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Frank W. Nelte

UNDERSTANDING THE WRITINGS OF SOLOMON

Three Books of the Bible were written by Solomon ... Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon. All three books are certainly a part of the inspired canon of the Bible. They are books that God WANTS us to have access to; they have God's approval for being included in HIS Word, the Bible. They must in some way all serve in at least one of the following four ways: as doctrine or as reproof or as correction or as instruction in righteousness, so that "the man of God" may be properly equipped to live a godly life. As Paul wrote:

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

Various books of the Bible may serve one or two of these purposes Paul enumerated, without necessarily serving all four of those purposes. These two verses certainly apply as much to the three Books of the Bible that were written by Solomon as they do to every other Book of the Bible.

Yet these three Books do differ in certain ways from other Books of the Bible. Let's take a closer look at them.

Let's start by looking at Solomon's situation and his life.

SOLOMON'S LIFE:

Solomon became king of Israel when he was still a teenager. [A later king, King Josiah, was only 8 years old when he ascended to the throne (2 Kings 22:1).] So God appeared to the young Solomon in a dream in Gibeon (1 Kings 3:5) and God said to Solomon: ASK WHAT I SHALL GIVE YOU.

Solomon freely acknowledged his youth and immaturity, when he said to God:

"And now, O LORD my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father: AND I [AM BUT] A LITTLE CHILD: I KNOW NOT [HOW] TO GO OUT OR COME IN". (1 Kings 3:7 AV)

So Solomon asked God for ... "an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and bad" (1 Kings 3:9). This humble and rather selfless request pleased God, and so God replied that He would not only give Solomon a wise and understanding heart, but also much more. Note the three parts of God's reply to Solomon:

1) Behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was NONE LIKE THEE BEFORE THEE, NEITHER AFTER THEE shall any arise like unto thee. (1 Kings 3:12 AV)

As far as WISDOM AND UNDERSTANDING are concerned, Solomon would be the one with the greatest understanding of all the kings that would rule over Israel. No king would exceed him in this

regard.

2) And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches, and honour: so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee ALL THY DAYS. (1 Kings 3:13 AV)

As far as RICHES AND HONOUR are concerned, he would be the greatest king amongst his contemporaries (i.e. "all your days"). This left open the possibility that more riches and honour might perhaps be bestowed on some leaders after him? Nor does this have any bearing on how much honour and how many riches were bestowed on any before Solomon's time as king. This verse only compares Solomon to his contemporaries.

3) And IF THOU WILT WALK in my ways, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as thy father David did walk, THEN I WILL LENGTHEN THY DAYS. (1 Kings 3:14 AV)

As far as A LONG LIFE was concerned, this was made CONDITIONAL ON OBEDIENCE TO GOD. So right here God included a factor that would allow us to know without contradiction whether Solomon stayed faithful to God's "statutes and commandments" or not. Simply by considering the length of Solomon's life we can know how GOD evaluated Solomon's life, based on this conditional promise in 1 Kings 3:14.

The wisdom part of God's promises to Solomon is summed up a little later as follows:

And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that [is] on the sea shore. And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt. For HE WAS WISER THAN ALL MEN; than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol: and his fame was in all nations round about. (1 Kings 4:29-31 AV)

But as we have seen, God HAD spelled out a condition to Solomon in 1 Kings 3:14, when He promised to give Solomon wisdom and riches and honour. This is important to keep in focus.

And IF THOU WILT WALK IN MY WAYS, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as thy father David did walk, THEN I WILL LENGTHEN THY DAYS. (1 Kings 3:14 AV)

God made "length of life" conditional on obedience. The Bible tells us that Solomon was king for exactly 40 years (1 Kings 11:42). So Solomon died somewhere between age 54 years and age 59 years, having become king somewhere between ages 14 years and 19 years. It seems highly unlikely that Solomon reached age 60 years, when 40 years before his death he had described himself as "but a little child". Recall that David himself had ALSO referred to Solomon as still "young and tender" (1 Chronicles 22:5; 1 Chronicles 29:1), i.e. very likely not yet in his 20's.

Solomon then spent the first 20 years of his reign building two magnificent buildings. He spent the first 7 years building the Temple for God (1 Kings 6:38), and he then spent the next 13 years building his own palace (1 Kings 7:1). These first 20 years of Solomon's reign, which were devoted to these two buildings, are summarized in 1 Kings 9:10.

And it came to pass at the end of twenty years, when Solomon had built the two houses, the

house of the LORD, and the king's house ... (1 Kings 9:10 AV)

At that point in time, exactly halfway through his 40-year reign, God appeared to Solomon a second time. Solomon was by then somewhere between 34 and 39 years old.

And it came to pass, when Solomon had finished the building of the house of the LORD, and the king's house, and all Solomon's desire which he was pleased to do, That the LORD APPEARED TO SOLOMON THE SECOND TIME, as he had appeared unto him at Gibeon. (1 Kings 9:1-2 AV)

Of the three aspects God had mentioned 20 years earlier (i.e. wisdom, riches and honour, and a long life), AT THIS POINT God only focused on the third part, the conditions for a long life, the condition which God required Solomon to comply with in order for God's blessings to continue unrestrained. The other two aspects God had by then already fulfilled ... by then Solomon already had wisdom and riches and honour. So God said:

AND IF THOU WILT WALK BEFORE ME, as David thy father walked, in integrity of heart, and in uprightness, to do according to all that I have commanded thee, [and] wilt keep my statutes and my judgments: THEN I WILL ESTABLISH THE THRONE OF THY KINGDOM UPON ISRAEL FOR EVER, as I promised to David thy father, saying, There shall not fail thee a man upon the throne of Israel. (1 Kings 9:4-5 AV)

God followed this conditional promise with a strong warning that IF either Solomon or his children would end up in idolatry, THEN Israel would end up in foreign captivities and the Temple Solomon had built would be destroyed. This warning God had NOT stated 20 years earlier. God made clear that integrity of heart and uprightness are what is most important to Him.

[BUT] IF YE SHALL AT ALL TURN FROM FOLLOWING ME, YE OR YOUR CHILDREN, and will not keep my commandments [and] my statutes which I have set before you, but go and serve other gods, and worship them: THEN WILL I CUT OFF ISRAEL OUT OF THE LAND which I have given them; AND THIS HOUSE, which I have hallowed for my name, WILL I CAST OUT OF MY SIGHT; and Israel shall be a proverb and a byword among all people ... (1 Kings 9:6-8 AV)

What God is saying is that IF the person who had built the Temple ended up in idolatry, then God would see to it that this Temple would be destroyed. God was not going to, on a permanent basis, place His presence in a building that had been constructed by someone who thereafter went into idolatry. The point is that God does not accept offerings from people who don't submit to His rule. When we sin, then God does not regard our offerings, and He does not receive them with good will. That is the principle of Malachi 2:13.

So notice that God very clearly spelled out that IF Solomon would end up getting involved in idolatry, THEN national captivity for Israel was going to be inevitable, and also the Temple Solomon had built would SURELY be destroyed!

With this sober warning from God Solomon started the second 20 years of his reign. One of the major activities Solomon engaged in during those 20 years was the acquisition of 700 wives, all princesses, and an additional 300 concubines (see 1 Kings 11:3). While it was common for kings at that time to have many wives, going to the extreme of having 1000 women shows either an inordinate concern for pleasing himself, or a desire to build a certain image of himself, one that no man after him would

hopefully ever be able to equal. There was certainly no altruistic motive in having these 1000 women. When you consider that those last 20 years were only slightly longer than 1000 weeks, it means that on average Solomon had one new wife or one new concubine every week for those entire 20 years. This is not to say that Solomon went about it exactly like this, but it does give us some perspective of his situation.

And these wives caused Solomon ENORMOUS PROBLEMS! Against his own better judgment Solomon allowed all these wives to drag him into idolatry, the very thing against which God had sternly warned him earlier in his life. This happened in the latter part of his reign, probably in the last 2 to 8 years of his life, when he was "old" (i.e. he was in his early 50's).

For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, [that] his wives turned away his heart AFTER OTHER GODS: AND HIS HEART WAS NOT PERFECT WITH THE LORD HIS GOD, as [was] the heart of David his father. (1 Kings 11:4 AV)

The next four verses, 1 Kings 11:5-8, spell out in detail just how much Solomon got involved in idolatry, building pagan shrines and temples just to appease his many wives.

FOR SOLOMON WENT AFTER ASHTORETH THE GODDESS OF THE ZIDONIANS, AND AFTER MILCOM THE ABOMINATION OF THE AMMONITES. (1 KINGS 11:5 AV)

This verse shows that Solomon got ACTIVELY INVOLVED in the pagan customs of these two pagan deities. The Hebrew expression translated as "went after" refers to ACTIVE PARTICIPATION in these "abominations". And so the next verse tells us that Solomon "DID EVIL".

AND SOLOMON DID EVIL in the sight of the LORD, and went not fully after the LORD, as [did] David his father. (1 Kings 11:6 AV)

Solomon also built "high places" for the various idols ...

THEN DID SOLOMON BUILD AN HIGH PLACE FOR CHEMOSH, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that [is] before Jerusalem, AND FOR MOLECH, the abomination of the children of Ammon. (1 Kings 11:7 AV)

This was only the tip of the iceberg.

AND LIKEWISE DID HE FOR ALL HIS STRANGE WIVES, which burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods. (1 Kings 11:8 AV)

Since all 700 of his wives were foreign princesses, there is the possibility that in the latter part of Solomon's life there may have been SEVERAL HUNDRED pagan shrines or "high places" in the area of Jerusalem, where these foreign wives practiced their pagan religions. Solomon had ceased to walk in integrity of heart, and in uprightness before God. So the next verse states God's response to this situation.

AND THE LORD WAS ANGRY WITH SOLOMON, because his heart was turned from the LORD

God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice, (1 Kings 11:9 AV)

Solomon had NOT kept that which God had commanded him (1 Kings 11:10). So God pronounces a very severe penalty on Solomon. This was in addition to the penalties for idolatry, which God had mentioned 20 years earlier.

