as merely an “impressionable young student” (Thompson, 1986, pp. 19-20).
Ben Battenfield’s letter is accompanied by supporting evidence (e.g., class notes, statements from others, etc.) establishing the truthfulness of his claims against the professors (Doran and Choate, p. 4; Gibson, 1981, p. 321).	Mark Scott’s letter is accompanied by supporting evidence (e.g., class notes, handouts from the professors, copies of overhead transparencies used in class, copies of pages out of one of the professors’ own personal Bible, etc.) establishing the truthfulness of his claims against the professors (Thompson, 1986, pp. 6-7).
Ben Battenfield carried his complaint to the Dean (Doran and Choate, p. 104).	Mark Scott carried his complaint to the Dean (Thompson, 1986, pp. 5-6).**
Ben Battenfield’s charges were supported not only by the evidence that he provided, but by other students as well (Doran and Choate, p. 117).	Mark Scott’s charges were supported not only by the evidences that he provided, but by other students as well (Thompson, 1986, pp. 18-19,66-67).
One of the COB professors was on record as stating: “I am a hard evolutionist; the first chapter of Genesis is poetry” (Doran and Choate, p. 103).	One of the ACU professors (Archie Manis) was on record as claiming to be a theistic evolutionist, and had written “hymn, myth” across Genesis 1-2 (Thompson, 1986, pp. 16,169-172).
Textbooks that once were used in classes at the COB to defend biblical doctrines (e.g., Milligan’s <i>Scheme of Redemption</i> ) were replaced with newer modernistic works (e.g., <i>Stevens’ New Theology</i> ) [Gibson, 1981, p. 7].	Textbooks that once were used in biology classes at ACU to defend the biblical doctrine of creation (e.g., Zimmerman’s <i>Darwin, Evolution, &amp; Creation</i> , used in the early 1970s) were replaced with newer, modernistic works (e.g., Montagu’s <i>Science &amp; Creation</i> and Gould’s <i>Ever Since Darwin</i> ) that openly attacked God, the Bible, and the creation account, and which propagated organic evolution (Thompson, 1986, pp. 7,67-69, 86-87,95-97).
In personal conversations with some of the accused faculty, professor Ralph Records (chairman of the chemistry department at Transylvania University) became convinced that they favored the liberalism set forth in the tenets of “higher criticism” (Doran and Choate, pp. 116-117).	In personal conversations with one of the accused faculty (Archie Manis), Mr. & Mrs. L.D. Swift, Mr. & Mrs. John Propst, Mr. & Mrs. Eddie Murray, and others became convinced that at least this one professor was a strong advocate of theistic evolution (Thompson, 1986, pp. 109-135).

\* See Gibson (1981, p. 8).

\*\* [NOTE: While there is a similarity in that both Battenfield (1917) and Scott (1985) brought their complaints before their respective college deans, it is there that the similarity ends. Dr. Calhoun (1917) stood against the accused faculty members and with the supporting evidence. Dr. Perry Reeves, Dean of the College of Natural and Applied Sciences at ACU (1985) stood with the accused faculty members and against the supporting evidence.



