

Is That Hair I See?

Back in the 1960s and '70s, the big hair days, men and male teens began to grow their hair long. This, of course, was an anathema to their parents and because of this, long hair came to be considered a show of rebellion. Rebellion is a bad attitude, but long hair may or may not signify what people thought it did. My father tells of a board meeting in the Christian college where he worked when this topic was raised. It seemed some of the young men attending the college had allowed their hair to grow out somewhat similar to the Beatles and this concerned some board members. It was thought rebellion was seeping into the Christian fiber of the school and needed to be quelled. My father, being the president of the school, knew the students better than the men on the board, who had probably never met the young men in question. There may have been one or two who had an authority problem, but the majority were just good students who were not as concerned about the previous generation's social guidelines. In other words, they were typical late teen to early 20 year olds.

As the board discussed the horrible sins of anyone who would grow their hair long, my father began to doodle on his notepad. Dad was an excellent artist. He could make a portrait of a person with so few lines it was amazing. This enabled him to quickly draw someone with an outstanding likeness to his subject. You would immediately recognize who he was sketching. In quick fashion, my father produced a simplified copy of Michaelangelo's picture of Jesus. It had one striking difference. He had styled Jesus' hair to copy the 1950s crew cut. The person beside him asked to look at what he was doodling. Dad passed it to him. Then that man passed it to his neighbor on the other side. The drawing slowly circulated the room. After it made the rounds, no one was willing to make a motion that men should not have long hair. It would seem like they were banning Jesus from the school.

A friend of mine from that era attended a well known Pentecostal school that forbade male students to grow long hair. Long hair was deemed a heresy and not fitting for good Christian conduct. My neatly trimmed, clean shaven friend and his wife found the issue amusing. So he proceeded around the school asking his male friends in a quickly slurred manner, "Is that hair I see?" Slurred together it sounds like, "Is that heresy?" Such are the normal methods in determining sound doctrine. We ask ourselves, "Does it fit my practice and cultural expectations?"¹ Truly, this is not an appropriate way to determine the meaning of Scripture, or to run a Christian school or a congregation. Instead, we must take Scripture for its intent and remove the centuries of bias and training to allow its eternal direction to determine our behavior. This is a difficult process. Often our culture excuses things that God doesn't, and our training leads us in paths that are not as righteous as we thought. Righteousness is complying to God's directions, rather than complying to the pre-programmed set of rules which are socially acceptable where we were raised.

¹ Refer to the article *Evangelism, Historically or Hysterically*, where we discuss the learning process we all go through to understand the meaning of words. The example of Baptism will reveal that our culture often defines expected practice, not Scripture.

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In previous articles, we have discussed how language changes over time and how the meanings of words are not eternally consistent. Here, I will discuss a word that underwent a dramatic change in the first few centuries of Christianity. From that time forward it has remained consistent over many centuries, because the universal usage in the church defined the word for us and that definition remained consistent even through the Protestant Reformation and the numerous denominations that developed from this event. The word in question is ‘heresies.’ It is used in Scripture, but seems to take on a different connotation in the years that follow the fledgling Christian movement. It is surprising to discover the original meaning and how it changed over time.

Our English word ‘heresy’ is actually a transliteration from the Greek word αἵρεσις *haireisis*. There are only a few times this word is used in the New Testament, but an apparent change in meaning during the first few centuries AD can be detected from its use in these verses.

