Debating Bible Basics

a handbook for creative preaching

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Introduction

In the course of many years discussing and debating the Biblical understanding of the Gospel, a fair amount of material has been built up. This book seeks to bring much previously published material together under one cover. All true Christians are preachers, but very few are public debaters. The purpose of this material is not so much to train public debaters as to give a window on the thinking of other religious groups, and to inspire all of us in their own personal witness to God's truth in a world of confusion and darkness. It seems to me that we should strive to know the mind and spiritual background of ones' audience. One has to listen rather than simply seek to impart our understanding onto an open mind: for there are few open minds in this world today. We must seek to understand people and lead them on from where they are. It is not difficult to identify the misinterpretations of Bible passages which many religious people base their beliefs upon. I submit that we need to not merely have the reasons why their interpretations are inconsistent with the rest of Scripture; we need to also more positively have a personal idea what the passages they quote do mean. For it is far more powerful and helpful in the work of conversion to leave someone with a new and positive understanding of what something does mean, than to leave them with their earlier beliefs demolished or questioned, but with nothing in its place. In any case, it's rare that argument ever really changes anyone's mind. Reason is used to justify ourselves, and contrary to what we may think, reason rarely directs people in their religious beliefs. Because of this I have included after most of the debate transcripts some examples of how to positively approach people over the matter in hand, as well as some more negative comment on the difficulties which their beliefs have when compared with the rest of Scripture.

I feel particularly for young people 'raised in the truth'. They want to find their own faith, and not dumbly follow the faith of their fathers. But I wouldn't necessarily recommend they go and visit every church in their neighbourhood in their struggle to compare their understandings against the views of others. The 'traditional Christian' perspectives on most of the main doctrinal areas are found well represented in this present volume. Why not read through what they have said in this transcript, and think how better I might have responded to them. And if you (or, indeed, anyone) conclude I'm just plain wrong, or made a totally inadequate response- let me know, and with open minds searching for God's Truth, let's discuss it.

Reading through the transcripts of the public debates, I realise how difficult it is to show the wisdom, understanding and grace of the Lord Jesus when placed 'on the spot' and having to give immediate responses to Biblical issues. It makes one marvel the more at His spiritual, intellectual and dialectical skill in responding so powerfully, so quickly. For me, probably for us all, after every encounter there is so much one would like to have phrased better, or reasoned the more incisively. So from my inadequacies as a debater, indeed as a preacher altogether, I dare to hope if nothing else that a lesson and encouragement can be taken. An encouraging lesson that you, too, with all your inadequacies of knowledge and personality, can go out there into your world and make a difference, make a witness for God's Truth, and by His grace, bring others to the Hope of the Kingdom. And of course there are some things I would express differently, even think about differently, as the years have gone by. But my commitment to the essential doctrines of the Gospel remains, of course.

All too easily we can define 'preaching' as merely debating and combating theological ideas opposed to our own- with no significance placed upon the value of the person with whom we are in discussion. That person on the other side of the fence to you has, just like you, their

inner traumas and struggles, their secret conflicts and dramas... and yet all this becomes hidden behind the facade of doctrinal debate and argument. It is to the person we must appeal if we are to win them for Christ, or win them closer to Him as we seek. Paul Tournier wrote eloquently of the huge gap "between intellectual relationship and personal relationship". Whenever we start to debate doctrine, impersonal ideas, this gap becomes significant. Ideas become so easily mere ammunition in a subconscious battle for self preservation. If we are to convert and help others to Jesus, rather than to ourselves, we need to find "another mode of relationship" than mere intellectual argument. Such argument alone will not convert or persuade towards the cause of Christ. And yet sadly so much of our collective preaching effort has been taken up with exactly this kind of fruitless debate. Doctrinal argument tends to divide; whereas it is the common areas of experience which tend to unite. And so a woman reaching out to other women, perhaps other young mothers, will be a far more likely cause of conversion than knocking on the doors and engaging all and sundry in doctrinal debate. But that woman, if she is to bring about an authentic conversion, must all the same convert her fellow-woman to something. And she likely will have to talk around all the host of misunderstandings and wrong ideas which her friend has been exposed to in this sadly confused and lost world. Hence this book.

I believe in all seriousness that we worldwide are God's cutting edge for this generation. But remember, in all your debating, in all your discussions, in all your faithful upholding of the Biblical position. That it isn't to prove you right and another wrong. Many of us wasted far too much of our time and effort in this kind of "theological gladiatorship", to quote the words of John Thomas in later life. See the value of persons, the meaning of persons; perceive that every person matters to God. Witness to them, seek their salvation and present relationship with their creator, from the motive of a heart that bleeds for this world. If this truly is your motive, you will succeed- in glorifying our Father in Heaven and His Son and their word. For this ultimately must be our sole aim.

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The Sources of Error

There are four chief obstacles in grasping truth which hinder every man, however learned, and which scarcely allow anyone to overcome them; to whit:

· Submission to faulty or unworthy authority.

· Influence of custom; the common belief, therefore it must be correct.

· Prejudice: defence of an erroneous opinion to which one is sentimentally attached.

· Concealment of one's own ignorance.

Every man is entangled in these difficulties Even should the first three obstacles be refuted by the convincing force of reason, the fourth is always ready as an excuse for a man's own ignorance. Although he has no real knowledge of a matter worthy of the name, he may yet shamelessly magnify it, so that at least to the wretched satisfaction of his own folly, he suppresses and evades the truth.

Men blinded in the fog of these four errors do not perceive their own ignorance. They take every precaution to cloak and defend it so as not to find a remedy. Worst of all, although they are in the deepest shadow of error, they believe that they are in the full light of truth.

Roger Bacon

Chapter 1

The Trinity

Jesus Christ And The Trinity- What Does The Bible Say?

Transcript Of A Debate (With Leslie Everitt)

Saturday 12th November 1988

Bromley Christian Center, Masons Hill, Bromley, Kent UK

Speakers:

For the Trinitarian position: Mr. Leslie Everitt (Evangelical Christian)

For the non-Trinitarian position: Mr. Duncan Heaster (Christadelphian)

Chairman: Mr. Graham Baldwin (Bromley Christian Center)

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Introduction

CHAIRMAN:

I have been asked to point out that the Bromley Christian Center are just hosting this. They are in no way involved in either the planning or whatever to do with this debate. I was asked if we could actually find a location that was somehow local and central. That was how it came to be here. You probably know both of the people who are going to be debating the proposition : ***"Jesus Christ and the Trinity – What does the Bible Say?"***.This is Mr. Leslie Everitt, who is an Evangelical Christian from a brethren tradition, and this is Mr. Duncan Heaster, who is a Christadelphian.

The way that this is actually going to be run will be that initially there will be a twenty minute opening speech each, with Mr. Heaster actually leading off. There will then be a second speech of ten minutes' duration. We are then going to have a break for coffee for which there will be a charge of 20p for coffee and biscuits (but that can be sorted out later). There will also be soft drinks. Following that break there will be ten minutes of question time directed at each of the speakers, and then they will be given five to ten minutes to sum up at the end.

I would like to say that this is being recorded. You have probably seen on your seats this yellow leaflet. If you want a transcript of the debate, fill it in. There is a box there and one in the vestibule.

We will hand it over now to Mr. Heaster to start.

Mr. Heaster's First Speech

The non-trinitarian position

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Everitt, ladies and gentlemen, good evening.

In Jeremiah 9:24 we read these words:

“Thus saith the Lord (Yahweh), Let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me”.