President Crossfield issued letters as a part of COB's counter-attack, claiming that Battenfield had falsely accused the College (Doran and Choate, pp. 105-106).	President Teague issued letters as a part of ACU's counter-attack, claiming that Scott had falsely accused the University (Thompson, 1986, pp. 97-99).
Circular letters and advertisement were sent forth by COB officials, stating: "We take occasion to affirm our fidelity to the fundamental truths of Christianity as revealed in the Bible, and to the historic principles of the Disciples of Christ" (Doran and Choate, p. 105).	In letters and advertisements (e.g., <i>Gospel Advocate</i> , 2-20-86, p. 103), ACU officials stated: "We teach our students that God's Word is true and inerrant. We teach them to observe its sanctity, from Genesis 1:1 through Revelation 22:21" ( <i>Christian Bible Teacher</i> , 1986, p. 163; <i>Image</i> , 1986, p. 32).
C.R.L. Vawter complained, in the pages of the <i>Christian Standard</i> , that the college had done everything <b>but</b> deny the specific charges against its faculty by allowing them to answer the questions submitted to them. Vawter observed: "It would have taken no more space to have printed the denial" of the accused professors than it had taken to print the "evasions" coming from the COB (1917, pp. 764-765).	Brethren in the churches of Christ nationwide, through letters, phone calls, and other communications, urged ACU's accused faculty to <b>specifically</b> state what they <b>did</b> and <b>did</b> not believe—rather than have the University use such "evasions" as "The professors against whom these allegations have been brought have repeatedly stated their faith in God's Word and in the Genesis account of creation" ( <i>Gospel Advocate</i> advertisement, 1986, p. 103). To date, no <b>specific</b> answers have been forthcoming from the two professors, and all attempts to secure such have failed miserably (Thompson, 1986, pp. 74-85, 102-107, 137-144).
C.R.L. Vawter wrote the college, including with his letter "yes" or "no" type of questions which, when answered, would have settled the matter one way or another; COB officials refused to answer (Doran and Choate, p. 107; <i>Christian Standard</i> , 1917, p. 65).	Bert Thompson and others (e.g., Buster Dobbs of Houston, Texas) wrote the college, including with their letters "yes" or "no" types of questions which, when answered, would have settled the matter one way or another; ACU officials refused to answer (Thompson, 1986, pp. 27-30, 46-49, 56-60).
"...students of the College of the Bible gave their testimony in the pages of the <i>Christian Standard</i> . All of the students were reputable, mature persons. Three women were among the witnesses. These students who played key roles in the proceedings were singled out and punished in one fashion or another" (Doran and Choate, p. 117).	Students at ACU (Kent West, Mark Scott, et al.) gave their testimony. All were reputable, mature persons. Mark Scott was expelled for his part in this controversy (Jackson, 1986b, p. 32; see also <i>Abilene Reporter-News</i> , 1986, p. 1). One student, in writing to the <i>Optimist</i> to complain of the teaching of evolution, noted: "I suppose I'll get put on probation for this, but I can no longer maintain my silence" (West, 1986, p. A-2).
The COB student newspaper, the <i>Crimson Rambler</i> , entered the controversy, protesting Ben Battenfield's actions (Doran and Choate, p. 110).	The ACU student newspaper, the <i>Optimist</i> , entered the controversy, protesting Mark Scott's actions (e.g.: 12-13-85; 2-7-86; 2-16-86; see Thompson, 1986, pp. 187-192).
COB students wrote petitions in support of the accused professors (Doran and Choate, pp. 105-106).	ACU biology students wrote a petition in support of the accused professors (Thompson, 1986, pp. 163-169; <i>Optimist</i> , 1986).
"President Crossfield calculated to keep the controversy within the confines of the college if at all possible. Crossfield and the accused denied categorically the accusations leveled against them" (Doran and Choate, p. 107).	President Teague calculated to keep the controversy within the confines of the college if at all possible. Teague and the accused denied categorically the accusations leveled against them (Thompson, 1986, p. 98).*
The COB controversy was made public on March 31, 1917 in an article published in the <i>Christian Standard</i> (1917, pp. 764-765).	The ACU controversy was made public in January 1986 in a book titled, <i>Is Genesis Myth?</i> , and through advertisements in various brotherhood journals (e.g.: <i>Gospel Advocate</i> , 2-20-86, p. 105, et al.) [Thompson, 1986, p. 98].*

\* See also ACU's "Institutional Statement," issued on February 17, 1986, signed by 60+ members of ACU's Board of Trustees.

\* In addition, most major, and many minor, brotherhood journals ran advertisements concerning the book (e.g.: *Therefore Stand*, *Gospel Advocate*, *Firm Foundation*, *The Bible Way*, *The Restorer*, et al.).