(BibleWorks definitions with Strong’s numbers) 139 αἵρέσις *haireisis* {hah’-ee-res-is}
Meaning: 1) act of taking, capture: e.g. storming a city 2) choosing, choice 3) that which is chosen 4) a body of men following their own tenets (sect or party) 4a) of the Sadducees 4b) of the Pharisees 4c) of the Christians 5) dissensions arising from diversity of opinions and aims

Origin: from 138; TDNT - 1:180,27; n f

Usage: AV-sect 5, heresy 4; 9

There seems to be a great hesitancy for modern translators to translate this Greek word as it was used in biblical times. One notices the first definition of *haireisis* is, “the act of taking, capture: e.g. storming a city.” This definition developed into the concept of ‘a band of outlaws or thugs,’ which seems to be implied in definition 4) but not clearly declared in the hostile context shown in definition 1). Those doing the capturing were usually men who had no concern for those within the city walls. They wanted the goods in the city and would resort to thievery and violence to obtain their goals. Definition 4) is less violent than a band of thieves, but as language does, it slowly came to mean just anyone who followed their own passions and tenets whether violent or a less subversive group like the Elks Club. The church later became worried about certain teachers who saw things somewhat differently from the general leaders, so the term began to be used for anyone who did not adhere to orthodox teaching. Unapproved doctrines became known as heresies. This led the church to band together and rid themselves of anyone who thought outside the box. It is very difficult for Iron to sharpen Iron if the one needing sharpening is always thrown away before being sharpened. Let’s look at how *haireisis* was used in a few examples and see if “unapproved doctrine” or “men who believed differently,” seem to fit.

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The Septuagint,² third century BCE, uses this word *hairesis* in Genesis 49:5 where the blessings were being spoken over Simeon and Levi. Jacob did not give them a very good blessing because of their violence against Chamor and Shechem in regards to their treatment of Dinah. While Dinah was wronged, Simeon and Levi broke an oath made to Chamor and Shechem and stormed their city, killed all the men and took everything including women and children. Jacob's name was profaned by their actions because his sons had acted dishonorably. The English below is from the Hebrew, but the Greek words used in the Septuagint will be most revealing.

NKJV Genesis 49:5 "Simeon and Levi are brothers; Instruments of cruelty are in their dwelling place. 6 Let not my soul enter their council; Let not my honor be united to their assembly; For in their anger they slew a man, And in their self-will they hamstrung an ox. 7 Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce; And their wrath, for it is cruel! I will divide them in Jacob And scatter them in Israel.

The Hebrew phrase כלי חמס (*clei chamas*), 'instruments of violence,' seems to uniquely be translated into Greek as ἀδικίαν ἐξ αἰρέσεως (*adikian ex hairesis*) 'unrighteousness out of heresy.' It is interesting that the English translation of the Greek renders it, "injustice of cutting off."³ This English translation suggests the translator assumed their disreputable action was in making the agreement for the men to circumcise themselves to be counted as one of the Israelites.⁴ Jacob's displeasure was from them not keeping their word and violently taking advantage of those with whom they had made an agreement. He did not approve of their heresy - storming the city of Shechem, killing all the men while they were in pain from the circumcision.⁵ The way this is used in the Greek, indicates that the connotation for the word *hairesis* in this passage was "the act of taking capture, storming a city." Those were the actions of Simeon and Levi and that usage best fits the context of the passage. It was the use of instruments of violence (Hebrew)~unrighteousness out of heresy (Greek).

² The Septuagint was a third century translation of the Hebrew Torah into the Alexandrian dialect of Greek. Tradition tells us that it was translated by 70 or 72 Rabbis, commissioned by Ptolemy II Philadelphus to be placed in the Alexandrian library. Later translations of other important Hebrew writings were completed by various individual translators. By late second century BCE most of the Prophets had been translated plus the Writings and Apocryphal books. These were compiled into what we now know as the Septuagint.

³ LXE Genesis 49:5 Symeon and Levi, brethren, accomplished the injustice of their cutting off.

⁴ NKJV Genesis 34:13 But the sons of Jacob answered Shechem and Hamor his father, and spoke deceitfully, because he had defiled Dinah their sister. 14 And they said to them, "We cannot do this thing, to give our sister to one who is uncircumcised, for that would be a reproach to us. 15 "But on this condition we will consent to you: If you will become as we are, if every male of you is circumcised,

⁵ NKJV Genesis 34: 24 And all who went out of the gate of his city heeded Hamor and Shechem his son; every male was circumcised, all who went out of the gate of his city. 25 Now it came to pass on the third day, when they were in pain, that two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, each took his sword and came boldly upon the city and killed all the males. 26 And they killed Hamor and Shechem his son with the edge of the sword, and took Dinah from Shechem's house, and went out.