Wherefore the LORD said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and THOU HAST NOT KEPT MY COVENANT AND MY STATUTES, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant. (1 Kings 11:11 AV)

So God then stirred up enemies against Solomon ... Hadad the Edomite (1 Kings 11:14) and Rezon the son of Eliadah (1 Kings 11: 23) and Solomon's servant Jeroboam (1 Kings 11:26). And then Solomon died (1 Kings 11:43).

When people, with whom God has been working, and whose sins and the penalties for which God has chosen to record in the Bible, repent (e.g. David and Manasseh), then such repentance is usually mentioned, to avoid creating a wrong impression. After God has listed Solomon's sins of idolatry, there is no hint that Solomon might have repented, and perhaps "put away" these pagan wives and "torn down" the pagan shrines he had built around Jerusalem. Rather, the Bible shows that those pagan shrines continued to stand in the Jerusalem area for another 300 years! It was only King Josiah who, approximately 300 years after Solomon, eventually tore down the pagan high places Solomon had built.

AND THE HIGH PLACES that [were] before Jerusalem, which [were] on the right hand of the mount of corruption, WHICH SOLOMON THE KING OF ISRAEL HAD BUILDED FOR ASHTORETH the abomination of the Zidonians, and FOR CHEMOSH the abomination of the Moabites, and FOR MILCOM the abomination of the children of Ammon, DID THE KING (i.e. Josiah) DEFILE. And he brake in pieces the images, and cut down the groves, and filled their places with the bones of men. (2 Kings 23:13-14 AV)

So the pagan shrines Solomon had built outlived Solomon by about 300 years. Solomon made no attempt to undo the problems he had created in building these shrines. As he died at anywhere from age 54 years to age 59 years, God had certainly not given him "length of days" as per the conditional promise in 1 Kings 3:14. His death at such a relatively young age, after God had SPECIFICALLY promised him a long life if he would obey God's laws, also implies that when he died God was still angry with him, as per 1 Kings 11:9.

[Comment: I suspect that IF Solomon had indeed remained faithful to God throughout his life, THEN as per 1 Kings 3:14 God would have given him an 80-year reign, a double-portion as it were, and he would have lived at least into his early 90's. Even the wicked king Manasseh, who repented later in life, "reigned 55 years in Jerusalem" (2 Kings 21:1).]

That's basically the picture.

Now the question:

WHY WOULD GOD POSSIBLY HAVE WANTED TO INCLUDE IN HIS WORD, THE BIBLE, BOOKS THAT HAD BEEN WRITTEN BY A MAN WITH WHOM GOD TELLS US HE WAS ANGRY?

There is no parallel statement to 1 Kings 11:9 about the author of any other book of the Bible. God is angry with a man, to whom He, God, has appeared in a dream on two separate occasions, because the man has become involved in idolatry. It is as if God has said: "I know you have compromised with idolatry and therefore I am angry with you; BUT I still want to include three books you have written within the framework of MY Word." WHY did God do that?

Someone might say: what about the pagan priest Balaam, with whom God was also "angry" (see Numbers 22:22)? For a start, God did not use Balaam to write any book of the Bible. And the only reason we can trust the prophecies Balaam pronounced is because the Bible specifically tells us that Balaam spoke only the words God specifically wanted him to speak.

Notice ...

AND THE LORD PUT A WORD IN BALAAM'S MOUTH, AND SAID, Return unto Balak, and thus thou shalt speak. (Numbers 23:5 AV)

AND THE LORD MET BALAAM, AND PUT A WORD IN HIS MOUTH, AND SAID, Go again unto Balak, and say thus. (Numbers 23:16 AV)

And Balaam lifted up his eyes, and he saw Israel abiding [in his tents] according to their tribes; AND THE SPIRIT OF GOD CAME UPON HIM. AND HE TOOK UP HIS PARABLE, and said, Balaam the son of Beor hath said, and the man whose eyes are open hath said: (Numbers 24:2-3 AV)

When the Bible includes statements like these, then we can certainly be confident that even the words of a pagan priest with whom God is angry are correct and true. But there are no statements like these about Solomon, that would assure us that everything Solomon wrote was God-inspired.

Let's consider one other point.

HOW GOD ENSURES THAT WE KNOW HE IS THE REAL AUTHOR OF A BOOK:

Someone might say: IF a book is included in the Bible, THEN every word of it must automatically be an expression of God's will.

If that were so, then WHY did God bother to repeatedly state in specific books that HE is the One who is speaking through human instruments in that particular book? What does this tell us about other books or other passages, where some MAN is recorded as speaking (in the Old Testament), where God does not give us this sort of assurance? Let's look at the books in the Old Testament that follow the three books written by Solomon.

Notice:

The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, [and] Hezekiah, kings of Judah. Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: FOR THE LORD HATH SPOKEN, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. (Isaiah 1:1-2 AV)

The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiyah, of the priests that [were] in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin: TO WHOM THE WORD OF THE LORD CAME in the days of Josiah the son of Amon

king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign. (Jeremiah 1:1-2 AV)

Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth [month], in the fifth [day] of the month, as I [was] among the captives by the river of Chebar, [that] the heavens were opened, and I SAW VISIONS OF GOD. (Ezekiel 1:1 AV)

That they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret; that Daniel and his fellows should not perish with the rest of the wise [men] of Babylon. Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven. Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his: And he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding: He revealeth the deep and secret things: he knoweth what [is] in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him. I thank thee, and praise thee, O thou God of my fathers, who hast given me wisdom and might, AND HAST MADE KNOWN UNTO ME NOW WHAT WE DESIRED OF THEE: for thou hast [now] made known unto us the king's matter. (Daniel 2:18-23 AV)

THE WORD OF THE LORD that came unto Hosea, the son of Beeri, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, [and] Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel. (Hosea 1:1 AV)

THE WORD OF THE LORD that came to Joel the son of Pethuel. (Joel 1:1 AV)

THUS SAITH THE LORD; For three transgressions of Damascus, and for four, I will not turn away [the punishment] thereof ... (Amos 1:3 AV)

The vision of Obadiah. THUS SAITH THE LORD GOD concerning Edom ... (Obadiah 1:1 AV)

Now THE WORD OF THE LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, (Jonah 1:1 AV)

THE WORD OF THE LORD that came to Micah the Morasthite in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, [and] Hezekiah, kings of Judah ... (Micah 1:1 AV)

The burden of Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite. GOD [IS] JEALOUS, and THE LORD REVENGETH; the LORD revengeth, and [is] furious; the LORD will take vengeance on his adversaries ... (Nahum 1:1-2 AV)

THE BURDEN WHICH HABAKKUK THE PROPHET DID SEE. O LORD, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! [even] cry out unto thee [of] violence, and thou wilt not save! (Habakkuk 1:1-2 AV)

THE WORD OF THE LORD which came unto Zephaniah ... (Zephaniah 1:1 AV)

In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, in the first day of the month, CAME THE WORD OF THE LORD by Haggai the prophet unto Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, saying, THUS SPEAKETH THE LORD OF HOSTS, saying, This people say, The time is not come, the time that the LORD'S house should be built. (Haggai 1:1-2 AV)

In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, CAME THE WORD OF THE LORD unto Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet, saying, (Zechariah 1:1 AV)

The burden of THE WORD OF THE LORD to Israel by Malachi. (Malachi 1:1 AV)

Repeatedly God makes abundantly clear that what is recorded by these various authors is HIS Word. He does so by using the phrases "THUS SAYS THE LORD", "THE WORD OF THE LORD", "THE LORD HAS SPOKEN", "VISIONS OF GOD", etc.

Now let's look at the three Books written by Solomon:

THE BOOK OF PROVERBS:

The Book of Proverbs starts with: "The proverbs OF SOLOMON, the son of David, king of Israel" (Proverbs 1:1).

While God is frequently mentioned in this Book, NOWHERE is God Himself actually given credit for any single one of these proverbs. In other words, these are NOT "the proverbs OF GOD"! They are simply "the proverbs OF SOLOMON", which God has sanctioned and approved, so that we might learn from them. But SOLOMON REPEATEDLY takes or receives the credit for the bulk of these proverbs.

THE PROVERBS OF SOLOMON the son of David, king of Israel; (Proverbs 1:1 AV)

THE PROVERBS OF SOLOMON. A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish son [is] the heaviness of his mother. (Proverbs 10:1 AV)

These [are] also PROVERBS OF SOLOMON, which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied out. (Proverbs 25:1 AV)

And moreover, because the preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yea, he gave good heed, and sought out, [and] SET IN ORDER MANY PROVERBS. (Ecclesiastes 12:9 AV)

The Book of Proverbs is in fact the first Book in the Bible (in the order in which we have it) prefaced by the name of its author. It is a Book that is frequently quoted in the New Testament. Let's note one other statement about Solomon:

And he SPAKE THREE THOUSAND PROVERBS: and HIS SONGS WERE A THOUSAND AND FIVE. (1 Kings 4:32 AV)

So Solomon SPOKE 3000 proverbs, and while he may have collected a few from other sources (e.g. Proverbs 30:1 ?), I suspect that the vast majority were Solomon's own proverbs. The Book of Proverbs itself only contains 915 verses, and some of the proverbs there take up more than one verse. So the Book of Proverbs may contain in the region of 750 to 800 individual "proverbs" that Solomon had spoken (some of which require two or more verses in our modern Bibles). This means that God saw fit to only preserve ABOUT ONE QUARTER (in very general terms) of all the proverbs that Solomon had spoken.

This shows us a selection process! All 3000 proverbs were Solomon's! But of those sayings that Solomon had originated (or in some cases collected from other men's sayings?), God saw fit to include approximately one quarter in HIS Word, the Bible. The other three quarters of all the proverbs Solomon had spoken God did NOT want to become a part of HIS Word.

So why did God make such a selection process?

The approximately one quarter of Solomon's proverbs (and I doubt that Solomon himself was involved in

selecting which of his 3000 proverbs would be included in God's Word) that God chose to include in HIS Word are statements that are basically true and sound, and about which God can say: "Yes, that is right. That is a good way to explain this particular principle", etc.. They are statements that have received God's approval, even though many may still require a great deal of discernment as to when and how they should be applied, and many are quoted in the New Testament.