<p>“The ‘fat was in the fire.’ It was not envisioned in the initial stages how bitter and prolonged the struggle would be.... Calhoun seemed not to realize that he had attacked the power structure of Transylvania University and the College of the Bible. The accused were literally fighting for their lives” (Doran and Choate, p. 109).</p>	<p>The “fat was in the fire” with the publication of <i>Is Genesis Myth?</i> It was not envisioned in the initial stages how bitter and prolonged the struggle would be. Thompson had challenged the power structure of the largest college among the churches of Christ. The accused were literally fighting for their lives.**</p>
<p>The <i>Christian Standard</i> ran articles, calling for a correct solution to the inroads liberalism was making into the COB (<i>Christian Standard</i>, 1917).***</p>	<p>Religious journals ran advertisements concerning <i>Is Genesis Myth?</i>, and some called for a correct solution to the inroads liberalism was making at ACU.****</p>
<p>The liberal journal, the <i>Christian Evangelist</i>, strongly supported the COB Board and stated that it was content to “await the decision of the board of trustees” whose decision “should be announced before outside judgment of a condemnatory nature is passed” (1917, p. 421).</p>	<p>The <i>Christian Chronicle</i> strongly supported the ACU Board and Administration in published front-page articles (2-20-86, p. 1) and editorials (2-20-86, p. 26). Howard W. Norton, editor of the <i>Chronicle</i>, noted in his editorial (which he admitted to writing without first reading the evidence in <i>Is Genesis Myth?</i>): “Some in our brotherhood have already rushed to judgment and decided that they are guilty. I am not one of those people. I prefer to wait and weigh evidence as it comes forth.... Let us <b>not</b> write off people and institutions that are tried and true until we know for sure that the accuser’s package contains the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth....”*****</p>
<p>“The Lexington fuss was becoming daily more murky.... Had Crossfield and the accused professors faced up to the charges that they were indeed theological liberals the issues could have</p>	<p>The ACU controversy was becoming more involved daily. Had Teague and the accused professors faced up to the charges that evolution was indeed being taught as fact, and Genesis la-</p>

\*\* In a May 22, 1986 letter on ACU stationery, William J. Teague, president of the University, noted that the controversy had reached such major proportions that up to that point in time over 80,000 copies of the “Institutional Statement” had been mailed. In my November 17, 1985 meeting with ACU officials, Dub Orr, Vice-Chairman of the ACU Board of Trustees, said: “What you do as far as the school is concerned in your publications at this point is not going to cause us to do anything more or less” (Thompson, 1986, p. 151). By the time the controversy had become full-blown, that statement had been proven to be completely false, as the mailout of over 80,000 items plainly shows.

\*\*\* [NOTE: The editor of the *Standard*, George P. Rutledge, and general manager, Russell Errett, sent out their own circular letter to leaders among the Disciples of Christ, demanding that a neutral investigative committee be named that could investigate the Battenfield charges in an impartial manner.]

\*\*\*\* In addition to the journals that ran advertisements for the book, *Is Genesis Myth?*, several religious papers called for a neutral investigation to the charges against ACU, and strongly urged the University to “clean house.” See: (1) *The Witness*, Curtis Dickinson, ed., Alamogordo, New Mexico, February, 1986; (2) *The Banner of Truth*, F.O. Blakely, ed., Highland, Indiana, March 1986, p. 31; May 1986, p. 64; (3) *Bible Herald*, Gene West, ed., Fairmont, West Virginia, March 1986, pp. 671-673,676; April 1986, pp. 686,688. In addition to religious journals, numerous local church bulletins called on ACU officials to “clean house.” See, as an example: *The Marlow Discerner*, Wayne Price, ed., Church of Christ, Marlow, Oklahoma, March 27, 1986, pp 2-3.

