From The Majestic Book of Hebrews. THE TWO GROUNDS OF BELIEF,

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PART 1

 #1. Generalization from this book puts into evidence *the two grounds of belief*.

#2. A ground of belief is the foundation of, or the basis for, that which is to be believed. Belief conduces to forms of thought, speech and behavior.

#3. There are two and only two grounds of belief. The first is *revelation, the Word of God*. "God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son" 1:1, 2. The Word of God becomes the ground for personal belief, as we live in the universe of materiality. Trust in revelation determines the range and character of the three manifolds of thought, speech and behavior. That's Noah, Abraham, Moses, Rahab, and David confronting the world of temporal reality (11:7-8, 24-25, 31-32.)

#4. The second ground of belief is *time and materiality*. "Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says, 'Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as when they provoked Me, as in the day of trial in the wilderness, where your fathers tried Me by testing Me, and saw My works for forty years" (3:7-9; Psalm 95:6-11.)

#5. The Israelites professed faith in the God of revelation. But their professed faith *did not function as the true ground of belief*. Their thought, speech and behavior in the desert are conclusive. The real, actual, functioning ground of belief was time and materiality. They were rationalist. That generation firmly believed in the world of things. The worldly ground of belief determined how they understood the Word of God.

#6. Raising human reason, human lived experience, and common sense above the language of the scripture patently exposes what one's actual ground of belief is.

#7. It happens that one may read the Bible and proclaim faith in it -- all the while living on another ground of belief.

From The Majestic Book of Hebrews. THE TWO GROUNDS OF BELIEF, PART 2

#1. "Therefore, let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have come short of it. For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard" 4:1, 2.

#2. These verses indicate that the historical profile of Israel in the exodus was contradictory to revelation. We understand, therefore, that their chosen ground of belief was time and materiality. Consciously, purposefully, the majority of Israelites set their hearts and minds upon time and materiality as their ground of belief, not revelation.

#3. The desert generation in its response to revelation is instructive. The Almighty had made "promises" to them. These people were expected to believe that the word of God has overruling effect upon material circumstances. But Israel did not believe that. Israel did not trust that article of belief. "It was not united by faith in those who heard".

#4. Those unbelievers were not devoted to the promises of God. They were concerned with survival; their own prescribed interests. The ground of belief as revelation offered them no confidence.

#5. So, the whole structure of faith was willfully shifted from one ground of belief (revelation), to the other (time and materiality). In consequence, Israel had "come short of it"; "the word they heard did not profit them".

#6. "Therefore," the Text insists to us in the contemporary, "let us fear if," we conclude, as did they, that the Word of God is to be only the vassal of time and materiality.

#7. The fearful generalization: They did not enter "His rest".

From The Majestic Book of Hebrews. THE TWO GROUNDS OF BELIEF, PART 3

#1. "For when God made the promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, saying, 'I will surely bless you and I will surely multiply you'. And so, having patiently waited, he obtained the promise" 6:13-15.

#2. These 3 verses expose the power at the heart of the revealed ground of belief. To ground all thought, speech and behavior in revelation strikes the rational mind as folly. The ideology being that it does not, cannot, will not work in the material world. It's too much to believe. It requires the power of God. And what will He finally do?

#3. Abraham and Sarah confronted an intractable biological, natural limitation. This material condition posed an issue. Shall we ground belief and therefore thought, speech and behavior in the word of God or ground belief in time and materiality?

#4. The Lord's intention was to overrule time and materiality and so reverse temporal limitations to His promise. "I will surely bless you and I will surely multiply you".

#5. For Abraham and Sarah this promise registered as a first-class risk. Time and materiality were pressing increasingly upon such possibilities.

#6. But this wasn't only a promise; it was an oath. "He swore by Himself". Grounding belief in revelation, then, he "patiently waited". As one waits upon eternal absolute power to act, promise and fulfillment appear to be more and more remote one from the other. Waiting patiently means that Abraham waited until it was physically "too late".

#7. However, well-grounded belief holds to the power of God; until "he obtained the promise". This is Abrahamic faith. The promises of God and the Scriptures themselves are delivered to us as an oath. Grounding belief in revelation is the acceptance of God's oath. His commitment to fulfill His word against all temporal and material conditions. Believe it or not.

From The Majestic Book of Hebrews. THE TWO GROUNDS OF BELIEF, PART 4

#1. "Therefore, when He comes into the world, He says, 'Sacrifice and offering You have not desired, but a body You have prepared for me; In whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You have taken no pleasure. Then I said, Behold, I have come (In the scroll of the book it is written of me) to do Your will O God'" (10:5-7; Psalm 40:6-8.)

#2. Human sin is the problem. The biggest problem. Sin requires sacrifice. The ultimate sacrifice was never animal sacrifice.

#3. "But a body You have prepared for Me". *The Almighty, from eternity past, intended for a human body sacrifice.*

#4. But redemption from sin all hinges upon the one who offers Himself as the sacrifice. "Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God". *To do the will of God, Jesus Christ, in the flesh, had to ground His belief in revelation, the word of God*. And doing that, dramatically and usually adversely, affects the body. This personal reality, inevitably, involved the whole man: body, soul and spirit. Nothing in the Lord's earthly life was exempt.