I would suggest to you that the Trinity is a conception of God which is impossible to understand and which completely contradicts the clear teaching of the word of God. Can you understand a God who is one and yet three and three and yet one? Can you conceive of a son who existed before he was born? A son who is as old as his father? I suggest that the doctrine of the Trinity finds no place at all in the Word of God. There is no mention of the word “trinity” in the Bible, and it was introduced into Christianity, as most of us here will be aware, in the 3rd century A.D.

The word “God” occurs about 1,300 times in the New Testament, and in not one of those passages where the word “God” occurs is there any suggestion of a plurality of persons in the Godhead. By contrast, we read in Isaiah 45, “Thus saith the Lord (Yahweh)… I am Yahweh and there is none else, there is no God besides me”. So far as the Bible is concerned there is one God and that one God is Yahweh. Now I presume Mr. Everitt believes that there is one God. He believes there is one God consisting of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. But that God, I submit, is unknown to the pages of the Scriptures. We turn to the New Testament where we read in 1 Corinthians 8:6 “to us (the true believers) there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things…and one Lord Jesus Christ”. So far as the Bible is concerned there is one God, not God the Son, God the Father, and God the Holy Ghost. There is one God, the Father, and in addition, there is one Lord Jesus Christ. Malachi 2:10 likewise associates "the Father" with the one God: "Do we not all have one Father? Has not one God created us?". The Father is the only God. Jesus himself said, John 17:3 “Father (notice how he called God his father) this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent”. So again, there is only one God, the Father, and in addition, one Lord Jesus Christ sent by the Father. Ephesians 4 tells us the same thing “There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all.” *God the Father is above all*. 1 Timothy 2:5 “There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus”. There's evidently a difference between the Holy Spirit and Jesus-according to trinitarianism, they're "one", yet Jesus Himself speaks as if they are separate. He says that whoever blasphemes Him will be forgiven, but blasphemy of the Holy Spirit isn't forgivable in this way (Lk. 12:10).

Now I suggest that every passage that Leslie may quote can be explained in harmony with this simple teaching of the Bible. The idea of the Trinity needs to be read into every passage that may be quoted.

Now concerning this one God, Yahweh, we read in John 1:18 “No man hath seen God at any time”, and yet in Exodus 19 we read that Yahweh came down on Mount Sinai, and in Exodus 24:9 “Then went up Moses and Aaron …and they saw the God of Israel”. But John says that “No man hath seen God at any time”. Exodus 24 says Moses and Aaron went up into the mountain and they saw the God of Israel. Now does the book of Exodus contradict the gospel of John? Well, of course not. The two are reconciled by Acts chapter 7, where we read in

Acts 7:38 “This is he (Moses), that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him from Mount Sinai”. So when it says that Yahweh came down onto the mountain and that they went up and they saw the God of Israel, Stephen tells us in Acts 7 that it wasn’t Yahweh himself, in person, who came down it was an angel who came down. Concerning that angel, we are told in Exodus 23 God says, Yahweh says “I send an angel before thee to keep thee in the way. Beware of him, for *my name* is in him”. So there was an angel who carried the name of Yahweh and it is said that where this angel went Yahweh was said to go. When this angel spake, it is said that Yahweh spake. When this angel did things, it is said that Yahweh did them. This angel then, represented Yahweh; he carried Yahweh’s name. But that angel was not Yahweh himself. That angel was not God himself in person. He represented God. And that is an important point to which I will return later.

Now throughout the Old Testament, there are indications that it was in the purpose of Yahweh to manifest Himself in another way different to this manifestation through the angels. This purpose of God to manifest Himself in another way is indicated by His very name “Yahweh” or “Jehovah” which means “He who will be”.

Now this purpose is elaborated, it is expanded upon in prophecies like 2 Samuel chapter 7 where God says to David, 2 Samuel 7:14 “When thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up (the phrase there in the Septuagint is ‘I will resurrect’, incidentally) thy seed after thee (thy descendant) and I will establish his kingdom. I will be his father and he shall be my son”. Now there is no doubt who this great descendant, who this seed of David really is. The very first verse of the New Testament: “The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David”.

So then, God said to David concerning Jesus “I will be his father, he shall be my son”. Now notice the future tense there. How could Jesus have been existing as God, next to God, at the time when God spoke those words to David. God said “I *will be*”, I the future, his father, “he *shall be* my son”.

Psalm 132 develops the same theme, verse 11, God says to David “Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne”, and that’s quoted in Acts 2 concerning Jesus. He was the fruit of David’s body that was to be set upon the throne of God. If Jesus was the fruit of David’s body how could he then have been in existence at the time when God spoke those words to David?

So David was to have a son. The son did not exist at the time but the promise was made.

Psalm 89 is, if you like, God’s commentary upon this promise that he made to David. In that Psalm we read in verse 27 about this son promised to David. God says “I will make him my firstborn”. Now therefore there is no question of Jesus being “eternally begotten”, whatever that means, as the doctrine of the Trinity states. No question at all of Jesus being begotten eternally. God says “I will (future) make him my firstborn”. Now earlier in verse 26 of that Psalm, we read “He shall cry unto me, Thou art my Father, my God and the rock of my salvation”. So, Jesus calls God “my Father, my God”. Of course, one thinks of the cross, the crucifixion, Christ saying on the cross, “my God, my God, why have you forsaken me”. Now there is no possibility, as I can see it, that Jesus was very God when he said things like that. Notice also “He shall cry unto me (Jesus crying to God) thou art the rock of my salvation”, and so this son of David who was to be the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, would need

salvation. He was to cry unto God "thou art the rock of my salvation". So then, Jesus needed salvation.

So we come in the New Testament to the circumstances surrounding the birth of Jesus. Remember how the angel came to Mary and said to her "Thou shalt conceive in thy womb and bring forth a son, and shall call his name Jesus. He shall be great, (notice the future tense again) and shall be called the Son of the Highest, and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David". "He shall be called the Son of the Highest." It doesn't say "he *is* called", no, "He *shall be* called the Son of the Highest". Notice the "Son" of "the Highest". Now if God is "the Highest", if words mean anything at all, how can Jesus be co-equal and co-eternal with God, if God is "the Highest" and Jesus Christ is "the Son" of the Highest. Now please see whether Leslie answers that point.

So then, we go on. How was this to be brought about? How was Jesus to become the Son of God? Well, the Holy Spirit came upon Mary, and the Holy Spirit is defined there in Luke 1 as the "power of the Highest". The Holy Spirit therefore is not a person; it is the power of "the Highest" who is God himself.

Matthew 1:18 puts it this way "Mary was found with child of the Holy Spirit". If Mary was found with child of the Holy Spirit, and if the doctrine of the Trinity is true and we have God the Holy Spirit, then the Holy Spirit is the father of Jesus, for she was "found with child of the Holy Spirit". So the doctrine of the Trinity surely introduces into the simple teaching of God's Word, contradiction and confusion.

So Jesus was the son of David through Mary and he was Son of God because he was begotten of God by the power of the Holy Spirit. Now I want to bring to your mind a very well known passage, John 3: 16 – and this is typical of where people read a passage, hear it preached from, preached about and yet they don't actually stop to think what it really implies. Now we are all like that. So let's think about that verse again. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life". Now if Jesus was begotten, he had a beginning; and if he had a beginning, and he was begotten by God, he could not be co-eternal with the Father, neither could he be God, for God, we are told, has no beginning. In Galatians 4:4 we are told Christ was "made seed of a woman". Romans 1:3 says Christ was "made of the seed of David and declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead".