\*\*\*\*\* (Norton, 1986, p. 26). See also the front-page article, “ACU, Thompson Square Off in Evolution Controversy” by Joy McMillon and Scott Lamascus. Norton’s editorial sparked another controversy. He received numerous letters taking issue with his stand. Two such letters were printed in the March 1986 issue of the *Christian Chronicle* (p. 23). Many letters opposing Norton’s stand in favor of ACU were received by the *Chronicle*, but never published. Copies of such letters are on file at the offices of Apologetics Press, publisher of *Is Genesis Myth?*

been openly addressed and resolved in one fashion or another” (Doran and Choate, p. 110).	belled as myth, the issues could have been openly addressed and resolved in one fashion or another.*
Finally, “the Board of Trustees found itself being forced to take action” (Doran and Choate, p. 111).	The Board of Trustees at ACU finally found itself being forced to take action, and did meet on Saturday, February 15 and Monday, February 17, 1986.**
“The Board made the policy decision that the Board would retain the sole jurisdiction in the case” (Doran and Choate, pp. 112,114).	The ACU Board retained the sole jurisdiction in this case, despite pleas for an “outside, neutral investigative committee” to examine the facts.***
“The college offered statements from students that they had not lost their faith, testimonials to the gracious temperaments of the professors, and warnings against stirring up needless trouble” (Gibson, p. 8).	ACU’s Board and Administration offered statements from students that they had not lost their faith, testimonials to the gracious temperaments of the professors, and warnings against stirring up needless trouble.****
“The Board heard no students who said their faith had been shaken by the teachings of the accused faculty” (Doran and Choate, p. 115).	The Board heard no students who said their faith had been shaken by the teachings of the accused faculty, even though such testimony was available.*****
“The Board completely exonerated the accused members of the faculty, declaring that the teachings of the faculty were in harmony with the best tradition of the Christian Church” (Doran	The ACU Board completely exonerated the accused members of the faculty, stating: “We endorse the Investigative Report prepared by the Special Committee of the Board of Trustees,

\* President Teague and his cohorts at ACU had masterminded from the beginning what was intended to be an ingenious cover-up, with Teague even going so far as to send a personal memo to professors Williams and Manis, instructing them not to speak to anyone at anytime about these matters. However, when querists would telephone or write ACU, asking about the teachings of the two professors, they were told, “Feel free to speak to the two professors and they will tell you what they believe.” More than one querist accepted ACU’s invitation, only to find that the invitation was invalid. For example, Tommy Hicks, minister of the Handley Church of Christ in Fort Worth, Texas, set up a meeting at the Handley church building, scheduled for March 8, 1986. This meeting was an “open forum” for the purpose of allowing both sides to be heard. [The meeting did occur, but no one from Abilene attended; tapes are available.] C.G. Gray, ACU Vice President for Academic Affairs, told Hicks to “feel free to call the two professors and speak with them in order to get straight answers.” Hicks tried to do just that. Professor Kenneth Williams learned of the incoming call and physically removed his telephone from the hook, as verified by the telephone company operator. Professor Manis also would not discuss these matters. Months later, in June and July, 1986, Andy Kizer, minister of the Church of Christ in Howe, Texas (to cite another example) called Dr. Gray, only to be told that the two professors gladly would give straight answers to his questions. Believing that Dr. Gray’s statements were true (and not knowing of the existence of President Teague’s memorandum to the two professors), Kizer telephoned Dr. Manis, only to receive questions in response to questions and a vague “run-around” for over half an hour.

\*\* The ACU Board met twice, once on February 15 and once on February 17, to discuss these matters. These dates were verified in a telephone conversation between Tommy Hicks and Dub Orr, Vice-Chairman of the ACU Board of Trustees.

\*\*\* See ACU’s “Institutional Statement” of February 17, 1986. Further corroboration of the insistence of ACU’s Board that no outside investigation would be allowed was provided by Hulen Jackson, “Minister of Mission Meetings” for the Church of Christ in Duncanville, Texas, and Senior Board member at ACU. In a July 1, 1986 letter to Dr. Bert Thompson, Jackson noted: “I disagree fully with your charges that the investigation by a committee of the board appointed by our chairman and the administration was ‘ludicrous’ and should have been by outsiders. Schools don’t operate as you well know in this fashion.”