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After seeing the usage of the word in the Septuagint we can see how the term may have a slightly different connotation but based on the more ancient definition. It seems the focal point of the term still hangs on the idea of taking capture.

Paul includes “heresies” in a list of works of the flesh.

NKJV Galatians 5:19 Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, 20 idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, 21 envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

These works seem to be grouped in common categories. For example, fornication follows adultery. Both are sexual sins. Idolatry and sorcery are grouped together, again related forbidden religious practices. A bigger group includes; contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, and envy. ‘Jealousy’ is a word that seems to be reduced to the romantic setting of lovers. The Bible does not have this notion in mind. To understand its usage will help give better understanding of this entire grouping.

Jealousy is the Greek word ζήλος *zelos*. Our English word zealous is derived from this Greek word.⁶ In the King James Bible there was an attempt to distinguish between two concepts found within the term zealous.⁷ There was the positive connotation of someone who had great passion for truth, and then a negative connotation where those who through their passion wished to force their way upon everyone else. So the King James Bible’s translation of this term tended to use zealous for the positive aspects, but jealous for the negative connotation. In this passage, jealous is used to indicate people who have an out of control zeal to force their passion on others. It is akin to stirring up passion for your own desires and gain or using your passion to manipulate others for your own personal agenda.

With this understanding, the grouping of words in Galatians 5: 20-21 give a much clearer understanding of what Paul wishes to label as works of the flesh, “disagreements, zealous stirring up of passion to manipulate others, uncontrolled anger, looking to have your own way and be in charge, disassociation because of differences, and then the word ‘heresies’ is used just before he mentions envy, the desire for another’s position or possession. It is evident that in this string of words, heresies is more related to the taking of capture and forcing your will on another, than an

⁶ Merriam Webster online dictionary: **Origin of *zeal***: Middle English *zele*, from Late Latin *zelus*, from Greek *zēlos*

⁷ (BibleWorks analysis window with Strong’s data) 2205 ζήλος *zelos* {dzay’-los} Meaning: 1) excitement of mind, ardour, fervour of spirit 1a(zeal, ardour in embracing, pursuing, defending anything 1 a1) zeal in behalf of, for a person or things 1a2) the fierceness of indignation, punitive zeal 1 b) an envious and contentious rivalry, jealousy Usage: AV - zeal 6, envying 5, indignation 2, envy 1, fervent mind 1, jealousy 1, emulation 1; 17

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unapproved thought concerning a particular doctrine. The mere variance in beliefs is not a problem. The problem stems from a person's inability to deal patiently with those in a congregation that do not agree with him.

Heresy is the use of force to accomplish your goals. In a congregation the force is usually manipulation or stirring up dissension within the group. When someone is demanding that everyone agree with him or..., this is heresy. When someone goes behind the leader's back and starts teaching contrary to him, this is heresy. When someone angrily denounces other's beliefs indicating that it will lead everyone to hell if they continue with such beliefs, that is heresy. An individual, coming in and forcing his doctrinal position upon a group is heresy. It is not heresy to have a different belief. One can believe differently and not act divisively. To stir up controversy against the leaders of a group to force change; or with the hope of taking it over; or gather people to form a new group, is heresy. Heresy is an attitude and an action, not a belief.

Reviewing the use in Genesis from the Septuagint indicates that our usage in the New Testament may be more based on heresy's first definition, "1) act of taking, capture: e.g. storming a city," rather than subsequent definitions in the church era, "improper doctrine." The definition over time certainly developed into an unapproved doctrine. However, we tend to read a later definition back into the Bible. Doing so seems to justify the later practice of purifying the church. A passage from 2nd Peter is a good example of this.