#5. There is no hint in Scripture of Jesus ever grounding His thought, speech and behavior in time and temporality.

#6. The body is never irrelevant, nor is its care and wellbeing determinant. *But it is incidental to the life of faith*. As Jesus grounded belief in the will of God, so did He carry His own body to the altar of sacrifice.

#7. But, the body tends, always, toward *a more convenient ground of belief*; time and temporality.

#8. By the force of a faith fully grounded in revelation, the Lord displaced and overruled any controlling influence of the physical body.

From The Majestic Book of Hebrews. THE TWO GROUNDS OF BELIEF, PART 5

#1. Throughout the gamut of scripture, a noticeable and yet subtle mistake was often made by historical actors.

#2. Here is the mistake: To begin with time and materiality as the ground of belief in order to understand how God relates to time and the material universe. Adam and Eve (Genesis 3) were the first practitioners of this mistake.

#3. "See to it"... "that there be no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a single meal. For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected..." (12:16, 17.) This mistake marked Esau ever after.

#4. Our present version of it: Trust in mathematics, science, medical arts, scholarship, human reason and experience above the Bible.

#5. The corrective: To begin with revelation, the Word of God, as the ground of belief, in order to understand how the Lord relates to time and the material universe.

#6. With this starting point, our comprehension of all temporal reality begins to transform. God becomes the ever-active causation of all things. His revealed assurances hold more hope and promise. The conviction that we do not face the natural world nor the sociological order alone expands; prayer is more pointed and exact.

#7. On the other hand, the effect of *the classic mistake* is to obscure and limit the place and the power of God in the world. This mistake purports that God no longer relates to the world as He did in the biblical instances.

#8. The Bible is relegated to the dim, irrelevant past. Sound familiar?

From The Majestic Book of Hebrews. THE GROUNDS FOR BELIEF, PART 6

THE RESULTING CONSTANTS OF BEHAVIOR. #1.

10:26-31: *Maintain unreserved observance of revelation*. To ground belief in the word of God is synonymous with persistent, careful observance of revealed meaning. This is called "the truth" v.26.

Neither believers nor the church hold the warrant to "set aside" (v.28) the absolute meaning provided by the Lord. Old Testament examples serve as precedents in this regard (v.28.) But, "How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace"? v.29.

The necessary generalization is that the revelation *is not subject to man; his intelligence, rationality, experience, interpretive schemes nor his range of personal concerns*. The Bible is the most unique language manifold, which presents to the mind that precedent spiritual reality to the universe in which we live. Human beings are not permitted to “reconcile” Scripture with cultural nor social norms. We are not permitted to "modernize" the text.

Most urgently, human beings are not permitted to treat Scripture as a relic of the past; inconsequential, emptied of meaning for the present. The idea of being on “the right side of history" is a myth. There is only God and His words: "For we know Him who said, ' Vengeance is mine. I will repay'. And again, 'The Lord will judge His people'" v.30; Deut 32:35.

From The Majestic Book of Hebrews. THE TWO GROUNDS OF BELIEF, PART 7

 THE RESULTING CONSTANTS OF BEHAVIOR. #2.

10:32-39: *Maintain the revealed enlightenment in every circumstance and state of being*.

"But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings" v.32. Acting in the world, under the umbrella of belief grounded in the word of God, does not exempt us from "conflict of sufferings." It is, in fact, causal of just such things.

The biblical ground of belief is not acceptable to the world. Trouble is ahead. Here is the conflict: Minds, enlightened by revelation, are to stand up against public humiliation and suffering. "being made a public spectacle" v.33. There will be "reproaches and tribulations."

The full machinery of the social order comes to bear upon the believer. He is to be discredited in the light of beliefs grounded in time and materiality. Debate will take place, ideas will be examined, perspectives compared. But this is not a "conflict of civilizations;" it is a conflict of the two grounds of belief. The rigor of testing can induce distrust in the word of God.

"Do not throw away your confidence, which has great reward" v.35. Yes, we will pay for our faith. But more to the point we must prove our faith. Why? "For you showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one" v.34. These believers denied no part of their faith. Their faith, fully grounded in revelation, made all things temporal and material, absolutely relative to "the will of God" v.36. These people held no rationally constrained faith. They believed in Heaven (v.34), the second coming (v.37) and a ground of belief leading to "the preserving of the soul" v.39.

From The Majestic Book of Hebrews. THE TWO GROUNDS OF BELIEF, PART 8

THE RESULTING CONSTANTS OF BEHAVIOR. #3.

Chapter 11: *The two orders of behavior*.

The two grounds of belief give expression to two different orders or categories of behavior. Belief grounded in time and materiality leads to

1. purely pragmatic behavior. This is a type of action uniquely contexted by material conditions. On the other hand, belief grounded in revelation, the Word of God, prompts an order of behavior that we can call --

(2) symbolic. Among individual believers and churches, *symbolic behavior* is problematic and highly contested; even controversial. According to this text, the revealed ground of belief conduces to a form of behavior that serves to *symbolize* trust in revelation and not purely the pursuit of outcomes. That is its purpose. To the degree that it does that, then, to that degree it is *anti-pragmatic*.