\*\*\*\* See: ACU’s “Institutional Statement” of February 17, 1986.

\*\*\*\*\* The ACU Board received testimony, via the school’s newspaper, containing a petition signed by 22 students (see: *Optimist*, February 16, 1986), that the two professors had done nothing wrong. But testimony available from other students (e.g., Mark Scott, Dale Burleson, Kent West, Brenda Lobley, and others) was discounted completely.

<p>and Choate, p. 115).</p>	<p>which concludes that the two professors, all of their colleagues, and the overwhelming majority of their current and former students affirm that evolutionary theory is not advocated as fact at the University.”*</p>
<p>Some of the students at COB who stood with Battenfield were told to “reflect on the possible consequences” of that association (Doran and Choate, pp. 110-111).</p>	<p>Some of the students at ACU who stood with Mark Scott, and who defended <i>Is Genesis Myth?</i> as accurate, were called into C.G. Gray’s office (Vice President for Academic Affairs) and told to “reflect on the possible consequences” of their association and actions.**</p>
<p>The final report of the COB Board stated: “The Board believes that the disposition to preserve the good of the past, combined with the ability to improve the task of the present should be the underlying principle to its trusteeship of the institution” (Doran and Choate, p. 115).</p>	<p>The final report of the ACU Board stated: “We acknowledge that we make mistakes; we reject the charge that such mistakes are intentional or calculated to deceive. We reaffirm our faith in the integrity of our faculty and administration.”*</p>
<p>The COB Board distributed the results of its “investigative report,” and those results were published. “The Lexington newspapers published glowing accounts of the thoroughness of the probe during the decisive days of the proceedings and reported that the Board had fully exonerated the accused faculty” (Doran and Choate, p. 117).***</p>	<p>The ACU Board distributed the results of its “investigative report,” and those results were published. A news release, distributed through Associated Press, appeared in newspapers all over the country, recounting the “thoroughness” with which the ACU Board had exonerated the accused faculty (e.g.: <i>Abilene Reporter-News</i>, 2-18-86, p. 1).****</p>
<p>The investigation by the COB Board—without appointing a neutral, independent committee to examine the charges that had been leveled—was called in the pages of the <i>Christian Standard</i> “a farce.” An investigation by a delegation, in no way linked to the College itself, never was held (Doran and Choate, p. 118-121).</p>	<p>The investigation by three members of ACU’s own Board—without appointing a neutral, independent committee to examine the charges that had been leveled—was called into question publicly by several concerned brethren. An investigation by a delegation, in no way linked to the University itself, never was held.*****</p>
<p>M.C. Kurfees, himself an alumnus of the COB, said that to his eyes, “The honorable and manly course would have been for these professors to candidly announce to the founders and supporters of the institution that they had accepted views out of harmony with its principles” (Kurfees, 1917, p. 623).</p>	<p>Brethren who had examined the evidence from the hands of the accused ACU professors urged these men to admit their beliefs in theistic evolution and be straightforward about such an admission, instead of hiding behind the cloak of “academic freedom” or the ACU Board’s so-called “investigation” (West, <i>Gene</i> 1986, pp. 671-673; Workman, 1986, pp. 2ff.).</p>
<p>Kurfees called the COB Board’s investigation “unfair, unbrotherly, unmanly, and positively ridiculous” (Kurfees, p. 554).</p>	<p>One writer, during the ACU situation, described the ACU Board’s in-house investigation in these terms: “We believe it is the same, in principle, as if President Nixon had appointed three close associates to investigate the Watergate scandal.”*****</p>

\* See: ACU’s “Institutional Statement” of February 17, 1986.