NKJV 2 Peter 2:1 But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction.

Since this is followed by denying the Lord, this seems to suggest a false teaching, yet following the suggested interpretation, we can see how it works in our own movement. Let's read this.

2 Peter 2:1 But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive divisiveness, forcing compliance to their desires, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction.

There are two reactions that have been found within the Hebrew Roots Movement to God's revelation concerning the reunification of Israel and Judah. One of humility, another of hostility to our heritage. The hostility to our heritage has brought about the largest move to deny Yeshua as Messiah. It is based in arrogance, pride, selfish ambition, bitterness, and infiltrates a congregation manifesting a critical spirit, telling of the sins of their previous church. It desires no more than to portray one's spirituality above that of the people they left. The result of this kind of conduct and teaching, is more of the same. People who have come into this movement following such a teacher who is hypercritical of the church, will continue in this spirit to be hypercritical of each Hebrew Roots teacher, Bible Version and follower of Yeshua who doesn't believe

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exactly as they do. This is a heretic begetting more heretics. We must repent of our heretical behavior or this movement will self destruct. That is the plan of the destroyer, because this is prohibitive to the forming of this nation.

Heresy will always arise in the guise of righteous zeal. Every heretic believes they have a mission from God. Therefore, those who do not believe like us are wrong and they are in need of correction. The heretic believes that he has the truth and likely the only way to act or believe. This compels him to change others by argument and making exaggerated claims as to the necessity of the position he upholds. The lack of respect for individuals and properly God-ordained authority is evident. The lack of humility and considering others to be inferior in value, will lead to factions, divisions, turmoil, insurrection, and constant contention.

Heresy can also be found in the leadership. An example can be found in the story of William Tyndale. Tyndale believed that the Scriptures needed to be translated into the native tongue of the people. This teaching was contrary to the official church doctrine. Tyndale was pronounced a heretic. To quell Tyndale's attempts to provide the Bible in the English tongue he was arrested and jailed. After a year of abuse in prison he was executed by hanging and then burned at the stake. Who used unauthorized force? The proclaimed heretic did believe contrary to the authorities. However, as we have discussed, a heretic is not one who believes differently or even follows out those beliefs. It is a person who forces his will upon the others. Tyndale wasn't entering churches and demanding they believe as he. He wasn't usurping authority. He was merely translating the Bible into English. The authorities took offense at his actions and began to use unjustified force against him. It was well within their authority to remove him from the church rolls and consider him to not be one of their group. It was a heretical action to have him jailed and then executed. That was the use of force to make one capitulate to their beliefs. It is as bad, maybe even worse, for the leadership to control the flock in such a manner. In church history, it was often the ones yelling heretic who were the heretics, not the one being burned at the stake. A heretic can rise to power through his actions, however, this does not substantiate his behavior. Disassociation is the only reasonable manner for a congregation to deal with a member of the group who does not comply with received teaching or practice. Enforcing congregational law can never be equated with enforcing God's law.

A very negative view of the heretic has been presented and one might think all of them have destructive motives and a bad spirit. In most cases, this could not be further from the truth. Usually a heretic has good intentions but an elevated self-worth in his relationship to the particular Scriptural issue. He considers himself to be a guardian and protector of the truth. Most heretics lack proper training and have no idea of proper protocol, or God-inspired leadership. If they understood the proper way to behave, most would follow that path. The wrong path has been delivered to them, by example, in their past, by revered zealous mentors. Those mentors have taught that strong actions are justified due to the seriousness of the offense.

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A heretic might examine strong actions as presented in the Bible for examples and assume that this is the model they should emulate. If you hear leaders being labeled compromisers and hypocrites, you might be listening to a heretic. You also may be listening to someone who has great leadership potential, but is a little immature in his skills because he has not been properly trained.