Now we can take it a stage further. We read in Hebrews 1:5 "unto which of the angels said he (God) at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee". So according to the Scriptures, the Son of God was begotten at a definite point in time. "Thou art my Son, *this day have I begotten thee*". So Jesus was not eternally begotten as the Trinity maintains. A being cannot be eternal and be begotten. So I submit that since Jesus came into existence and was born, begotten of the Father at a definite point in time, he cannot be the second person of the Trinity.

So we go on in Christ's life. Luke 2:52 "Christ increased in wisdom and in favour with God and man". The word "favour" there means "acceptability, giving of pleasure". Christ increased in acceptability, in giving of pleasure to his God. So we come to the baptism of Jesus. Jesus said he was baptized because "thus is becometh us to fulfil all righteousness".

Now if Jesus was God he wouldn't need salvation, and yet, as we have touched on earlier, the Bible teaches that he did need salvation, and he asked God for that salvation. Hebrews 5:7 puts it this way: "In the days of his flesh, when Christ offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears (notice how Jesus prayed to God) unto Him (that is God) that was able to save him from death, and was heard, in that he feared". So then Christ prayed to God to save him from death. Therefore Christ needed salvation. It goes on another two verses which are very difficult to understand from the Trinitarian viewpoint: "Though Christ were a son yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered". Obedience to whom? Obedience to God. Christ learned obedience to God by what he suffered. There is no way that God can learn obedience to God Himself. Verse 9 "and being *made perfect*, he became the author of eternal salvation". So Jesus was *made perfect* in the sense of "*made complete*". It shows therefore that he wasn't perfect right when he was born. Now I stress the word "perfect" there doesn't necessarily mean "sinless", it just means "complete". Jesus was sinless, holy, harmless, undefiled.

Now we also read in Hebrews, Hebrews 13:20 we read that "God brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ through the blood of the everlasting covenant". Well, what was the 'blood of the everlasting covenant'? It was the blood of Jesus. So it was through the sacrifice of Jesus, through his own blood, offered on the cross, that he was saved, that he was brought again from the dead.

And so Jesus began his ministry. Hebrews 4:15 tells us that during that time he "was tempted in all points like as we are" and yet James 1:13 says that "God cannot be tempted with evil". So if God can't be tempted but Jesus was tempted, surely the conclusion is that Jesus was not God.

Now again, we can go a stage further because James 1 goes on to say that every man is "tempted when he is drawn away of his own evil desires and enticed" and then he goes and sins. Now Jesus was "tempted in every way" that we are tempted it said in Hebrews 4:15. James 1 says that we are tempted by these evil desires inside us. So for Jesus to be tempted, he had to have our evil desires inside us. He had to be of our nature. Now of course, it is blasphemous to say that God Himself in person has the possibility of sinning and of temptation. Christ was tempted like we are tempted, in exactly the same way, it says. Now when you and I are tempted, we come in our lives to a point when we can either obey God or we disobey God. Jesus came to those same divergent paths. Every time though he obeyed. At the end of his life, another temptation, he obeyed. Always going God's way. By definition therefore, he had the possibility of sinning or else he wouldn't have really been tempted. He had the possibility of failure. He didn't sin, he didn't fail, but he could have done. And God himself has no possibility of any failure. Now as we said, 2 Samuel 7 that prophecy about Jesus who would be the great descendant of David, it goes on to say "If he commit iniquity, I will punish him". Now that prophecy is quoted about Jesus in the New Testament where it is talking about the Son of God. "I will be his father and he shall be my Son", and yet God says about Jesus "If he commit iniquity, I will punish him". So therefore, God knew when made that promise to David that Jesus had the possibility of sinning. Now he ***DID NOT SIN***, I cannot labour that strongly enough. He was perfect. But he could have sinned.

Now although Jesus was not God Himself, he was God's representative – like the angel – he carried the name. "I am come", he said in John 5:43 "in my Father's name". That is why we read in Matthew 1:23 that Christ was called "Emmanuel" "God with us".

(I'm going to go over time a little bit).

Now I would point out to you that Jesus did not demonstrate God the Son Incarnate in his life. He showed us what the Father is like. Because he was perfect, he could say "he who hath seen me, hath seen the Father". The words Jesus spoke were not the words of God the Son Incarnate, they were the words of the Father. Jesus said "he that sent me is true and I speak to the world those things that I have heard of him; as my Father hath taught me I speak these things". So Jesus was the vehicle, if you like, through whom the Father was speaking to Israel. John 3:34 "he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God because God giveth not the spirit by measure unto him". Notice how Jesus said that he was sent by God. He says later that he who is sent is inferior to him who sent him. And he said another time when people started to think that he was God Himself, he said "why callest thou me good, there is none good but one, that is God". He was aware as keenly as anyone else, as anyone ever has been, that he had our human sin-cursed nature in which Paul says "dwelleth no good thing".

Throughout the New Testament letters the Apostles constantly refer to Jesus as "the Son of God" and they use phrases like "blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ". Jesus then, looked upon his Father as his God. "I ascend to my Father, to your Father; to my God and to your God". He said in John 14:28 "My Father is greater than I am" and yet the Creed of St. Athanasius which defines the Trinity says that in the Trinity no part of it is greater or less than any other part and yet Christ himself said "My Father is greater than I".

So then, I rest the non-trinitarian position. I submit that Jesus Christ is not the second person of the Trinity, he is the Son of God who is the Father.

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN:

Actually, two minutes before the end of the period we are just ringing to let the people know they have two minutes before the end of the period and then, obviously, if they do go over then it will be deducted from their second speech. So we will balance it up there. Right.

Mr. Everitt's First Speech

Bible Evidence For The Trinity

Good evening, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Heaster, ladies and gentlemen.

My task, as I see it at this point, is to show you the Scriptural teaching that Jesus is Divine.

This can be shown of course in many ways. Indeed, one of the problems that anyone discussing the subject like this has, is that there is so much evidence that Jesus is God that it is impossible in the time available to even begin to touch all of it. All that I can do is to show you something of the main lines upon which Scripture operates.

Now one thing that is quite clear is that in a number of passages of scripture, Jesus is called God. The first verse that I will call as witness to this effect is the first verse of John's gospel: "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God". Now that Scripture has, of course, been the subject of

a great deal of discussion. But one thing is perfectly clear – I have been into this with some care – that when it says "the Word was God" that is telling us who and what the Word was. It isn't simply that Jesus represented God – that is not what it says at all – but that the Word, which is Jesus, was God. Now I believe our friends, the Christadelphians, teach that the word "Word" in this context does not refer to Jesus. It is simply a statement of the purpose of God. And yet when you read the passage as a whole you find that there are many statements made which refer to a person by means of an abstraction. Allow me to demonstrate that. I will continue reading until I get to the point I want to make:

Verse 3: "All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in the darkness and the darkness comprehended it not. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name".

Now you see the person that is referred to there is the light; and the light is the same person as we've got referred to right at the beginning as the Word. And if you carry on to verse 14 it says "and the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. John bare witness of him, and cried saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me; for he was before me". You see there is no break in the thought sequence between the Word and Jesus actually in this world. I mean no break in the thought sequence as to the person spoken of.

Now, John's gospel is a very long book in one way. Not long in the terms of words but long in terms of ideas, and one of the themes of John's gospel is to bring out from time to time pointers to the fact that, as he says in his opening verse, Jesus was God.