The other three quarters of Solomon's proverbs, in excess of 2000, that have not been preserved God simply did not want in His Word. The reasons why God chose not to include them are really immaterial. It is sufficient that God has shown us that He only preserved A PORTION of "the wise sayings" Solomon had spoken. Had all 3000 not been only Solomon's proverbs, had they all been "God-inspired", than ALL OF THEM should have been preserved as a part of the Bible.

The general tone of the Book of Proverbs is positive and upbeat, and it is likely that Solomon spoke and collected most of these particular proverbs during the first 20 years of his reign. Since Ecclesiastes 12:9 tells us that Solomon CONTINUED to set in order many proverbs throughout his reign, PERHAPS (?) many of the proverbs that God chose NOT to include in His Word from that total number of 3000 originated in the latter part of Solomon's reign, when God was already angry with him, and when Solomon's views may NOT have been acceptable to God? I don't know and I suppose it doesn't really matter? We have the proverbs that God wanted preserved.

The name "Solomon" is derived from the word "shalom", meaning "peace". And in this Book Solomon readily uses his own real name in the introduction. He still had "peace" in his life.

Now let's look at the next Book.

THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES:

This is a most unusual Book in many respects. For a start, the word translated "Preacher" is a mistranslation that can be led back to Martin Luther's translation into German as "Prediger". The word should really be translated as "Speaker", without implying any kind of "inspired sermon". Solomon was not a Levite, and it was not really his place to give "sermons" anyway.

Next, the Book has an extremely gloomy, negative and pessimistic tone and a mood of hopelessness. Everything is portrayed as useless, empty and vain. Death looms very large on the horizon in this Book. That is hardly the stuff "inspired sermons" consist of.

In these things it is IN OPPOSITION TO THE ENTIRE REST OF THE BIBLE. When we really understand it correctly, this Book of Ecclesiastes is critical of God Himself! Yet God chose to include this Book in HIS Word! You need to understand why!

Before we look at the answer to this question, let's note the following points:

1) Nowhere does this Book claim to speak for God, as do Isaiah, Jeremiah, etc., etc. Instead, the Book opens as follows:

THE WORDS OF THE PREACHER (really "SPEAKER"), the son of David, king in Jerusalem.
(Ecclesiastes 1:1 AV)

This tells us very plainly that this Book presents us with the words of A MAN! They are not the words "of God"; they are the words of "a man"! And it is a man who chooses not to directly give his own name. He only identifies himself as a king and as "the son of David". It is obviously Solomon, but he is careful not

to use that name in this Book. When we read the Book carefully, the reason for the omission of his real name should become clear: when he wrote this Book, he no longer had any real "PEACE" and a name that means "peace" (i.e. "Solomon") would simply not have been appropriate for the troubled and tormented mind that produced this Book.

The Book contains statements ABOUT God, and it makes references TO God ... but it NEVER at any stage claims to speak FOR GOD!

2) As a teenager Solomon had addressed God as "LORD God" (i.e. YHWH ELOHIM) in 1 Kings 3:7.

And now, O LORD MY GOD (YAHWEH ELOHIM), thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father: and I [am but] a little child: I know not [how] to go out or come in. (1 Kings 3:7 AV)

So Solomon was clearly familiar with the name "YHWH". When writers of books in the Old Testament claim to speak for God, they typically claim to speak the words of YHWH (usually translated into English in the KJV in capital letters as "LORD"). In the Book of Ecclesiastes the name "YHWH" is NEVER USED. Only the name "Elohim" is used in Ecclesiastes. It is as if Solomon is acknowledging that his relationship with "YHWH" had been severed by the time he wrote this Book.

3) The total absence of any "THUS SAYS THE LORD" statements and similar statements means that God does NOT vouch for the correctness of Solomon's views and statements. We need to understand that God has told us up-front, in the very first verse, that these are only the words of A MAN, Solomon, and God therefore requires us to evaluate Solomon's words and views on their own merits, when evaluated against everything we see in the rest of the Bible. We cannot assume that Solomon's views must be correct, simply because God chose to include them in the Bible.

As an example: The Apostle Paul wrote 14 Books of the New Testament. Yet in places he also sometimes gives us nothing more than his personal opinion. For example, in 1 Corinthians 7 he gives advice regarding marriage and the sexual relationship within marriage. Then Paul writes:

But I SPEAK THIS BY PERMISSION, [and] not of commandment. (1 Corinthians 7:6 AV)

What then follows in the next two verses is Paul's personal advice.

For I WOULD THAT ALL MEN WERE EVEN AS I MYSELF. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that. I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, IT IS GOOD FOR THEM IF THEY ABIDE EVEN AS I. (1 Corinthians 7:7-8 AV)

Basically Paul's advice to new members coming into the Church then was: if you are single, then STAY single and you will be better off!

The problem is that GOD, not Paul, had previously said: "IT IS NOT GOOD that the man should be alone ..." (Genesis 2:18).

Now we can try to reason things out, and we can say that Paul was only saying this "FOR THE PRESENT DISTRESS" (1 Corinthians 7:26).

I SUPPOSE therefore that this is good for the present distress, [I say], that [it is] good for a man so to be. (1 Corinthians 7:26 AV)

But the bottom line is that Paul was only giving his personal opinion, and not claiming any divine authority for these specific statements.

I don't believe that this was really good advice, except perhaps in a very limited locality, and certainly not advice that members of God's Church should have followed for any length of time. Nor would it have been good advice for members who found themselves in perhaps 100 or more different localities throughout the Roman Empire at that time. Should only people in Corinth have avoided getting married? What about Christians in Ephesus and in Jerusalem and in Rome and in Colossae and in Smyrna and in Antioch and in Alexandria and in Crete, etc., etc.? Was Paul still under the impression that the second coming of Christ would be quite soon, in his own lifetime? Should Mr. Armstrong have advised young men and young women in 1970 or in 1971 not to get married BECAUSE HE THOUGHT that the second coming of Christ would be quite soon?

The point I wish to make here is NOT that Paul's advice was necessarily right or wrong. The real point is that Paul stated QUITE CLEARLY that he was only giving us his own personal opinion, something we all have also done many times. Paul stated quite clearly "I speak this by permission and NOT OF COMMANDMENT" (verse 6) and later he said "I SUPPOSE ..." (verse 26). Yet it is a part of the Bible, the Word of God.

Likewise, the Book of Ecclesiastes very clearly gives THE OPINIONS of Solomon. Some may be right before God, and some may be wrong. Either way, they all need to be evaluated against what God has stated in the rest of the Bible.

4) In the Book of Ecclesiastes Solomon presents a number of different things. These include:

A) Solomon makes some FACTUAL OBSERVATIONS. These are generally correct.

B) Solomon also presents some OBJECTIVE STATEMENTS, which are also usually correct.

C) Solomon also relates many PERSONAL EXPERIENCES. These experiences could be right and proper before God, and they could be wrong and ungodly. They need to be evaluated on their own merits against how GOD tells us to conduct our lives.

D) The Book also has a very specific PERSPECTIVE, from which life is viewed. Whether or not that PERSPECTIVE is a godly one or not needs to be examined.

E) Solomon also presents many PERSONAL VIEWS AND OPINIONS. We need to recognize that these views are NOT GOD'S VIEWS AT ALL! They are only Solomon's views. We should not attempt to whitewash ungodly views, attempting to find some justifications for views that are in fact contrary to God's views. We need to recognize Solomon's state of mind when he wrote this Book. Only then will it become clear WHY God included this Book in HIS Word, the Bible.

Here is the point to remember: Simply because Solomon makes some correct factual observations and some correct objective statements, this does NOT mean that therefore his perspective must automatically be a godly one, nor does it mean that his personal views and opinions must all be godly views. In this Book we need to be very careful to not confuse factual statements and observations with personal opinions and a very subjective perspective!

5) When Solomon wrote this Book of Ecclesiastes, he KNEW that it was inevitable that Israel would go

into captivity and that the Temple he had built would be destroyed ... all because of HIS sins! God had specifically warned him about this earlier in his reign. He KNEW that because he had allowed himself to be drawn into idolatry, THEREFORE EVERYTHING HE HAD ACHIEVED WAS USELESS AND FUTILE, DOOMED TO DESTRUCTION!

It is only BECAUSE he had gone into idolatry that THEREFORE "all is vanity". The statement "vanity of vanities, vanity of vanities, all is vanity" is only true from one specific perspective. It is only true from the perspective of someone who knows that everything he has achieved is going to be destroyed by God because of disobedience.

To make this quite clear: the statement "vanity of vanities, all is vanity" is NOT true for human life in general! This statement was specifically true FOR SOLOMON'S LIFE, though not necessarily for anyone else's life! Solomon KNEW this was true for his own life, because of the very specific warning God had given him in a dream.

The Book of Ecclesiastes reflects Solomon's state of mind of gloom and futility. But that is NOT the view and the perspective we find in the rest of the Bible outside of Ecclesiastes. To understand this Book, we have to understand Solomon's state of mind when he wrote this Book.

6) Solomon is not shy about referring to himself as "the greatest". One might argue that Solomon was only being "factual", but it is NOT a godly perspective that Solomon has taken. In Ecclesiastes 2:9 he basically says that he was greater than his own father David, the only one who had been "before him in Jerusalem".

SO I WAS GREAT, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me. (Ecclesiastes 2:9 AV)

Now think about this for a moment! Is it really a GODLY approach for a son of David to say: "I am greater than my father David"? Solomon knew very well how GOD had evaluated David's life. And Solomon knew equally well that God was angry with him, Solomon. Would God really have WANTED Solomon to make a statement like this? Would God really WANT any man to evaluate his own life in these sort of terms? I doubt that very much.

Furthermore, WHY would Solomon even want to compare his own status to other people? In this chapter Solomon is ignoring his own advice, which he had earlier given in the Book of Proverbs:

Let another man praise thee, AND NOT THINE OWN MOUTH; a stranger, and NOT THINE OWN LIPS. (Proverbs 27:2 AV)

Solomon has in fact devoted a lengthy section in Ecclesiastes to highlight what he considered to be his achievements. He repeatedly claims to have conducted himself in wisdom, even though the facts show that he ended up compromising with idolatry ... which was anything but wise!