Leadership training is imperative and finding the right teachers to do this is also crucial. Bad leaders produce bad next generation leaders. If our leader left their previous congregation through a dispute and maligned them when he left, if he has not repented, we likely have an immature leader. If the person leading a righteous cause has been unable to work with any congregation because they are always wrong, he likely is suffering from an inability to operate in groups and will resort to heresy to control his followers. These are immature responses to someone not hearing his message. It takes several years to learn a subject well enough to believe it. It requires several more years to properly exhibit those beliefs consistently. It takes even more years to learn how to teach them without misrepresenting them to the audience. It might take even more years to refine that message so that you don't create monsters by what you teach.

The average person who was run out of a church for heretical Hebrew Roots teaching, had probably not known the doctrine they wished to present longer than 6 months. Of course, under those circumstances, they will have done it wrong. Since it may take several years to both learn a subject well and properly exhibit those beliefs consistently, people who were run out of their church for "heresy" after only a few months are probably not ready to be leaders. They need more time to learn to present their ideas with humility rather than segregate and demonize people over doctrinal differences. The result of our hyper-critical roots, has been many different groups teaching the Hebrew Roots of our faith and few desiring to associate with others. We have learned to distinguish our teachings from other's and label their's as "evil." Segregation by doctrine and division over minute differences is the only way a critical group can exist but it will still ultimately implode and self destruct.

In closing, let's consider the following.

1. A heretic is someone who strongly and forcefully imposes his way on others without any jurisdiction to do so. The term is describing attitudes and actions not false doctrine.
2. A heretic causes division and strife in a congregation by the manner in which he operates. He stirs up contention.
3. Someone who tries to rally people in an organization against the leadership, and teaches against the leaders while in that organization is a heretic.
4. Heresy needs to be eliminated from our methodology.
5. A heretic is not the enemy, he is merely someone who has had improper examples for leadership and has emulated those he has held in high regard or has been improperly trained. He falsely justifies bad behavior due to his sincerely held beliefs that a particular doctrine is of great importance. He applies his insights to everyone, all the time. He feels he is saving you from grave circumstances. This is a false sense of self-importance.

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6. No one wants to listen to someone who is suggesting they are evil when they follow through with their own beliefs. To insinuate that a person is a pagan or following false gods because their practices are different from yours will only cause division and strife.
7. People will likely reject a person exhibiting arrogance unless that person is telling them what they want to hear. To assume the position of teacher, without being asked to be one, will only be evidence of your arrogance.
8. People who left a previous congregation in hostility will approach their next congregation with a similar spirit.

This movement will not facilitate the will of God if we do not repent from our long practice of wrong behavior. We have used force and manipulation to spread our message. Our actions disqualify our message. This wrong behavior will not change as long as the group at large validates it by following people who give a hostile message. If our actions and monetary gifts support them and we do not speak out against such behavior, we will continue in improper communal development i.e. division and strife.

We need to change our behavior in such a manner to allow the church or anyone else to discover a Hebrew Roots person by his proper behavior. We must be recognized because we are kind, loving, respectful, humble, caring, and obviously seeking their best while keeping the commandments of God.⁸ This cannot be communicated through bitter, angry arguments over every detail of Scripture.⁹ Our pride and arrogance is all over our face while we try to remove a splinter from our brother's eye.¹⁰ If we live among our audience exhibiting good character, his question can be, "Is that hair I see?" inquiring about a beard grown to honor a commandment as we understand it.¹¹ It is certainly better than to incite a judgement from them, "What you are teaching is heresy," based on their observation of our poor behavior.

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⁸ NKJV Galatians 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. 24 And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

⁹ NKJV Ephesians 4:31 Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.

¹⁰ NKJV Matthew 7:3 "And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?"

¹¹ NKJV Leviticus 19:27 `You shall not shave around the sides of your head, nor shall you disfigure the edges of your beard.

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