Now as I understand it, the way Jesus came was not to get up and say boldly, "I am God"; but he went about, as it says in another passage "doing good, and healing all those that were oppressed of the devil for God was with him". If you read the gospels (I think this is true of all four gospels) what you find is a man comes in and immediately the question arises, 'Who is he?' 'Who is this man?' And from time to time you are given hints or pointers as to who he really was. For example, if we go to Mark's gospel (because, although I've spoken much about John, this point we're making is spread out through the whole of Scripture) – we go to the second chapter of Mark, and we find that Jesus had been defending his disciples against the Pharisees, who were insisting upon the detailed observance of the Sabbath law in accordance with their prescribed rules. The disciples had been eating ears of corn on the Sabbath day which they had plucked from a ripe corn field. Jesus says in verse 27, "the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath. Therefore the Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath". The title 'Son of Man' goes in parallel, so to speak, with the title 'Son of God'. It is used some eighty times or so in the gospels always, or most always, from the mouth of Jesus himself. Therefore, when he says "the Son of Man" he is referring to himself. "The Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath". The word 'Lord' in basic meaning means 'a person who has power over something or someone'. Who can have power over the Sabbath which God created, except God?

I just make that as one witness from another part of Scripture. I said time is short and therefore I will pass over the other passages that might be referred to in John's gospel and take you right to the end, or rather, to the end of chapter 20. Chapter 21 forms a kind of supplement, or appendix, or epilogue, to John's gospel and the main narrative ends with chapter 20. Chapter 20 tells us how Jesus rose from the dead. It also tells us that there was some difficulty among his disciples in believing this, in particular with Thomas. Thomas, one might say, was a typical twentieth century man – wouldn't believe anything he couldn't see. But Jesus appeared to his disciples, first when Thomas wasn't there, which aroused his unbelief, and secondly when Thomas was there. And in verse 27 it says, "then saith he (this is, Jesus) to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God". Now if Jesus had not been God, he would have had to have immediately refuted that.

I can draw your attention for example, to illustrate this point, to Acts 14. Paul and Barnabas had been preaching in Lystra which is in what we now call Turkey. They had healed a man that had been a cripple and when the people saw it, they said (verse 11 of chapter 14) "The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men. And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius; because he was the chief speaker". And so they attempted to offer sacrifices to Paul and Barnabas. And immediately it says, verse 14, when Barnabas and Paul heard of (it) "they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out, And saying, Sirs, why do ye do these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you the ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven and earth, and the sea and all things that are therein": and so on. And it says, verse 18 "And with these sayings scarce restrained they the people that they had not done sacrifice unto them".

Again in Acts 10 we find Peter comes to Cornelius. Cornelius, a Roman centurion, had sent messengers to Peter asking him to come and preach the gospel to him. When he came it says, verse 25, "and as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him. But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also and a man".

Again, you go to Revelation. In chapter 1, John falls down at the feet of Jesus appearing in magnificent form as "one like unto the Son of Man". There is no rejection of that.

Go to the end of the Book and you find chapter 22 and verse 8 "And I John saw these things and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things. Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God".

You see, any other being accepting worship, save God, is gravely sinning because as the Lord himself said when he was tempted by the devil, to worship the devil, "thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and him alone shalt thou serve". And yet, you see, Jesus accepted worship.

Again, it says in the end of Luke, after Jesus was parted from them and carried up into heaven, "they worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy".

Indeed, there are many passages in Scripture where Jesus is worshipped. For example, at the end of the second epistle to Timothy, we find, chapter 4 verse 18, "And the Lord shall deliver

me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever".

Again at the end of the second epistle of Peter, he exhorts his hearers to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen".

Go to Revelation 1:6 (or rather verse 5) "And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen".

Go to chapter 5 verse 9. This is the elders exclaiming, "And they sung a new song saying, Thou are worthy to take the book and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue and people, and nation" – addressed, you see, to Jesus.

Again, you get in verse 13 Jesus linked with God in worship "Blessing and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever".

Jesus the Lamb of God is worshipped with God. He is God.

Now on the question of the Trinity, I will remind you of one thing (because my time is almost elapsed) and that is at the end of Matthew's gospel the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are joined together in one single name. The final commission of Jesus to his disciples, chapter 28 verse 19, is "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost". One name, three persons, one God.

That, I think, is all I need to tell you for the moment. I hope to answer some of Mr. Heaster's points in my second speech.

This is Bible evidence for the Trinity.

Mr. Heaster's Second Speech

Bible evidence against the trinity

Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to make it quite clear that I tried to explain in my first speech that, as Jesus said, he came in his Father's name: "I am come (John 5:43) in my Father's name". John 17 "I have manifested thy name" he said. In Philippians 2, which we will probably talk about later we are told that because of Christ's humility and his perfect sacrifice he was "exalted to the Father's right-hand side and given *the name* the name of Yahweh that is above every name. So then, Jesus carried the name of God. That is why we read in Isaiah 9:6 about Jesus "He shall be *called* the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father…" all these other titles of God. That name was *called upon him* and so that is why he could receive worship.

Now as Leslie has dealt with at some length with that subject, I will also give some attention to it.

Jesus then carried the name of God and therefore he could receive worship on behalf of God. The fact that he receives worship doesn't imply either co-equality or co-eternity with the Father. You may like to notice in Hebrews 1: 5 & 6, God says to Jesus "Let all the angels of God worship him". So then God commanded the angels to worship Jesus. So therefore the worship that Jesus had, in this case by the angels, was commanded, was directed by God.

Then consider John 5:22 & 23. "The Father hath committed all judgment unto the Son that (in order that) all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father". So because the Father *committed* all judgment to the Son, as I said in my first talk, therefore all men can honour the Son even as they honour the Father. Philippians 2:11 we read that because God gave Jesus "the name above every name", the name of Yahweh that was in order that Jesus should be worshipped by every tongue to the glory of God the Father. So the worship that Jesus was to be given was to the glory of God the Father and that surely is a fundamental point that *all things are to the glory of Almighty God* who as I said before, knows no equal.

Now as Leslie has pointed out, Jesus was worshipped. People paid Jesus reverence. Now it isn't altogether true that men have always declined worship. You may like to look up at your convenience 1 Chronicles 29:20 where David was worshipped. If you want a New Testament example, Matthew 18:26 the servant in the parable worshipped his master. Revelations 3:9 the Philadelphians, it says, were to be worshipped. False teachers would come and worship before their feet. In the R.V. of the New Testament there is a note which says that the word "worship" denotes an act of reverence whether paid to man or God. An act of reverence whether paid to man or God. So the fact that somebody is worshipped doesn't automatically make them God. Those notes were written by Trinitarians.

So then, we will move on from there to John chapter 1. Now many people read those verses there "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God" as if to say, well there you are, there is all the proof you need – Jesus was God. But it doesn't say that, does it? That Jesus was God. It says "In the beginning was the Word, and the *Word* was with God and the *Word* was God". Now we must notice that carefully. If John meant to say that Jesus was God, Jesus was in the beginning, well he would have said that. But it says the *word* was there in the beginning. Now, that phrase "Word", in the Greek, is the word "Logos". I quote from a Lexicon saying what that phrase means "the outward form by which the inward thought or reason is expressed". So in some way, my words express my purpose; they express the essential me, if you like, and so it is with God, with the logos. It implies the essential purpose that was with God in the beginning. It says, John 1:3, "all things were made by him", by the logos. Now that agrees with what we read in Psalm 33:6 "by the word of the Lord were the heavens made"; 2 Peter 3:5 "by the word (the logos of God) the heavens were of old". God commanded, Genesis 1, "God said, Let there be light". "God said, Let the earth bring forth cattle" and that is obviously what is being alluded to here in John chapter 1. It is clearly alluding back to the language of Genesis 1.