The only other king in the Bible who focused on his own achievements in the same way Solomon does in Ecclesiastes is Nebuchadnezzar, who said:

The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty? (Daniel 4:30 AV)

... and for that attitude God immediately reduced Nebuchadnezzar to a sub-human status; i.e. God took the spirit in man away from Nebuchadnezzar for a period of seven years (see Daniel 4:31-37).

In Ecclesiastes chapter 2 Solomon's attitude is very much like Nebuchadnezzar's attitude in Daniel 4:30. I can see a very clear parallel between Nebuchadnezzar's evaluation of his own achievements and Solomon's evaluation of his own achievements. God's response to Nebuchadnezzar's attitude was very severe! Why would God's response to Solomon be any different? Note also that Solomon in this section of Ecclesiastes does NOT give God the credit for his (Solomon's) "greatness"!

The contrasting godly perspective is shown by David in the Psalms, when David wrote:

Behold, thou hast made my days [as] an handbreadth; and mine age [is] as nothing before thee: verily EVERY MAN AT HIS BEST STATE [IS] ALTOGETHER VANITY. Selah. Surely EVERY MAN WALKETH IN A VAIN SHEW: surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up [riches], and knoweth not who shall gather them. (Psalm 39:5-6 AV)

Does David's statement here apply only to everyone except for Solomon, or does it also include Solomon? It most assuredly also applies to Solomon as it does to all other people. So Solomon's perspective in Ecclesiastes chapter 2 is not really "wise".

Furthermore, Solomon "heaped up" staggering amounts of riches by taxing his people to the extreme. Both, David and Solomon, heaped up riches, but there is a major difference. David "heaped up riches" for the explicit purpose of providing for the Temple that his son was to build. David LOVED to leave those riches to his son. Solomon, on the other hand, did not gather riches for any godly projects. Solomon gathered riches for his own selfish purposes, and he HATED to leave all that wealth to his son, something he states unashamedly in Ecclesiastes 2:18.

Yea, I HATED ALL MY LABOUR which I had taken under the sun: BECAUSE I SHOULD LEAVE IT UNTO THE MAN THAT SHALL BE AFTER ME. (Ecclesiastes 2:18 AV)

Neither David, nor any other of God's servants throughout the Bible ever displayed the attitude of "so I was great and better off than those before me". That's not how Abraham viewed himself. That's not how Moses viewed himself. That's not how Isaiah and Jeremiah and Ezekiel viewed themselves. When we study this Book, God wants us to SEE that Solomon's perspective was not right!

WE ARE TO READ THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES FOR REPROOF AND FOR CORRECTION!

We are to learn from what happened to Solomon, and we are especially to learn from WHAT HAPPENED TO HIS MIND, when he knowingly went into idolatry.

Many people, who have studied Ecclesiastes, have tried to read some godly perspective and godly motivation into Solomon's comments, when Solomon was only critical, negative and bitter! Can we not see that we are dealing with an extremely bitter man, when he openly tells us that he hates to leave his wealth to his own son?

7) Some of Solomon's views are ungodly and even critical of God! In chapter 4 he focuses on problems in society (although he himself was most likely the wealthiest man alive at that time) and then he "PRAISES THE DEAD", claiming they are better off than the living.

Wherefore I praised the dead which are already dead more than the living which are yet alive.
(Ecclesiastes 4:2 AV)

He was not talking about the dead "saints", people in their graves who are awaiting the resurrection. He was talking about ANY "dead". In the next verse Solomon makes quite clear that we should not read some "righteous" interpretation or application into his negative statement. Because in the next verse he is critical of God's plan to reproduce Himself through human beings!

Solomon there says: THOSE WHO HAVE NEVER YET LIVED are better off than both, those who are currently alive, and also those who have lived and died. That view is absurd and anti-God! If it were true, THEN it would mean that those who have never yet lived are "BETTER OFF" than Abel and Enoch and Noah, they are "better off" than Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, they are "better off" than Moses and Joshua and David, etc. And they are "better off" than you and I.

Here is Solomon's statement:

YEA, BETTER [IS HE] THAN BOTH THEY, WHICH HATH NOT YET BEEN, who hath not seen the evil work that is done under the sun. (Ecclesiastes 4:3 AV)

Also note! The very fact that Solomon says that those who have never yet existed are better off than those who have already died makes quite clear that he was certainly not thinking of "the dead who are awaiting salvation"! So "the dead" in the previous verse is NOT a reference to "the righteous dead". And Solomon's view is simply not true!

God is the giver of LIFE, not the giver of death! And it is LIFE that Solomon is critical of in this whole Book of Ecclesiastes.

8) Solomon's ungodly perspective still gets worse. A little later he claims that a miscarriage, "an untimely birth", is better off than someone who does not receive a decent burial. Here is Solomon's statement:

If a man beget an hundred [children], and live many years, so that the days of his years be many, and his soul be not filled with good, AND ALSO [THAT] HE HAVE NO BURIAL; I say, [that] AN UNTIMELY BIRTH [IS] BETTER THAN HE. (Ecclesiastes 6:3 AV)

That view is utterly perverse! But what it should do is help remove the scales from our eyes, and help us recognize just how utterly negative Solomon is about life! How can anybody possibly say that a miscarriage is better than someone to whom GOD has given the precious gift of life, even if that life does involve facing some tests and trials and hardships?! And who cares about "a burial"? Do you believe that a miscarriage is better off than YOU are, simply because you have to face some trials in this life?

9) Solomon KNEW that he had gone the wrong way and he knew his own mind, that he was not prepared to repent and to change. And so he made this statement about himself:

Better [is] a poor and a wise child than AN OLD AND FOOLISH KING, who will no more be admonished. For out of prison he cometh to reign; whereas also [he that is] born in his kingdom becometh poor. (Ecclesiastes 4:13-14 AV)

He is speaking about himself as the "old and foolish king" who REFUSED to accept correction. He was not prepared to be admonished, and he knew it! He also KNEW that God was going to give most of the kingdom to Jeroboam, and that Jeroboam had great popular support. In this verse Solomon acknowledges that he had set his mind to not change! He had in effect "hardened his heart".

10) So note very carefully!

Solomon's negative views of life, and his praising of the dead and of those who have never ever lived and of "the untimely births" is compatible with ONLY ONE SPECIFIC SITUATION!

Those views are only compatible with a mind that has been offered salvation by God and that has for one reason or another REJECTED that offer of salvation, and that therefore KNOWS that there remained NOTHING TO LOOK FORWARD TO but utter destruction in the lake of fire!

Consider this very carefully!

For those people who KNOW they have rejected the salvation God had offered them and who know that the lake of fire is the only thing they have to look forward to ... for those people ALL OF SOLOMON'S VIEWS ARE TRUE!!

For people who are heading for the lake of fire ... it would have been better if they had never been born; it would have been better if they had ended up as "an untimely birth"; and it is better for them to have died than to continue living with the knowledge of their future fate. It is for such people that EVERYTHING is "vanity" and EVERYTHING is "vexation of spirit". It is for such people that life is "a sore travail". For such people a focus on their "greatness" in this life is the only thing they have, because they have NOTHING to focus on beyond this life.

To state this another way: Satan would be in full agreement with Solomon's negative views about life, because Satan also has nothing to look forward to, and HE would be better off if God had never created him.

Jesus Christ also made one comment about those who have never been born.

The Son of man indeed goeth, as it is written of him: but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! GOOD WERE IT FOR THAT MAN IF HE HAD NEVER BEEN BORN. (Mark 14:21 AV)

Jesus Christ is saying very plainly: it is BETTER to never have been born than to end up in the lake of fire! If someone was going to "betray the Son of man", and then still SOMEHOW afterwards be able to, even through trials, end up in the Kingdom of God, THEN Jesus Christ's statement (i.e. "good were it for that man if he had NEVER been born") would not be true! No amount of trials can compare with living for future eternity in the Kingdom of God. I don't believe that Jesus Christ was making some empty threat. Note also that Judas Iscariot chose the option Solomon expounds here in Ecclesiastes ... Judas took his own life, which is like Solomon "praising the dead", because he also had nothing else to look forward to in life.

So Solomon's reference in Ecclesiastes 4:3 likewise is only true for people who are destined to end up in the lake of fire.

12) When we clearly understand that THIS is the perspective from which Solomon wrote this whole Book of Ecclesiastes, THEN everything falls into place! All of his negative views are perfectly understandable.

And all of his conflicting views become understandable. For a mind that knows that it is heading for the lake of fire, continued living is miserable and frustrating and death seems very attractive ... BUT the uncertainties surrounding death also raise fears, and so even "a LIVING dog is better than a DEAD lion" (Ecclesiastes 9:4). There is only uncertainty and insecurity whichever way such a person turns.

As the Apostle Paul explained, if we, who have been offered salvation by God, "sin wilfully" then there remains nothing ... "but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries" (Hebrews 10:26-27 AV).

THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES IS A VERY DRAMATIC EXAMPLE OF THIS "FEARFUL LOOKING" AHEAD!

13) This perspective of someone who is heading for the lake of fire does NOT prevent Solomon from knowing what is right. So he can conclude his book with the objective statement:

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: FEAR GOD, AND KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS: for THIS [IS] THE WHOLE [DUTY] OF MAN. (Ecclesiastes 12:13 AV)

It is interesting that Jesus Christ actually implied that we need to do MORE than just "keep the commandments" if we expect to have real faith. So Solomon's statement here is correct, but it is also incomplete! Notice:

So likewise ye, when ye shall have done ALL THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE COMMANDED YOU, say, We are unprofitable servants: WE HAVE (only) DONE THAT WHICH WAS OUR DUTY TO DO. (Luke 17:10 AV)

The truth is, we have to do MORE than just "keep the commandments". We have to go "above and beyond" what may be required. If one mile is required of us, God would really like us to go two miles. So don't view "keeping the commandments" as the "WHOLE" duty of man. Merely keeping the commandments is really not enough. THE ATTITUDE AND THE PERSPECTIVE that God is looking for in us is even more important than just keeping the commandments.