Everyday parlance calls such symbolic behavior as that, "impractical," "unrealistic," "unworkable," and "unreasonable," given the situation. And those who ground belief in time and materiality, would be right.

However, Hebrews 11 is a treatise on symbolic behavior. The scandalous feature of the symbolic is this: It cannot “work” in any given situation, circumstance or state of being *unless the power of God is in it.* It is this fact that determines which ground of belief is chosen.

Symbolic behavior is considered too big a personal risk to take. It is understood in this way because that order of behavior is not accredited by human reason nor by human experience.

Faith is constrained by what people think. But the wonder of biblical faith is this: "Now faith is the assurance of *things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen*" v.1.

From The Majestic Book of Hebrews. THE TWO GROUNDS OF BELIEF, PART 9.

THE RESULTING CONSTANTS OF BEHAVIOR. #4

Chapter 11: The applied ground of belief. A summation by personage: "But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them" v.16.

Such believers are a study in contradiction. The people mentioned or listed in this text lived in this world. But they lived here on the grounds provided by a very different world. They lived and behaved in a post-temporal way. It is certain that these believers applied no ideological test to their trust in the Lord nor to the word of God.

There is a direct relation between the ground of belief and-->personal behavior. This is sufficient explanation for their conduct in time and materiality. The functioning dynamic in this chapter is "by faith" v.3-5, 7-9, 11, 17, 20-24, 27-31.

This causes to arise the question: Why did they go to these famous extremes of trust in God?

The answer is implicit in their behavior. Because they knew this: "and without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him" v.6.

It appears irrefutable that, the kind of faith that pleases God, is not a kind of faith grounded upon time and temporality. The churches preach, however, just that ground of belief based on just such a reading of the Bible. These textual witnesses, "(men of whom the world was not worthy)" v.38, would counter, that belief grounded in revelation is the true course. "For by it the men of old gained approval" v.2. Precedents.

From The Majestic Book of Hebrews. THE TWO GROUNDS OF BELIEF, PART 10

THE APPROVAL OF GOD.

#1. There is a persistent theme running through the Book of Hebrews: Pursuing and achieving the approval of God.

#2. This purpose is indicated in 1:13; 3:6-10,12-13, 17; 4:5, 15; 6:4-10; 7:26; 9:14; 10:9, 19-25, 36-39; 11:2, 4, 5-6, 11, 16, 26, 31, 39-40; 12:14-17; 13:2, 15-16, 21.

#3. It is patently explained that pursuing and achieving the approval of God is inextricably linked to belief grounded in revelation, the Word of God.

#4. Belief is fundamentally connected to our thought, speech and behavior in the temporal and material universe: "And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him"11:6.

#5. *Therefore, belief grounded in time and materiality is not the high road that leads to securing the approval of God.*

#6. The differential: Belief grounded in revelation tells us how to live in the material world. And that way of behaving secures the approval of God. We must depend upon the power of God to survive. But it defies common sense. It is not pragmatic. It appears to be unworkable.

#7. On the other hand, belief grounded in time and materiality acts as the control for biblical meaning in the world. It is the basis for reading Scripture. In such case, faith is obligated to that ground; and is severely constrained by it--because faith is not allowed to exceed the approval of human thought. Religious observances are catalogued and become a pattern of practice. These practices and doctrines are important but their practice alone does not please God.

#8. The revealed ground of belief requires the risk of life and limb in pursuit of the approval of God. The material ground is indebted to material outcomes in time. We must choose.

From The Majestic Book of Hebrews. THE TWO GROUNDS OF BELIEF, PART 11

TRANSCENDING HUMAN INTUITION.

#1. Faith grounded in revelation, the Word of God, must be understood as having the authority to carry our minds beyond human intuition. Our understanding of the present and the future is affected by the true ground of belief.

#2. One of the alarming features of the revealed ground of belief is that its most immediate focus is the present. The future is not a relevant factor in the biblical ground of belief.

#3. Every example of faith in Hebrews acted without reference to the future or material outcomes. Belief grounded in revelation is consecrated to achieving the approval of God in the present. The future temporal outcomes are left to the will of the Lord. *None of the behaviors recorded in chapter 11 can be considered relevant to the circumstance, imminently practical or "realistic.* Why? Because the behaviors are relative to trust in God and are not generated to secure acceptable temporal outcomes. In fact, just the opposite. Human intuition about the future is by-passed and overruled. This is part of the faith that leads to the approval of God.

#4. However, belief grounded in time and materiality is irreversibly preoccupied with material outcomes in the future. Human intuition about time, the present and the future and how our wellbeing is derived, is the engine of behavior.

#5. Belief grounded upon the revealed language manifold is pronounced as being a thing of the past, unnecessary and detrimental to our personal situations.

#6. Should we run this risk of trusting God with the future? "Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; for our God is a consuming fire" 12:28, 29.