So then, the Word, the logos, is more than mere words as we understand them. It expresses the essential purpose, power, of God. Now, in verse 14 we read that "the Word was made flesh, and we beheld his glory as of the glory of the only begotten of the Father". So then, the Word, this purpose that God has been working out throughout history, which He had with Him in the beginning, was brought together in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Word was made flesh; it was turned into a flesh-and-blood form in the person of Jesus Christ. So then Jesus was "the Word made flesh" and that is why in revelation 19 we read of Jesus described as "the word of God" the logos of God because he was made the logos, the logos

was made him, when he was born of Mary. In the other three gospels we read of the virgin birth of Jesus. We have looked at those passages already where the Holy Spirit would come upon Mary and therefore what would be born of her would be called the "Son of God" and in the exalted language of John's gospel that becomes "the Word (the spirit, the power, the purpose, of God) was made flesh and dwelt amongst us". So then, that is the meaning, I believe, of this phrase "logos", that it was the essential purpose that was with God from the beginning of the world and that Word became Jesus. That light, that Word, that purpose that was with God from the beginning, became Jesus.

So we go on to think about "my Lord and my God". Now that's in John chapter 20. If you want to look at the chapter you see in verse 17 of John 20, Jesus said "I ascend unto my Father and your Father, to my God and your God". Now it sounds very strange for Jesus to say something like that and then to be called God Himself in person. Now one way of looking at that is that the word "God", "my God", "my Lord and my God" as Thomas used, it is the word "theos" which basically means "a mighty one". It doesn't necessarily mean God Himself in person. In the Greek New Testament incidentally there is only one word translated God. That is this word "theos" and it is used to translate the Hebrew word "elohim" which means "mighty ones", and which is referred to angels, to men such as Moses and to other people apart from God Himself. So, it can be merely a title of ascription of honour unto Jesus or unto anybody.

Even if Thomas by saying "my Lord and my God" was implying that Jesus was his God the fact still remains as I have explained earlier that Jesus was the true manifestation of that one God. He came in God's name, he spoke God's words, he performed God's works. He was God manifested in the flesh (1 Timothy 3:16).

So then, the point is perhaps tidied up a little about the use of this word "God" if you go to John chapter 10 where, I believe, the Jews made the same mistake as Trinitarians do today. They thought that Jesus was making himself God. Now notice how Jesus answers that: John 10:34, Jesus answered them "Is it not written in your Law (then he quotes from Psalm 82) I said, Ye are gods (if you look at that Psalm, we haven't got time to do it now, but you will see that it is talking about the judges of Israel, those men who were called gods). Christ says, verse 35 "if he called them gods (just men being called gods) unto whom the word of God came and the scripture cannot be broken (i.e. you cannot deny this) say ye of him whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world thou blasphemest because I said I am the Son of God". So Jesus was saying, 'In the Old Testament men are called God, why are you stoning me? I'm only saying I'm the *Son* of God?'.

So then, Jesus came in his Father's name, he did his father's work and he has been given that name at his ascension to heaven. I rest my Bible evidence against the trinity

Thank you.

Mr. Everitt's Second Speech

Jesus is both God and man

Right! I've only ten minutes to answer Mr. Heaster which could require much longer, but I will deal with the last few points first.

On the word "God", it is quite true that it is, on rare occasions, used for other beings than the One whom we call "God the Father" – but can a man accept being called "God" – addressed as God? I think the case in Acts 14 makes it perfectly plain that he can't.

On the meaning of "logos", it is perfectly true that it has the primary meaning that Mr. Heaster has explained. But then the word "light" too has the primary meaning of what comes from the sun, or from these electric lights here. But it also is used as a reference to Jesus personally – he was the light; and as he was the light so he was the word. He himself is the expression of everything that God is. He is the one that declared God, according to John 1:18 "the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him". Therefore, I submit to you, that the interpretation I placed upon the first verse of John's gospel is the right one. You can read that section 1 to 18 right through, carefully, and you will find that it is consistent.

Now when it says "the word was made flesh" I think it is perhaps necessary to make one point clear. It doesn't mean that someone made the word flesh. More exactly translated it is "the word become flesh". We might almost say it is an act of His own.

So far.

Now the second point I want to make in referring to Mr. Heaster's first speech is the constant use of the word "shall be", "will be", and similar expressions, in relation to the foretelling of the coming in of Jesus into the open world and in particular those verses he referred to in the opening chapter of Luke, referring to the birth of Jesus from Mary.

[One point I am happy to be in entire agreement with Mr. Heaster on is the virgin birth. That is something that is much denied these days and so it is worthwhile saying that I affirm it.]

But the "shall be's" and the "will be's" in all those passages simply refer to the person that was to be born into this world. No other word could have been used until he was actually born. The confusion arises from a failure to distinguish the place that Jesus has come into (as is explained in Philippians chapter 2) in coming out of the divine Godhead into the place or form of a servant. Once you have grasped that fact, all those difficulties disappear.

Jesus is both God and man. I have no quarrel at all with Mr. Heaster on the subject of his real manhood because Trinitarian doctrine, if I must use that expression, is one that insists equally upon his manhood. There have been, and Scripture shows us, those who denied his manhood. We are not worrying about that argument at the moment, but that's why it is important to insist upon it. The reason it's important is this. Christ died for our sins. If he had not been man, he could not have died. If he had not been God, his death would have been of no avail, because he bore our sins in his own body on the tree. No mere man could have done that. Therefore, I also insist that he was sinless internally as well as sinless in the sense that he didn't commit sins. That is made perfectly clear from Scripture. It doesn't only say that "he did no sin neither was guile found in his mouth" but "in him is not". John's first epistle chapter 3 verse 5 "and you know that He appeared in order to take away sins" (I should say, I am reading in this instance from the New American Standard Bible) "And you know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin". It wasn't simply that he didn't commit sins, but there was no sin in him. If it had been otherwise, then his death would have been of no avail, because his sacrifice would not have been a pure sacrifice. "Holy, harmless, undefiled" refers not simply to what he did but what he was. He couldn't have

made a sacrifice for himself had he been sinful internally because the sacrifice would not have been admissible. The sacrifice to be effective had to be pure. What he did was to sacrifice for us and it was because he was perfect internally and externally in every way that the sacrifice is acceptable to God. Our whole salvation depends upon that point.

I will add something further, just to support that. If you go to the gospel according to John 7:18, "he who speaks for himself seeks his own glory" (that refers to the opponents of Jesus) "but he who is seeking the glory of the one who has sent him" (that is Jesus) "he is true and there is no unrighteousness *in him*".

Now turn with me to Psalm 92:15 "To declare that the Lord (that is Yahweh or Jehovah) is upright: He is my rock and there is no unrighteousness in Him". As there was no unrighteousness in Yahweh so there was no unrighteousness in Jesus. Therefore the moral argument that has been used against the deity of Christ falls flat. And thank God it does, for our salvation depends upon the true Godhead of Jesus and the true manhood of Jesus and the sinless perfection of Jesus. It was only because of all those three he was able to die for our sins.

I think that is all I need to say. Jesus is both God and man.

CHAIRMAN:

For those of you who have been looking enviously at us as we drink our water, there is some coffee and some drinks outside.

Questions From The Floor

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR FOR MR. HEASTER

QUESTION:

Alpha and omega

In Isaiah 44:6 it says "thus saith the Lord the King of Israel (thus saith Yahweh the King of Israel) and his redeemer the Lord of hosts: I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God". Then in Revelation 1:17 it says "And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last, alpha and omega: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore". It seems to me that in one passage you have Jehovah and in the other passage, Jesus both claiming to be the first and the last. Now I take Mr. Heaster's point that when Jesus was exalted to the right – hand of God he was given the name but in John 17:5 "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was". If he is going to be glorified with the Father's own self with the glory which he had before the world was, that suggests to me that the attributes between the first and the last were not something which he was given as a reward, not only as a reward, but were something which he was taking back which he had already had before the world was which he claimed as something to become.