Jesus Christ said something similar to Solomon in Matthew 19:17, when He said: "if you will enter into life, keep the commandments". However, Christ then added something, expecting MORE than just commandment-keeping when He said: "IF YOU WANT TO BE PERFECT, go and sell that you have and give to the poor ..." (Matthew 19:21). The point is: "the WHOLE duty of man", as stated by Solomon, actually stops short of what God is really looking for in you and in me.

Furthermore, we should also note the differences in perspective. SOLOMON focuses on "FEAR God and KEEP His commandments", but GOD has a totally different focus. God's instruction to us is to LOVE God! Notice:

And thou shalt LOVE the LORD thy God WITH ALL THINE HEART, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. (Deuteronomy 6:5 AV)

The end result (i.e. obedience to God) is the same in both cases, but the perspectives are decidedly different. Why did Solomon not focus on "LOVING God"? Is it because he himself no longer had any love for God? When he professed to spell out "the whole duty of man" ... was his heart really in it? Or was he

just mechanically giving the basically correct answer?

Where in Solomon's assessment of "the whole duty of man" does Paul's statement "WITHOUT FAITH IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO PLEASE GOD" (Hebrews 11:6) fit? What if someone fears God and keeps the commandments BUT LACKS REAL FAITH ... has such a person fulfilled "the WHOLE duty of man"?

Consider also: Solomon's statement in Ecclesiastes 12:13 isn't so much "the conclusion of the whole matter" as it is A FOREGONE CONCLUSION ... something Solomon started his life out with as a teenager. What Solomon presents is correct (if we infer the matter of willingly doing more than the commandments require), but it is hard to see how his critical and negative views of life and his view that EVERYTHING is just futile and useless (i.e. "vanity") could possibly have produced this conclusion? It is almost as if we are dealing with a mind that still knows many of the correct answers, but has lost the knowledge regarding how to logically arrive at those answers. The New Testament arrives at the same answer, that we must fear God and keep His commandments, but without resorting to any of Solomon's negative views and perspectives. Solomon's road to that answer is troubled and arduous, strewn with negativism.

So WHY did God include the Book of Ecclesiastes in HIS Word, the Bible?

Ecclesiastes is very profitable for reproof and for correction. It presents a very sober warning to us, not so much in the things that are said as in THE REALIZATION of what kind of mind has produced these statements.

Let's back off a little.

Do you know anyone who at one stage was a devoted member of God's Church (at least from all appearances), and who at some point just walked out of the Church and deliberately and resolutely turned his back on everything he had previously believed? In some cases such a person may have whole-heartedly joined one of the churches of this world? In other cases such a person really did not initially want to leave the way of life practised in the Church, but because of pressure from a spouse or from other family members or friends he gradually "let go" of what he had believed and practiced, and after a while the "letting go" accelerated? And then, after some months or a few years, you meet this person and you start talking.

At times such a meeting may be pleasant and leave you without negative impressions. But at other times such a meeting can also be quite chilling (note! "chilling" and not "chilly") and extremely scary! And the spine-chilling feeling is not the result of the words such people may speak to you. Such a feeling of fear is really the result of REALIZING WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO THEIR MINDS! It is the realization that the mind of the person you are speaking to has LOST both, knowledge and also A VALUE SYSTEM! They speak in casual tones about things that to your mind amount to "treading under foot" and treating with contempt the blood of Jesus Christ (see Hebrews 10:29). It becomes apparent to you that they have no hope in their lives apart from what this present life has to offer. And it is extremely scary for you to witness what has actually happened to the mind of someone you used to know so well.

Perhaps this has never yet happened to you? But some of us have experienced situations like this, and they can be scary, fearing for the other person. You can't help asking yourself: could this ever happen to MY mind?

So back to Ecclesiastes.

GOD INCLUDED ECCLESIASTES IN THE BIBLE TO SHOW US FIRSHTHAND WHAT WILL

HAPPEN TO A MIND THAT KNOWINGLY COMPROMISES WITH GOD'S TRUTH AND KNOWINGLY REJECTS GOD'S WAY OF LIFE! GOD WANTS US TO UNDERSTAND FIRSTHAND HOW A MIND WORKS WHICH HAS REJECTED THE SALVATION THAT GOD WAS OFFERING, AND THEREFORE KNOWS THAT IT ONLY HAS THE LAKE OF FIRE TO LOOK FORWARD TO!

In Ecclesiastes there is a perspective of just focusing on this life, because all hope for beyond this present existence has been lost. The view of life is very negative and critical. And while there is still some knowledge of certain right answers to life, the reasoning processes have become rather strange. The lesson of Ecclesiastes is not so much in what is said (although there certainly are many true statements for us to take note of). The real lesson is to see what has happened to Solomon's mind. That is the scary thing. The things he says and the words he uses are simply the means for exposing the hopeless and negative and fearful state of his mind, while at the same time displaying a certain amount of pride and arrogance in his own status in this life. The attitude of being critical of God surfaces at different times, revealing a wrong concept and wrong impression of God and God's dealings. This is something God wants you and me to UNDERSTAND!

We need to understand that in the story of Solomon we have an account where everything started out on the right foot with the right circumstances. Notice that when Solomon was still a child God (i.e. YHWH) LOVED Solomon.

And David comforted Bathsheba his wife, and went in unto her, and lay with her: and she bare a son, and he called his name Solomon: AND THE LORD LOVED HIM. (2 Samuel 12:24 AV)

And Solomon as a young child likewise LOVED God (i.e. YHWH).

AND SOLOMON LOVED THE LORD, walking in the statutes of David his father: only he sacrificed and burnt incense in high places. (1 Kings 3:3 AV)

It is two verses after this statement that we have the account of God appearing to Solomon in a dream in Gibeon, inviting Solomon to ask God for whatever he may have wanted.

Solomon's story is not about someone who never stood a chance, for whom life was nothing but a struggle, someone who was always cut off from God. No, Solomon's story really starts out with IDEAL CIRCUMSTANCES. Already as a child he is loved by God, he likewise has a love for God, God appears to him on two separate occasions in a dream, and God offers him every blessing imaginable. And yet Solomon went wrong!

The Book of Ecclesiastes, when properly understood, is probably the most powerful warning regarding:

"HOW SHALL WE ESCAPE IF WE NEGLECT SO GREAT SALVATION?" (Heb. 2:3)

And THAT is something God wants us to understand very clearly from this Book of Ecclesiastes.

Let's now look at the third book Solomon wrote.

THE SONG OF SOLOMON:

The opening verse of this Book reads:

The song of songs, which [is] Solomon's. (Song of Solomon 1:1 AV)

We saw earlier that Solomon did in fact write 1005 songs. This was extremely prolific by any song-writer's standard. Yet very few, possibly only one, of those 1005 songs are included in the Book of Psalms. Sometimes Psalm 72 is attributed to Solomon, though the last verse of that Psalm implies David as its author. Some people want to attribute Psalm 132 to Solomon, though the opening verse of this Psalm speaks about "David and all his afflictions", implying that David was the author of this Psalm also. And then Psalm 127 is attributed to Solomon, a Psalm of 5 short verses.

So, it seems like only one of Solomon's songs made it into the Book of Psalms (i.e. Psalm 127), with two other songs sometimes being suggested as having been written by Solomon (i.e. Psalm 72 and Psalm 132). Even then at the most only three of Solomon's 1005 songs made it into the Book of Psalms.

So what does it tell us when over 1000 of Solomon's 1005 songs never made it into the Book of Psalms? After all, it is not as if he didn't write any books of the Bible. He wrote three books that are a part of the Bible, but of his 1005 songs over 1000 didn't make it into the Book of Psalms.

It should probably tell us that the vast majority of Solomon's songs were NOT RELIGIOUS IN NATURE! THEY WERE NOT ADDRESSED TO GOD! And therefore they were not considered for inclusion in the Book of Psalms.

That isn't really a problem of any kind. It's okay to have songs about other aspects of life, without every song having to be addressed to God. Singing is a form of communication, and we can also communicate with other people through singing, much as not all our speech has to be of a religious nature.

At any rate, it seems fairly likely to me that many of Solomon's 1005 songs were "secular in nature", and never written with the intention that they would ever be considered for use in a spiritual context.

I also suspect that Solomon wrote MANY SONGS IN WHICH THERE WAS NEVER ONCE A REFERENCE TO GOD!

I say this because even in the Song of Solomon there is never any reference to God. Neither the word YHWH nor the word ELOHIM is ever used in the Song of Solomon. God is simply NEVER MENTIONED in the entire song of 117 verses. By contrast, Solomon inserted his own name SEVEN TIMES into this song, and FIVE TIMES in this song he refers to himself as "king", making a total of 12 direct references to himself in this song. But GOD is never mentioned.

It is not an unreasonable assumption to say that IF Solomon never so much as once referred to "God" in this song of 117 verses in length, which Solomon considered to be his best song, and which God selected for inclusion in HIS Word (i.e. it made it into the Bible), that there would also have been many other songs amongst those 1005 which also made NO REFERENCES TO GOD. And so they were not suitable for inclusion in the Book of Psalms.

Now WHY did Solomon write SO MANY songs? Is the number just in excess of 1000 a coincidence? What motivated him to write so many songs? And how did he so easily keep track of the number of songs he had written? After all, he wasn't writing songs to make a living from such songs. Is it just a coincidence that Solomon had 1000 women (700 wives and 300 concubines) and that he wrote just over 1000 songs?

My personal speculation, and it doesn't really make a difference whether that is correct or not, is that Solomon composed ONE SONG FOR EACH OF HIS WOMEN ... 1000 songs in all. That would leave just 5 songs that could be devoted to other subjects. One of those other 5 songs would be the "Song of

Solomon", one would be Psalm 127, and the remaining three others are unclear.

If my speculation is correct, then OBVIOUSLY those 1000 songs were never intended to be a part of the Book of Psalms, because those 1000 songs were not addressed to God, but to a wife or to a concubine. And therefore they would assuredly not have been preserved in the context of the Old Testament. They were not "spiritual songs" and they had never been intended to be "spiritual songs". Anyway, God saw fit that over 1000 of Solomon's songs should not be preserved.