\*\* Three students, Brian Finnell, Leon Schrei, and Richard Oler, were called to C.G. Gray’s office at ACU and instructed to “reflect on the possible consequences of their actions” (see Jackson, 1986b, p. 38).

\*\*\* See also the “Controversy File” on the 1917 College of the Bible Proceedings, Transylvania College Library.

\*\*\*\* This news release was distributed widely and appeared in papers all over the United States. See: (1) *Abilene Reporter-News*, February 18, 1986, p. 1; (2) *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 19, 1986, p. 16-A.

\*\*\*\*\* See, for example: (1) “Readers Respond to ACU-Thompson Controversy,” *Christian Chronicle*, March 1986, p. 23; (2) “ACU and Evolution,” *The Restorer*, Gary Workman, ed., May/June, 1986, pp. 2ff.

\*\*\*\*\* Boren, Maxie B. (principle author), “An Expression of Concern.” This “expression of concern” was in the form of an open letter, and was signed by numerous brethren around the country. A copy of it is on file at the offices of Apologetics Press.

<p>Various individuals called for the COB Board to allow an investigation of the charges by an independent, neutral investigating team not associated with the College. J.B. Briney, noted evangelist of the Christian Church, stated that “ever since the investigation of the charges...I have been satisfied the question would come up again, for nothing is ever settled until it is settled right.” All efforts to secure a neutral, independent investigating team were rebuffed by the COB Board (Briney, 1917, p. 793).</p>	<p>Various individuals called for the ACU Board to allow an investigation of the charges by an independent, neutral investigating team not associated with the University. Curtis R. Dowdy, evangelist for the Church of Christ in Columbia, Tennessee wrote: “I, therefore, believe that an independent study by men of science who are forthright in their faith in the Genesis account would go a long way in settling this question at ACU and ‘settling it right’” (“Letter to the Editor,” <i>Christian Chronicle</i>, March 1986, p. 23). All efforts to secure a neutral, independent investigating team were rebuffed by the ACU Board.</p>
<p>Concerning the “findings” of the COB Board’s investigation, it has been said, “The findings were a complete cover up and a perfect whitewash.... It is altogether possible for the ‘Firestorm in the Bluegrass’ which swept the College of the Bible, in 1917, to sweep the campuses of our Christian Colleges and Universities today. It can happen in what may seem to be an innocuous effort to contrast the theory of evolution with the facts of creation in a biology class. The devil will do his best to confuse the effort, and will seek to turn it to his advantage. He did it before; and we must not permit him to do it again” (Doran and Choate, pp. 137-157).</p>	<p>The reader can draw his or her own conclusion regarding the seriousness of the teaching of evolution at Abilene Christian University.</p>
<p>The College of the Bible fell to liberalism shortly after the battle of 1917. “The positions of McGarvey are laughed at if recalled at all, his classic books gather dust, the Bible is regarded as myth and legend, and the takeover of 1912-1917 has long since been swept under the rug and forgotten.... Ben Battlefield’s class notes were sufficient evidence. If true lovers of the college had pressed the early evidence, rather than languishing amid the strife, the future of the College of the Bible might have been different” (Gibson, 1986, p. 3, emp. in orig.).</p>	

The “Firestorm in the Bluegrass” shook the College of the Bible for 200 days—with devastating effects. President Crossfield, with his liberal faculty and Board of Trustees, refused to allow an independent investigation and chose instead to defend the accused professors. The President and the Board had “sown the wind, and reaped a whirlwind” (Hosea 8:7). By the summer of 1917, all “diplomatic relations” between the College of the Bible and the *Christian Standard* were severed. Many Kentucky churches passed resolutions disassociating themselves from the school (Gibson, 1986, p. 3). The College of the Bible had effectively left the “old paths” represented by the Restoration plea, in order to travel the road to theological liberalism. Hall L. Calhoun, the last remnant of McGarvey’s “old guard,” was left with no choice but to resign, which he did during that summer. Eight years later, in 1925, he would leave the liberal Christian Church forever and associate with the churches of Christ. In 1925, due to the influence of N.B. Hardeman, Dr. Calhoun joined the faculty of Freed-Hardeman College as chairman of the department of classical languages and Bible, as well as co-president along with Hardeman (Doran and Choate, 1985, pp. 137-