I don't know if I make myself clear!

MR. HEASTER:

I think we've got two issues here. We have got the question of Jesus being called the "alpha and omega" and reading in Isaiah that in fact that is the name of Yahweh. I have tried, I think, as hard as I can perhaps not very well, to emphasize this fact that the titles of God were given to Jesus on his ascension to heaven and at his resurrection. "I am come" he said, John 5: 43, "in my Father's name". John 17 "I have manifested thy name" and therefore Philippians 2:11, he was given "the name which is above every name" and that name must be the name of Yahweh. That is the name which is above every name and that is what was given to Jesus. Therefore, as I briefly mentioned in Isaiah 9:6 it says about Jesus "his name shall be called the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace". These titles which beyond all dispute apply to God were to be given to Jesus. It doesn't say in Isaiah 9:6 "he *is* Mighty God, he *is* Everlasting Father" or alpha and omega if you like. No, it says "he *will be called*" in other words, he will be given that name, those titles.

So we come on to the other question, John 17:5 "the glory which I had with thee before the world was". I am afraid I don't really see how that connects very much with Jesus having the name before the world was. It says "the glory" he had with him, with God before the world was. Now in John 17:3 we read that the Father is the only true God, just to remind us of that. Now John 17:24 says that Jesus was loved before the foundation of the world. Revelation 13 says that he was slain from the foundation of the world. Now it does not mean that Jesus was literally killed at the beginning of the world, though it says that he was slain from the foundation of the world, presumably in the sense that that was in God's purpose, the logos again. Similarly his kingdom was prepared from the foundation of the world (Matthew 25:34). So therefore he had the glory with God before the foundation of the world. In other words, in God's purpose, in the same way as Jesus in God's plan and purpose had been crucified, had been resurrected, had been given a kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world, all at the beginning of the world, in the same way, he was given the glory.

It doesn't mean that he had to exist as a person for that to happen. It is surely all brought together in 1 Peter 1:20 where we read that "Christ was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times". So the sacrifice of Jesus, the kingdom of Jesus, his glory were in prospect before the world was but not an actual existing reality. You read in Ephesians 1:4 that the true believers were chosen before the foundation of the world. If you choose somebody, it implies that they, obviously, exist. But the true believers didn't exist from the foundation of the world. They were there in God's plan and so it was with Jesus. For example we read in Romans 9:23 about the true believers that they are " afore prepared (past tense) unto glory". Their glory had been prepared right from the beginning and this is the principle of Romans 4:17 that God calls "those things which be not as though they were" because to God those things have all happened, they are there in His plan, the alpha and omega, in His logos, in His purpose, but it doesn't mean that either the true believers or Jesus himself had to be there from the beginning of the world.

QUESTION:

The doctrine of the Trinity

I would like to ask Mr. Heaster just a simple question. I notice that time and again when speaking to us he took the line that if this is so how can that be so? If this is true, then surely that can't be true? For example, if the Lord Jesus is said to be the Son of the Highest then

obviously he can't also be the Highest as well. If in one place he says my Father is greater than I, which many of us by the way would attribute to the elohim face he voluntarily took as man to speak and act in that kind of way, then how can he be equal with the Father and the Son. Setting one thing against another that way.

Now bearing in mind what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2:14 "but the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned," in the light of that verse and other verses of similar effect, would he accept that the mere fact that I may not be able to see how apparently diverse things can exist side by side, doesn't necessarily mean that they can't?

MR. HEASTER:

Well, in trying to find out the truth of the Bible, I can see no other way of going about it than to compare Scripture with Scripture. We are unfortunately in this Debate thinking about the ideas of men as well in the doctrine of the Trinity and if that says one thing, that none is greater or less in the Godhead and the Bible says "my Father is greater than I" I don't see why you shouldn't, or I shouldn't draw the conclusion that therefore the doctrine of the Trinity contradicts the Bible.

Now concerning 1 Corinthians 2 "the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God for they are foolishness unto him"; how I interpreted the gentlemen's comment there was that God is a mystery. God is too great for us to understand. We can't understand the things of the spirit of God neither can we know them. Is that what you were saying? Were you saying that I was applying sort of human logic and yet 1 Corinthians 2 tells us that human logic is no good?

REPLY:

I was simply quoting that verse to show as I believe it shows that scripture itself accepts that to the natural man the things of God are baffling and if the things of God are baffling to the natural man, I would humbly suggest that nothing could be more baffling than that He who is the one true and living almighty, eternal God could clothe Himself with flesh while still being in the absoluteness of the Godhead in heaven and at the same time be here as a man and take up all the attributes of man and the fact that I may not understand how that could be, how the two things could exist together…

MR. HEASTER:

Thank you. I was just clarifying your view on that verse. Thank you.

So our friend is really saying that the natural man can't understand the things of the spirit of God, it is all a mystery, therefore why use human logic. Now I am afraid, I don't want to be destructive to our friend but that must be taken in context. The natural man can't receive the things of the spirit of God but verse 15 "he that is spiritual judgeth all things" and verse 10 "God hath revealed these things unto us by His spirit, for the spirit searcheth the deep things, yea the deep things of God, for we have received" verse 12 "not the spirit of the world (which you are saying you have received), but the spirit which is of God that we might know the things that are freely given unto us of God which things we also speak, not in the words

which man's wisdom teacheth but which the Holy Spirit teacheth comparing spiritual things with spiritual".

Now I submit to you, ladies and gentlemen, that the word of God is a revelation of the spirit of God, as Christ said "my words are spirit, my words are life". We have been trying to compare scripture with scripture, spiritual things with spiritual things. The doctrine of the Trinity doesn't stand up to this analysis.

QUESTION:

The meaning of logos and other points.

I would like to ask Mr. Heaster how he would react to the following point. First of all, if we take Jeremiah 9:24 about understanding God in context, I'm glad to see he cares about context, then we find that it is knowing the things that God is doing and that one can see by the way God acts justly something being revealed; but if we move on, I mean our Christian friend over there only mentioned one verse, but he said there were others that had the same thoughts, where the context is the same. Romans says something on this at the end of chapter 11 about how unsearchable God's ways are. Now, surely I would appeal to you that if God is infinite and I am purely a creature then there is going to be a limit to the capacity with which I am going to be able to understand Him and you may get a little child that comes back from the edge of the water and says I've got the ocean in my bucket and although it's true in one sense, in another it is far from true and the wonderful thing I see about the doctrine of the Trinity is that it is proved to me that my Bible comes from God in that it goes beyond something that can be neatly and mathematically put together in a way that is understandable within the confines of the human intellect.

MR. HEASTER:

O.K. Can I answer that?

REPLY:

There are two other points I want to make and then I will sit down. I would be glad to write to you, Sir, or hear from you as time is short. But there are two other points.

First, you kept on talking about the meaning of logos as God's purpose. Now if you look at the times the word is spoken of, it isn't just a purpose, it is a person.

My last comment was that Thomas when he says "my Lord and my God" and he worships him it's not just that rarely, as Leslie says, God can be used of a normal person or that sometimes, somebody will revere or respect another, but that here you have worship and the name of God going together and so Jesus doesn't refute it. The simplest understanding of that verse is that Jesus acknowledged that here was the true God and there are no other Gods except the Lord.