Back to the Song of Solomon.

Song 1:1 of this song is really only a statement of authorship, much like the credits at the start or end of a movie. Verse 2 of the first chapter is really the start of this song. It reads as follows:

LET HIM KISS ME WITH THE KISSES OF HIS MOUTH: FOR THY LOVE [IS] BETTER THAN WINE. (Song 1:2 AV)

The opening words of this song tell us that this song is going to deal with the subject of SEX, with intimate kissing and with the PHYSICAL ATTRACTION between a man and a woman that typically leads to the sex act. The above verse was clearly intended to be sung by a woman.

Solomon used the same word here translated as "love" in Proverbs 7:18 to refer unmistakably to sex! There the harlot has prepared her bed (Proverbs 7:16) and she has perfumed her bed (Proverbs 7:17) and then she says:

Come, LET US TAKE OUR FILL OF LOVE UNTIL THE MORNING: let us solace ourselves with loves. (Proverbs 7:18 AV)

"Solace" means "let's amuse ourselves", in this case by having sex. As Green's Literal Translation puts these verses:

Come, let us take our fill of love until the morning, let us delight ourselves with caresses. For my husband *is* not at his house; he is going in the way, far away. (Proverbs 7:18-19 LIT)

Anytime someone speaks about "love" as something they do at night "UNTIL THE MORNING", they obviously mean sex! And that is what Solomon meant in Proverbs 7:18. And he uses the same terminology at the start of the Song of Solomon.

So when the Song of Solomon OPENS with a woman singing to Solomon "kiss me in an intimate way BECAUSE 'LOVE' with you is a better experience than drinking wine", she is obviously referring to WANTING TO HAVE SEX WITH SOLOMON. That's how Solomon wrote this song.

The remaining 115 verses deal with the subject of sex between a man and a woman, which we have generally taken to refer to sex between a husband and wife, referring to the honeymoon period of the marriage. Never once does this song refer to God. God simply does not feature in this song!

Since the subject Solomon covers in this song was going to be the physical attraction and the sexual relationship between a man and a woman, it is very natural for Solomon to never mention God. Further, why did Solomon consider this one to be the best of his 1005 songs? Since this one deals with love and sex, could it be that Solomon saw it as "the best of his LOVE songs"? Does it not imply that many of his

other songs dealt with the same general subject (i.e. love and sex with his 700 wives and his 300 concubines), and that this song was THE BEST ONE because it dealt with this subject in delicate and very poetic ways? It is a very common practice today to address songs to a woman, frequently even including a woman's name in the title (e.g. "Lucille", "O Carol", "Susanna", "Sweet Sue", "Sweet Caroline", "Clementine", "Michele", etc.), and why should Solomon not have done the same thing for each of his wives and concubines? With his 1000 women Solomon certainly would not have been shy in talking and singing about love and sex.

The Jews generally realized that this song was very explicit about a sexual relationship between a man and his wife, and so they had a rule that a man should not read this book until he was 30 years of age. They felt it would not be good for an immature mind to be exposed to such explicit sexual details.

One of the early so-called "Catholic church fathers" was a man named Origen. To avoid ever being tempted to have sex with a woman, Origen castrated himself. He had a very profound influence on the development of the doctrines of the Catholic Church, many of which are also accepted by many of the Protestant churches.

The fact that Origen castrated himself shows that he, at the very least, had a rather unsound and unbalanced view of a proper sexual relationship within marriage. Also, Origen was the dominant influence in interpreting the Bible in allegorical ways. Nothing really has a literal meaning and everything needs to be interpreted in some way, is the way Origen viewed the Bible. Origen saw an allegory and a parable in every possible section of Scripture, a very convenient way to do away with the literal meaning God intended to convey. He is sometimes referred to as "the father of allegory".

It should not come as a surprise that Origen simply could not accept that the Song of Solomon could possibly be a detailed discussion of the sexual interaction between a man and his wife. So Origen INTERPRETED the Song of Solomon to be a MYSTICAL discussion of the union of Jesus Christ and the Church. Every reference to some sexual nuance was given a mystical interpretation. A later so-called "church father", Theodoret, basically accepted the same explanation.

At the time of the Protestant Reformation a frank discussion of sex, even within marriage, was utterly taboo. Theologians would have been embarrassed to the extreme if they would have had to explain the sexual details Solomon discusses in this song. It was much easier for them to accept Origen's interpretation of this song. And if they looked hard enough, they could find any number of other Scriptures and scriptural principles, which could conveniently be tied to various statements in Solomon's song.

UNDERSTAND SOMETHING VERY CLEARLY!

The Catholic scholar Origen, who had castrated himself, was the one who ORIGINATED the idea that the Song of Solomon is an allegorical discussion of the relationship between Jesus Christ and the Church! Every church and every religious leader and every Bible commentator that has accepted the supposed allegorical meaning of the Song of Solomon has simply accepted the ideas of the extremely unbalanced Catholic scholar Origen!

I realize that this statement is going to make all those in God's Church, who also view the Song of Solomon as an allegory between Jesus Christ and the Church, rather unhappy. Of course they did not study Origen's writings to arrive at this allegory interpretation! They simply got it from others who taught it to them at Ambassador College, or at a local congregation, or from some commentary. And they can close their eyes to THE TRUE ORIGIN OF THE TEACHING THEY HAVE ACCEPTED. To all who have accepted the allegory explanation for this book I say:

Please at least do yourself a favour. AT LEAST look into exactly what the Catholic "theologian" Origen taught about the Song of Solomon. Openly examine how an unbalanced Catholic scholar explained this book more than 1500 years ago! Look at this evidence for yourself! At least openly face up to the evidence that is readily available. THEN, if you still hold the same view, you will at least be able to say:

"Yes, I STILL believe that this Book is an allegory about Jesus Christ and the Church! But I admit that this unbalanced Catholic "father of biblical allegory" certainly reached this same conclusion more than 1500 years before my time. So while I reject all of Origen's other views about the Bible, I admit that I believe that IN THIS CASE Origen actually came up with the correct explanation. I find it amazing that a man, who was basically a pagan in the mold of Simon Magus, was the first person to ever record a correct explanation of this Book of the Bible, but I accept that his explanation that the Song of Solomon is an allegory about Jesus Christ and the Church is indeed correct."

Of course you don't like the above statement! But I know of no other way to challenge you into examining this evidence for yourself. I know there are MANY of you out there who have accepted that teaching. And some people simply don't want to see any evidence that may threaten ideas they have accepted.

Please don't hide your eyes from the evidence that is available in this regard.

I have never looked to Bible commentaries to tell me what is right. I FIRST seek to correctly understand the Bible; and then SOMETIMES (!) I will check various commentaries to see if any of them "actually got it right". More often I have checked the commentaries to confirm that they are in fact wrong in their opinions. So I have now checked quite a number of different commentaries for their views on the Song of Solomon. The vast majority simply accept without question Origen's mystical explanation about an allegory about Jesus Christ and the Church. One exception I came across is the Adam Clarke Commentary. Here are some quotations taken from Clarke's Commentary on the Song of Solomon:

"IT IS MUCH BETTER, therefore, if explained or illustrated at all, TO TAKE IT IN ITS LITERAL MEANING, and explain it in its general sense. I say general sense, BECAUSE THERE ARE MANY PASSAGES IN IT WHICH SHOULD NOT BE EXPLAINED, if taken literally, THE REFERENCES BEING TOO DELICATE; and Eastern phraseology on such subjects is TOO VIVID FOR EUROPEAN IMAGINATIONS. Let any sensible and pious medical man read over this book, and, if at all acquainted with Asiatic phraseology, say whether it would be proper, even in medical language, to explain all the descriptions and allusions in this poem." (Clarke's Commentary, my emphasis)

MY COMMENTS: Clarke is acknowledging that the sexual references in this book are VERY EXPLICIT, and generally too embarrassing to expound publicly. Adam Clarke wrote this around 1825 AD, a time when sexual matters were simply not discussed in public.

"After what I have said on THE DIFFICULTY OF INTERPRETING THIS BOOK IN A SPIRITUAL WAY it would not be fair to withhold from the reader the general arguments on which the theory of its allegorical meaning is founded. THE PRINCIPAL PART OF THE COMMENTATORS ON THIS BOOK, especially those who have made it their separate study, HAVE IN GENERAL TAKEN IT FOR GRANTED THAT THEIR MODE OF INTERPRETATION IS INCONTROVERTIBLE; AND HAVE PROCEEDED TO SPIRITUALIZE EVERY FIGURE AND EVERY VERSE AS IF THEY HAD A DIVINE WARRANT FOR ALL THEY HAVE SAID. Their conduct is dangerous; and the result of their well-intentioned labors has been of very little service

to the cause of Christianity in general, or to the interests of true morality in particular." (Clarke's Commentary, my emphasis)

MY COMMENTS: Clarke has recognized that there isn't really a spiritual message in this book. Those who follow Origen's explanation, seeking explanations for this book elsewhere in the Bible to justify their allegories, are forced to "spiritualize every figure and every verse", which is a dangerous thing to do, as Clarke also mentions.

"The conviction on my mind and the conclusion to which I have conscientiously arrived, are the result of frequent examination, careful reading, and close thinking, at intervals, FOR NEARLY FIFTY YEARS; and however I may be blamed by some, and pitied by others, I must say, and I say it as fearlessly as I do conscientiously, that IN THIS INIMITABLY FINE ELEGANT HEBREW ODE I SEE NOTHING OF CHRIST AND HIS CHURCH, AND NOTHING THAT APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN INTENDED TO BE THUS UNDERSTOOD; and nothing, if applied in this way, that, per se, can promote the interests of vital godliness, or cause the simple and sincere not to "know Christ after the flesh." Here I conscientiously stand. May God help me!" (Clarke's Commentary, my emphasis)

MY COMMENTS: After 50 years of study Clarke concluded that there was "nothing of Christ and His Church" in the Song of Solomon. I have known and taught this same conclusion for the past 25 years, and I certainly didn't get this understanding from Adam Clarke. But it is interesting that here was a scholar who refused to read a commonly accepted idea into this Song of Solomon. He recognized quite clearly that the people who accepted Origen's idea of an allegory about this Book were forced to read their own interpretations INTO this Book.