157). Doran and Choate, in their work, *The Christian Scholar* (which chronicles these interesting events of the past), wrote regarding this controversy:

There is really no place to end this never-ending chapter on the 1917 “Battle of the Book” that shook the very foundations of the College of the Bible in Lexington, Kentucky, for well over two-hundred days. The shock waves of the aftermath of the earthquake have not yet subsided (1985, p. 121).

When Doran and Choate penned those words, it is doubtful they knew just how true they would turn out to be. Indeed, the shock waves of the aftermath of the earthquake have not yet subsided, especially in light of the repeat of history that occurred in 1985-1986. Sadly, the “Battle of the Book” that was fought in 1917 at the College of the Bible also was waged on the campus of yet another Bible college campus—Abilene Christian University—with exactly the same results.

Why is it we seem to be such poor students of our past history? When will we ever learn that those who sow to the wind eventually reap the whirlwind? Paul could not have been more correct when he told the Galatians (6:7): “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” The College of the Bible sowed theological liberalism. The President and Board allowed those educated in ways of the “new theology” of “higher criticism” to spread their venom, all the while denying that such was taking place. The evidence was disregarded, and those who presented it were subjected to belittling and demeaning criticism. Yet in the end they were proven correct. And the College of the Bible fell into a theological liberalism from which it never would return.

Will faithful members of the churches of Christ allow such to happen in our day and time? God is not mocked. We still reap what we sow. Oh, if we could but learn the lessons of the past, so that we would not be doomed to repeat them in the present. What are those lessons? May I suggest that among them are these.

First, a history of success and soundness does not guarantee automatically that a college or university somehow is immune to destructive errors and an onslaught of liberalism. Faithful men of God had labored for nearly fifty years to provide a strong biblical base for the College of the Bible. Yet in just five years (1912-1917) the school left the “old paths” and “walked not in the ways thereof.”

Second, faithful men must take great care to deal honestly and fairly with any evidence of false teaching. From our present, contemporary viewpoint, it is easy to see the crucial changes that were instituted at the College of the Bible between 1912 and 1917. Yet for some unexplained reason(s), we are unable to see what is happening all around us, even though the parallel is so striking it defies description. Ben Battenfield's notes and surrounding documentation should have convinced everyone of the modernism being taught (Gibson, 1986a, p. 3). The fact that C.R.L. Vawter's questions went conspicuously unanswered should have been a "red flag" that something was amiss. The testimony of mature, responsible students to the nature of the ongoing false teachings should have been heeded. If faithful men had dealt objectively with early evidence, instead of tending to ignore it, or worse yet, covering it up, the future of the College of the Bible might have been vastly different. As one contemporary writer has said: "If true lovers of the college had pressed the early evidence, rather than languishing amid the strife, the future of the College of the Bible might have been different" (Gibson, 1986b, p. 322). What will faithful brethren of years yet to come say of us in the ACU controversy?

Third, those dedicated to loving and defending God's inspired Word must never grow indifferent or weary in that love and defense. "All that is necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing." The Bible writer put it this way: "To him therefore that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (James 4:17). Persecution may well come (2 Timothy 3:12). The way may be difficult. But it is wrong for Christians to ignore, be apathetic toward, or casual about false teachers and false teachings. It is wrong for Christians to allow false teachers to go unchallenged. It is wrong for Christians to tolerate false teachers and their teachings (2 John 9-11). It is wrong for Christians to accept the teaching of and/or to extend Christian fellowship to false teachers (2 John 10; Romans 16:17, 18; 2 Thessalonians 3:6). And until we learn this, we too shall "reap to the wind and sow the whirlwind." God is not mocked!

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