MR. HEASTER:

Thank you. Well, your first point was, as I said a repetition of what we've just had, that God is a mystery. Now if I may as politely as possible say that, (I don't really consider that most

of what I said in my first speech has been answered I am afraid by Mr. Everitt at all. I don't think anything much at all has been touched on) to turn round and say it is all a mystery is a very easy get-out and Christ did say that unto the true believers "the mystery is revealed" – the revealed mystery. Now, I do accept that there is as Paul says "a mystery of Godliness" that God was manifested in the flesh and I am sorry if I give the impression that we Christadelphians think we know everything. I am not saying that anyone can fathom the mysteries of God fully as you say, in Romans 11. That is quite right. But the fact is that one can understand the basic simple truths of the word of God. That Christ was the Son of God, begotten by the Holy Spirit in the womb of Mary.

Regarding the the meaning of logos and the pronouns in John 1 where it says the world was made by *him,* I would firstly point out that the word "by" "the world was made *by* him" it can mean "on account of him, through him, by reason of him". As Romans 14:14 says "there is nothing unclean *of* itself". In other words, there is nothing unclean of itself, on account of itself. Well, the fact that a personal pronoun is used, doesn't necessarily imply that a person is being spoken of. There is, as I expect you recognize, a principle in the Scriptures of personification. In Proverbs 8 wisdom is spoken of as a woman "wisdom has builded her house, she has hewn out her seven pillars". Now presumably neither you nor I believe there is a woman called "wisdom" up in heaven or on this earth who is doing that – no we accept that that is the principle of personification. This is what is being used about this logos here in John 1. Now one can understand that further by the fact that logos in the Greek is a masculine word and therefore it must take a masculine pronoun, in the same way as wisdom in Hebrew is a feminine word and it therefore takes a feminine pronoun. It is no proof in itself of personality. And so it is with the meaning of logos.

You then said, I was almost pleased to hear, in your third point that the worship of Christ and the name of God go together. Well, I totally agree with you. As I have been trying to say, because Christ came in the name of God, therefore he could receive worship on God's behalf.

CHAIRMAN:

I think that although there are a lot more questions that people would like to ask, time is pressing we will have to draw a line here.

Right, now are there any questions for Mr. Everitt.

QUESTION:

The Nicean Creed

I would like to ask Mr. Everitt why it is, and he hasn't addressed this point, that we have none of the Trinitarian expressions found in the Bible. Nowhere do we read of God the Son or God the Holy Spirit. Nowhere do we read of Christ being co-equal or co-eternal. Is it true that these expressions were formulated in the Church in about the fourth century A.D. and such things as the Nicean Creed, they are not found in the Bible.

I would like that to be answered, about the Nicean Creed.

MR. EVERITT:

Firstly, the term Trinity, as I think Mr. Heaster has already said came into use early in the third century. The idea that is embodied in the Nicean Creed of 325 A.D., or rather the ideas are simply an attempt to give a rational expression in the thought system of those days to the truth of Scripture.

As regards Christ being equal with God, I would point out that Philippians says "who being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God".

QUESTION:

Co-equal and co-eternal

The doctrine of the Trinity states that Christ is co-equal and co-eternal with the Father. That seems to directly contradict the teaching of the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15 and I suggest we turn to it because it quotes God telling us what is true and what is false. In the middle of 1 Corinthians 15 looking at verse 23 it describes the return of the Lord Jesus Christ to the earth after which the dead shall be raised, and then it talks about the reign of Christ upon the earth and during this reign he shall destroy all his enemies and the last enemy to be destroyed is death we read in verse 26 and then verses 27 and 28 which seem to contradict the Trinity. Verse 27 "For God has out all things in subjection under his feet (under Christ's feet) and when it says all things are put into subjection under him (under Christ) it is plain that He is excepted who put all things under him. When all things are subject to him then the Son himself will also be subject unto him who put all things under him that God may be everything in everything". So God is subjecting all things to Christ and in the future it tells us here at the end of the reign of Christ on earth, the Son himself will be subject to his Father, therefore he cannot be co-equal and co-eternal.

MR. EVERITT:

I think the point must always be held that in coming into manhood Christ came into circumstances which were placing him in a position, I emphasize the word 'position', of lowliness in relation to God. Because God is greater than man. But it has been well said that he never ceased to be what he was because of what he became. When Christ became flesh, he came into those circumstances. Now it also is true that he remains a man and it is as man that he reins and when you come to the end, that is, you were referring to verse 28, it says "and when all things shall be subdued unto him, then the Son also himself shall be subject unto him that out all things under him that God may be all in all". That doesn't in the least affect the fact that in his own person he is God and is included in that word "God shall be all in all". So Christ was co-equal and co-eternal with God.

QUESTION:

Jesus is not God

Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, I find myself on the horns of a terrible dilemma in listening to you speaking about the doctrine of the Trinity. It seems that I have an unthinkable alternative. Either I must believe that God who you say is co-equal with Jesus and co-eternal, that God died on the cross, or that Jesus of Nazareth did not die. Neither of those propositions can I accept and I believe that the doctrine of the Trinity does absolute violence to the plain teaching of Scripture. Jesus is not God, therefore.

MR. EVERITT:

I must confess that your question puzzles me because I should have thought it was perfectly obvious that it was a man that died on the cross.

REPLY:

You said he was God. Jesus is not God.

MR. EVERITT:

Exactly. But you see it was as man that he died.

REPLY:

God cannot die. Jesus is not God.

MR. EVERITT:

I said it was as man that he died.

REPLY:

You said he was going to reign as man as well.

CHAIRMAN:

Can we try and keep this as an open debate.

MR. EVERITT:

Sorry. If this gentleman wishes to say something to me afterwards, can I deal with that separately?

He is both man and God. That is the simple teaching as I understand it. As man he died, but he didn't cease to be God because he was man. Jesus was God.

QUESTION:

Jesus as mediator

If Jesus is God as you claim, and the New Testament in 1,250 odd times only ever alludes to him as God by the actual use of the word which in most places is 'theos" and if he was from everlasting to everlasting on his resurrection, I have always understood that Trinitarians, whoever they may be, teach that Christ Jesus is part of the Godhead in total and there was no longer any need for his manliness. How can Jesus then as Paul says in 1 Timothy be a mediator between God and men, "the man Christ Jesus". If you link that with the question the gentleman behind asked that he is there in the interim to be subject to God at all times he is inferior both before and after his resurrection. Jesus as mediator means he was not God.

MR. EVERITT:

If you use the term inferior, he is in his person equal with God; in the place he is come into he is inferior. Now the point you have referred to about 1 Timothy, Jesus as a mediator, that brings out the point where both his Godhead and his manhood are absolutely necessary. If he was not God, he couldn't be mediator of God, and if he was not man, he couldn't have been mediator of man. He is the one that is the answer to Job's question "Oh that there were an umpire who could lay his hands upon us both" (Job 9:33 R.S.V.). Because he is God he is in figure (I accept Mr. Heaster's reference that Scripture uses figures) in figure he placed his hand on God, as man he places his hand on man. Because he was both God and man Jesus was capable of being mediator, which otherwise he couldn't have been.

QUESTION:

Christ and sin

In your remarks, I believe I am correct in saying, you said that both internally and externally Christ was without sin.

MR. EVERITT:

Yes.

REPLY:

On that premise, can you please explain to me the Apostle Paul's comment in 2 Corinthians 5:21 where Paul says (the context will show that God is speaking of Christ) "God hath made Christ to be sin for us who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in him". How is that explained if you say that either internally or externally Christ did not possess sin.

MR. EVERITT:

I should have thought that if he was made sin it was perfectly clear that he didn't have sin before.