Many people in the Church of God today have unquestioningly accepted the Catholic explanation of an allegory about Jesus Christ and the Church. Those same people typically usually also believe that THEY are excluded when Revelation 12:9 states that Satan has deceived "THE WHOLE WORLD". We don't realize just how much we have been deceived by Satan, when we without question just accept things that have originated with the Catholic Church.

The problem is really as follows:

THE ALLEGORIES we draw are usually correct! The details are true, and we know they are true because they are based on other parts of the Bible. THE PROBLEM is just that those details are NOT intended in the particular story to which we want to ascribe them! And so we read details that are true, based on other parts of Scriptures, into a story which was never intended to convey the true details we are reading into it! The problem is not the allegory we develop, because that allegory may in fact be a true and suitable allegory. The problem is that we try to fit it into a passage of Scripture which was not written to convey that allegory.

I realize that this may shock some people ... but I could take some of the songs of Elvis Presley or Jim Reeves and find spiritual allegories to fit those songs. That is not difficult to do at all! It just means I need to have a good understanding of correct relationships and events that are revealed in the Bible. But the point is: neither Elvis Presley nor Jim Reeves ever had the slightest intention of conveying any kind of spiritual message with their "love songs". And neither did Solomon have the slightest intention of conveying a spiritual message when he wrote "The Song of Solomon". And in his song Solomon was FAR MORE SEXUALLY EXPLICIT than either Jim Reeves or Elvis Presley ever were in any of their "love songs".

It is not uncommon that people who accept a certain explanation turn a blind eye to any evidence that

may contradict the explanation they have accepted. Evidence that is contrary to what they want to believe is simply brushed aside in all too many cases. Because this idea that the Song of Solomon is an allegory about Jesus Christ and the Church is so commonly accepted amongst members of God's Church, therefore I will here present some of the evidence that makes clear that this song is nothing more than a very poetic discussion of sex, presumably within marriage.

Here are some points to consider:

1) God is NEVER mentioned in this Book! It is THE ONLY BOOK in the entire Old Testament (apart from the Book of Esther) which NEVER REFERS TO GOD! The Book of Esther, however, at least contains five different acrostics on the names of God ... where the name of God is carefully hidden in the text.

[Comment: In Esther twice the first letter of each of four consecutive words forms the name of God, once spelled forwards and once spelled backwards; and twice the last letter of each of four consecutive words forms the name of God, also once spelled forwards and once spelled backwards. There is also one further acrostic on one of God's other names in the Book of Esther.]

When we keep in mind that such acrostics on the names of God are extremely rare in the Hebrew text, that most books of the Old Testament do not contain any acrostics on the names of God, then the very methodical way these acrostics are developed in the Book of Esther makes clear that God is "behind the scenes" as it were in this book about the Jewish queen of the pagan Persian Empire.

But the Song of Solomon does not contain any of God's names, and neither does it contain any acrostics on God's names. IT IS THE ONLY BOOK IN THE OLD TESTAMENT for which this is the case!

Does this fact set the Song of Solomon apart from all other books of the Old Testament, or does this fact not set this book apart? Yes, this fact without question sets the Song of Solomon apart, as in a category all by itself, a category in which God is NEVER mentioned!

Can we simply BRUSH ASIDE this total omission of any reference to God in this book? Is there NO REASON AT ALL why God is never mentioned in this book? Is it really irrelevant that God is never mentioned? Instead of a focus on GOD we have a very clear focus on SEX in this book.

Are we willing to face these facts or not?

2) Without any kind of introduction (apart from the author's name) it launches into intimate kissing and sex ... by the fourth verse Solomon has already brought this woman into his bedchamber! That is hardly a very "spiritual theme". No introductions or explanations; just straight into intimate contact between a man and a woman.

3) Never does this book make any references to "the Church"! Now other books of the Bible, when they are speaking prophetically, use the symbolism where "a woman" is used to represent a church. But those other books NEVER represent a church by a woman WHO HAS SEX ON HER MIND AND WHO CAN'T STOP THINKING ABOUT SEX! But that is precisely what we find in Solomon's song.

4) Solomon is most assuredly NOT "a type of Jesus Christ", as Origen originally taught! I believe that it is AN INSULT TO JESUS CHRIST to compare Solomon to Christ. God was ANGRY with Solomon, as we saw earlier. WHY would Jesus Christ possibly want to be compared to a man with whom He was angry? Solomon had 1000 women ... so should Jesus Christ have ONE THOUSAND CHURCHES, since "a woman" represents a church? Solomon deliberately and knowingly built pagan shrines, and even "went after Ashtoreh and Milcom" (1 Kings 11:5), so is that something that makes Solomon a good "type" of Jesus Christ?

Repeatedly God asks:

To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him? (Isaiah 40:18 AV)

To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One. (Isaiah 40:25 AV)

To whom will ye liken me, and make [me] equal, and compare me, that we may be like? (Isaiah 46:5 AV)

EXACTLY WHAT IS IT THAT SUPPOSEDLY MAKES SOLOMON A GOOD "TYPE" OF JESUS CHRIST ... HIS MORAL CONDUCT? HIS RELIGIOUS CONDUCT? HIS SELF-INDULGENCE? HIS BOASTING? WHAT?

I believe it is a very dangerous practice to liken some man to Jesus Christ UNLESS the Bible very clearly, in plain words (!), endorses such a comparison. It should be clear that Solomon's 1000 wives and concubines and Solomon's descent into paganism didn't bother Origen when he thought up this analogy. But it SHOULD bother you and me. And it happens to be an irrefutable FACT that Origen was the first person to put forward this ridiculous allegorical explanation for this book.

5) Jesus Christ NEVER, NEVER talks about His relationship with His Church in terms of sex and intimate sexual activities! To apply a sexual slant to Christ's relationship with His Church is totally unacceptable to God! Do you honestly believe that GOD would speak about His relationship with His Church in terms of intimate kissing and breasts and thighs and female organs and sexual activities?

Don't we understand what Jesus Christ said about the resurrected Church?

Jesus answered and said unto them, YE DO ERR, NOT KNOWING THE SCRIPTURES, nor the power of God. For IN THE RESURRECTION THEY NEITHER MARRY, NOR ARE GIVEN IN MARRIAGE, BUT ARE AS THE ANGELS OF GOD IN HEAVEN. (Matthew 22:29-30 AV)

That statement by Jesus Christ, also recorded by Mark and Luke, is very plain indeed. So WHY would God then want to refer to Christ's relationship with His Church in terms of sexual intercourse? Christ was saying: in the resurrection there will be no sexual activities! So analogies about sex are simply not appropriate for a discussion of life on the spirit level. That may not have bothered Origen, but it really should mean something to you and to me.

People who uphold the allegory explanation sometimes try to brush this Scripture aside by claiming that "Matthew 22:29-30 refers to the SECOND resurrection". But that is simply not true!

The Sadducees did not believe in ANY resurrection (Matthew 22:23), but they knew that the Pharisees believed in a resurrection to "eternal life", as did the young man in Matthew 19:16. And Jesus Christ was VERY CLEARLY referring to a resurrection to ETERNAL LIFE. That is made clear by the next two verses which refer to Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. Those three will all be in the FIRST resurrection. They will NOT be in a resurrection to physical life. So the context of Matthew 22:28-32 is the resurrection to SPIRIT LIFE.

The very first and most prominent thing about "angels" is that they are SPIRIT BEINGS! So when Jesus Christ said that in the resurrection we will be "like the angels of God", He was making clear that we are going to be spirit beings, and spirit beings don't have a sexual marriage relationship. It is clear that in Matthew 22:30 Jesus Christ was referring to the sexual relationship in marriage between a man and a

woman, and He made clear that this does not apply to "THE RESURRECTION". The Pharisees didn't even know that there will be such a thing as "the second resurrection".

It is a cop-out to want to apply this Scripture to the second resurrection!

We need to understand one thing very clearly: It is absolutely imperative for the "allegory believers" to assign Matthew 22:30 to the second resurrection! You see, if they were to concede that in this Scripture Jesus Christ was indeed speaking about the FIRST resurrection, THEN this would totally destroy any possibility of the clearly sexual references in the Song of Solomon having any kind of "allegorical" symbolism between Jesus Christ and the Church, since sex does not feature in the resurrection Jesus Christ is speaking about in this verse.

I realize that I can't change anyone's mind. But let me ask you this question:

WHAT IF Jesus Christ is really speaking about the first resurrection in Matthew 22:30 ... will you then STILL hold fast to the allegory explanation that was first put forward by Origen? Abraham and Isaac are going to be in the first resurrection. You can try to assert that Matthew 22:30 must be speaking about the second ... but what IF you are wrong?

Furthermore, in the second resurrection they WILL marry and they WILL have sexual relationships within marriages! But they will simply not be fertile, and no children will be born or even conceived. Abraham was married to Sarah for well over half a century, and only one child was born during that marriage. In many marriages no children are ever born. Are those not "real marriages" simply because no children have been produced? When people today enter marriage in their 40's or 50's or 60's (perhaps even a second marriage?) ... are those marriages not "REAL marriages" if they don't produce any children? In the second resurrection there will certainly be families, and the husbands and wives within those families will have sexual relationships, but for a whole century no children will ever be conceived. There is a lot more to marriage than just having children.

Anyway, Matthew 22:30 can't really be true for the second resurrection! Can you really expect billions of physical human beings to live together for 100 years without being structured into family units? Would the babies that come up in that resurrection be raised in communes? After the first 20 years of that 100-year period, everybody will be at least 20 years old, and most people will be considerably older than 20 years (taking their first life into consideration). For the next 80 years will they live without being in family units ... like "bachelor herds" in the animal world?

When you think the whole situation through, Matthew 22:30 cannot really be speaking about the second resurrection. But to accept this fact threatens the correctness of the allegory explanation of the sexual terminology of the Song of Solomon.

6)NUMEROUS DETAILS in this Book simply don't fit the analogy that Origen had drawn. Here are a few examples:

Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold king Solomon with the crown wherewith HIS MOTHER crowned him in the day of HIS ESPOUSALS, and in the day of the gladness of his heart. (Song 3:11 AV)

"His mother" is certainly not a reference to Mary, although Origen would no doubt have drawn that analogy. So WHO in Christ's relationship with the resurrected Church is "his mother"? And why would Jesus Christ want to be compared to someone who had NUMEROUS MARRIAGES (Hebrew "espousals" is plural, meaning numerous marriages)?

There are THREESCORE QUEENS, AND FOURSCORE CONCUBINES, and virgins without number. (Song 6:8 AV)

How can you possibly compare Jesus Christ to someone who brags about his "60 queens and 80 concubines"? In the resurrection will Jesus Christ have CONCUBINES, in addition to the Church? And will He have SIXTY wives? How can anyone possibly see an analogy to Jesus Christ in this discussion?

[Comment: At the time of writing this song Solomon only had 60 wives and 80 concubines ... the other 640 wives and the other 220 concubines only came after this song was written. The "60" plus "80" added up to 140 women, or twice "70 women". If 70 (as a multiple of 7) stands for completeness, could it be that AT THE TIME OF WRITING THIS SONG Solomon had actually intended to call it a day as far as "heaping women unto himself" is concerned? Could it be that he wrote this song about sex at the point where he felt he had as many women as he intended to have? Having twice the "complete number" of 70 at that point in time seems more than just a coincidence to me, though I don't suppose that it really matters one way or the other?]

Is Jesus Christ in the resurrection really so focused on the Church's "eyes, hair, teeth, lips, neck and two breasts" (Song 4:1-6) and on the "feet and joints of the thighs and navel and breasts and neck and eyes and nose" (Song 7:1-7)? And is the resurrected Church really going to be so focused on Jesus Christ's "head and locks and eyes and cheeks and hands and legs and mouth" (Song 5:10-16)? Why would Jesus Christ possibly want to describe His relationship with the Church in such PHYSICAL terms, when He is the One who plainly said that in the resurrection "they don't marry"?

7) I will not at this point discuss the extremely intimate sexual details Solomon was quite willing TO SING ABOUT, details which Adam Clarke referred to as follows: "... the references being TOO DELICATE; and Eastern phraseology on such subjects is TOO VIVID for European imaginations". But such vivid sexual descriptions are not appropriate for a discussion about Jesus Christ's relationship with His Church.

Understand the following:

WE have referred to a sexual relationship between a husband and wife as "LOVE". And WE tend to refer to sex as "MAKING LOVE". But when GOD talks about "love" He NEVER means "sex"! Throughout the Bible when God speaks about "love" He does not mean "sex"! We need to understand this!

Recall that "God IS love" (1 John 4:8). This has nothing to do with sex. In the Apostle John's very lengthy discussions about "love" sex never ever features! Sex really has nothing to do with "love"! Sex is a physical activity, love is a mental outlook and frame of mind and a commitment that is summarized by the three activities "SAY GOOD ... DO GOOD ... and PRAY FOR ..." (see Matthew 5:44).

When Paul said: "husbands LOVE your wives even as Christ also ..." (Ephesians 5:25) Paul did NOT mean "husbands go and have sex with your wives"! When Jesus Christ said that we are to ... "LOVE our neighbour as ourselves" (Matthew 22:39) Christ was also not speaking about sex! When Christ said that we are to "LOVE our enemies" (Matthew 5:44) He also was not speaking about sex! When Paul tells us that the first fruit of the Holy Spirit is "LOVE" he also was not speaking about sex!

WHERE ON EARTH DO PEOPLE GET THE IDEA FROM THAT WHEN GOD (!!) SPEAKS ABOUT "LOVE" THAT GOD SOMEHOW MEANS "SEX"?

I can understand that Solomon with his, at that point in time, 140 women might want to use the word

"love" to refer to sex. But that doesn't mean that God also uses the word "love" to refer to sex.

We should not confuse GOD using the word "love" with human beings using the word "love". With God "love" is not the same as "sex". And it is really not appropriate to refer to God's relationship (i.e. Jesus Christ's relationship) with those in the resurrection in explicit sexual terms.

So, if the Song of Solomon does NOT contain a hidden message about the relationship that Jesus Christ will have with His Church ... then WHY did God include this Book in the Bible?

It goes back to the very first recorded commandment that God gave to human beings.

And God blessed them, and God said unto them, BE FRUITFUL, AND MULTIPLY, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. (Genesis 1:28 AV)

The very first recorded commandment involved a sexual relationship between a man and his wife. Now humanity has abused this and any number of wrong attitudes about sex have been promulgated over the millennia. Satan, the god of this present age, has perverted the knowledge in this area of life, as he has in every other area.

On the one hand Satan tempts people to engage in sex before marriage and outside of marriage. And on the other hand he tries to portray sex as "a necessary evil" within marriage, to be used only for the purpose of begetting children.

The truth is that God created the sexual relationship between a husband and wife to be an enjoyable experience, which should help to bind a husband and wife to each other and strengthen their commitment to each other. Sex is not love, but sex can be one of the ways that a husband and wife can EXPRESS their love and commitment for each other. This sexual relationship within marriage is not really love in the same way as SERVING one's husband or wife is not love. But both, serving one another, and the sexual relationship within marriage, can be ways that a husband and wife can EXPRESS their love for each other. There are many things we can do, which in themselves are not love, but they can be EXPRESSIONS of love towards another person, be it a spouse or be it someone else. LOVE HAS TO START IN THE MIND, and it can be expressed in numerous different actions, ONE OF WHICH is a sexual relationship between a husband and wife.

Understand that EVERY SINGLE ONE OF THESE ACTIONS, including a sexual relationship, can be done from a different mindset (e.g. fear, anger, resentment, indifference, hypocrisy, rebellion, flattery, vanity, lust, etc.), and then those same identical actions are NOT an expression of love. The mindset is the key in determining whether something is an expression of love, or whether it is something else. The activity (including sex in marriage) is simply the vehicle for bringing that mindset out into the open.

Back to why God included the Song of Solomon in the Bible.

God created us male and female. And it was God's intention that a man and his wife have a sexual relationship. So God is responsible to teach us what is right and proper in this regard. Now while God has made certain limitations in this area very clear in the Bible (e.g. fornication, adultery, homosexuality and other perversions are wrong before God), He has NOT provided us with "A SEX MANUAL" on how to do it right, the way many modern "sex experts" would try to do this. It is not God's intention to provide any kind of "sex manual".

God also knew that hundreds of millions of people would be exposed to, and be in bondage to,

repressive perverted views of sex within marriage. God knew that Satan would promulgate a "sex is evil and nasty" attitude on those people who were not prepared to deal immorally in their lives. God knew that Satan would do his utmost to take the joy and the pleasure out of this relationship between a husband and wife, and to replace it with feelings of guilt and fear.

Solomon with his 1000 wives and concubines, on the other hand, was not in any way inhibited or embarrassed to openly speak about sex, and even to sing about explicit details (I expect that similar explicit sexual details featured in some of his other 1000 songs that have not been preserved) relating to sexual intercourse. What sets this song apart from any of his others (this is my speculation) and what sets this song apart from any of the "sex manuals" modern "sexperts" have produced is THE DELICATE AND ELEGANT AND POETIC AND RATHER DISCREET WAY in which Solomon has dealt with this subject here in the Song of Solomon.

The reason God included this Book in the Bible is NOT that we ought to repeat in our sexual conduct within marriage every detail of Solomon's description. The real message God wants us to get from this Book is:

It's okay to ENJOY a sexual relationship with your spouse. It's okay to conduct yourself without inhibitions in your relationship with your spouse. It's okay for sex to be fun between a husband and wife. There should be more to the whole experience than just the time taken up by the actual intercourse. The greater context of the whole experience should be exciting and pleasurable for a husband and wife. THAT IS WHAT GOD INTENDED US TO UNDERSTAND!

The actual words of this song are not really all that important. They are not intended to be quoted in ANY spiritual context! It is the overall impression and atmosphere that this whole song, taken in its entirety, creates that is important, because it POWERFULLY COUNTERACTS THE REPRESSIVE CATHOLIC TEACHINGS ABOUT "SEX BEING SINFUL"!

The Song of Solomon is never quoted in the New Testament, because it contains no spiritual teachings that either Paul or any of the other writers of books of the New Testament would have appealed to for support or confirmation.

So consider this point:

IF the Song of Solomon really contained such a POWERFUL hidden message about the relationship between Jesus Christ and the Church, as Origen had boldly asserted, then WHY was it never quoted by anyone in the entire New Testament? It seems that Paul and all the other writers of the books of the New Testament were not aware of this powerful allegory? Have we discovered a hidden allegory that none of the New Testament apostles were aware of? Or, more specifically, did the Catholic "church father" Origen know something that the New Testament apostles didn't even understand ... because like it or not, there is no way to get around the fact that this teaching about the Song of Solomon being an allegory must be led back to Origen? You may say: well, I didn't get it from Origen, I saw it in the Bible myself. My reply is: that's exactly what all the Protestants say about Sunday-worship ... that they got it from the Bible and not from the Catholics. But the facts say otherwise!

By including the Song of Solomon in the Bible, God has freed us from the restrictive and satanic attitude that sex within marriage is somehow evil, that it is wrong for a husband and wife to engage in sex unless they have the explicit intention of begetting a child.

I realize that my comparison of the Song of Solomon to songs by Elvis Presley and Jim Reeves may make some people very uncomfortable. I'll just say that in that case the feelings are mutual. It makes me

EXTREMELY uncomfortable to have to listen to ministers or sermonette-givers, as I have had to do on quite a number of occasions, expound the views of a Catholic teacher (Origen) and claim that this song about the intimate details of a sexual relationship between a man and his wife was intended by God to portray the relationship between Jesus Christ and His Church. It is not right before God to read such totally unsupported interpretations into the Scriptures.

Well, that concludes the overview of the three books of the Old Testament that were written by Solomon.

Frank W. Nelte