REPLY:

But then, at some stage, Christ must have had sin.

MR. EVERITT:

Yes, on the cross. When Christ bore our sins in his body on the tree.

REPLY:

Mr. Chairman, May I just say the correct translation of that is "that made him to be a sin-offering" MacKnight, C.H. Dodd, Albright all translate that to be a "sin offering" Christ wasn't made sin.

MR. EVERITT:

Well, I don't know I wish to make any comment on what the last questioner has stated unless he wishes me to answer.

CHAIRMAN:

Right, we are now going to have a short time for both sides to sum up their arguments and hopefully without resorting to fisticuffs…

Summation By Mr. Heaster*:*

The seed of Abraham

Well, ladies and gentlemen, in conclusion I think we must each ask ourselves the question, Are we humble to the word of God? Do we go through this word and say "ah, my Father is greater than I. I can of my own self do nothing". Christ learned obedience to God by what he suffered. Ah, well obviously this cannot mean that Jesus is God himself. There are very few of us that have that humility and that is what, though, God is looking for.

I would also like to stress in conclusion that Christadelphians are not Unitarians. We believe, as both Old and New Testaments clearly teach, that there is one Almighty God and Father whose Son is Jesus Christ, who was begotten at a definite point in finite time by God's power, the Holy Spirit, acting on the womb of the virgin Mary. As Paul says "the head of the woman is the man, the head of the man is Christ and the head of Christ is God" (1 Corinthians 11: 3). That is conclusive to me, at least.

Jesus was then, of our nature. The man, Christ Jesus, as Paul calls him and as he is described at times even after his ascension to heaven. It was essential for him to be of our fallen nature in order that he could be tempted. As Hebrews 4 says "he was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sinning". Through his overcoming of sin, a way to forgiveness and eternal life has been opened. "The wages of sin is death" sin brings death, therefore Jesus had to have our sinful nature in order to overcome sin; in order to be tempted to sin. Because he overcame those temptations, therefore he has opened up a way of escape for us. In Hebrews 2 verses 14 to 18 we read some words which really sum up the whole of my presentation to you tonight and you may like to read them later. Hebrews 2:14-18: "Forasmuch then as the children (that is us) partake of flesh and blood (that is, human nature), he (Jesus) also himself likewise partook of the same". It is as if Paul is going out of his way there to emphasize this fact: " he *also himself likewise*" was of our nature, "he took not hold of the nature of angels (if he did he would have had the nature of angels, no he took not hold of the nature of angels); but he took hold of the seed of Abraham". Now he opened then a way of escape from sin and death for the seed of Abraham to deliver then, I am quoting again from Hebrews 2 "to deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage". And that is, of course, the position of every one of us here tonight, living in fear of death all our lifetime subject to bondage to sin and death. Christ through being of our nature having the same bondage has opened the way of escape from this miserable position. Leslie said "how could a man take away our sins" and yet Hebrews 2 says unless he was a man then he couldn't have done so. That was the very point of him being of our nature in order that God could lay on him the iniquity of us, his brothers and sisters. So then, if your life or if your religion seems pointless because you sense that you're enjoying as it were a sort of "feel –

good" religion as I call it, and you sense that at the end of the day you are not sure whether you are really going to overcome sin and death, then the way of escape is clear through an understanding of the real Christ and becoming one of Abraham's seed or descendants.

Now I'd like to talk a lot more about Abraham's seed because it was only, Paul says there in Hebrews 2, for Abraham's seed or descendants that a way of escape has been opened, through Jesus having our nature. So then, we have got to become Abraham's seed or descendants if we are going to have the hope of salvation from sin and death which Jesus opened up. So how can we do it, how can we become the descendants of Abraham? The natural descendants of Abraham are the Jews. So how then can Gentiles become part of those people in order that Christ's sacrifice should apply to us? Paul gives us the answer, Galatians 3:27-29 "as many of you (he says) as have been baptized into Christ…are Abraham's seed" or descendants. Only as many of us as are baptized into Christ (the real Christ) are "Abraham's seed", and that baptism, I suggest to you, is not just a sprinkling, it is a total dipping in water.

At this point we must consider, I feel, the question, "what is the gospel?" What is the gospel? I submit to you that the majority of Evangelical Christians and Christendom generally have no clear cut – and – dried answer to that question. What is the gospel? And yet it does, fundamentally, affect our eternal salvation. Galatians 3:8 says that the gospel was preached to Abraham in the form of the promises that God made to him. God promised Abraham two things. He promised him, first of all, that he would have a great descendant through whom blessing and forgiveness would be brought to this earth. Galatians 3:16 tells us that that descendant was Jesus Christ. The second thing Abraham was promised was that he would have many descendants who would reign for ever upon this earth, Romans 4:13. So then, the gospel is made up of those two parts. Things about Jesus, the seed of Abraham, and things about the descendants of Abraham who are going to live for ever upon the earth. They are the two elements of the gospel which were preached by Jesus; remember how he went around the cities of Israel and the villages preaching the gospel, the good news of the coming kingdom of God that he would establish when God sent him back to the earth, and those two elements were preached by Christ's apostles. Acts 8:5 says that Philip went to Samaria and preached Christ. Now in the eyes of many of you, you would say: well, he turned round and said "believe on Jesus everybody" – but he didn't. It goes on to define what "preaching Christ" involves. Acts 8:12 says that when the people believed Philip preaching the *things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ* they were baptized. So then, there are the same two elements that were preached to Abraham. The things concerning the kingdom of God were preached to Abraham when he was told he would have many descendants who would reign for ever upon this earth. The things concerning the name of Jesus Christ were preached to Abraham when he was told that he would have one great descendant through whom the world would be blessed.

Now I submit to you that that is the gospel message in a nutshell. I also submit to you that if you believe in the Trinity, that belief makes a nonsense of that clear, simple, original gospel message. If you believe that Jesus was God, how could he have been Abraham's descendant. If he had no beginning, how could he have been a descendant of Abraham or David because those promises were repeated to Isaac, to Jacob and to David. God said to David that of the fruit of his body he would raise up this descendant who would be Jesus the Christ. Jesus said "salvation is of the Jews" John 4:22. It is only by being the descendants or seed of Abraham that we can have hope of salvation from death through Jesus.

So then, you see that these things are of vital importance. This is the gospel, the true gospel, I humbly, honestly believe that we are preaching to you tonight.

"God has appointed a day in the which he will judge the world (Acts 17:31) by that man whom he hath appointed" whom He will send back to this earth to set up God's kingdom.

So then, Jesus is coming, the Son of God coming back to this earth to set up God's kingdom upon this earth, and at the end of the first thousand years, we believe, of that kingdom, as someone has already commented tonight in 1 Corinthians 15, he will give up the kingdom to God who put all things under his feet, that *God may be all in all*.

So then, ladies and gentlemen, this is not just an academic debate. I am sorry if it has sounded like that at times. It is not an academic debate. "This is life eternal (this is everlasting life) that we should know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom he sent".

Thank you and God bless you all.

Summation By Mr. Everitt

Ego eimi: I am he

Once more, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Heaster, ladies and gentlemen, one thing I am in complete agreement with Mr. Heaster over is that this is not just an academic debate. My point is that while there is much that he has said about the gospel I would agree with, the whole thing is nullified by refusing to believe that Jesus is divine. If I might quote another Scripture, to underline many scriptures that have already been quoted, it is Hebrews 13:8, where it says, that "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever". Now when it says "the same" that is a title of Deity. It is a word for example that is used in Psalm 102:27 addressing God when it says "thou art the same". That is used in the second person. When it is transferred to the first person it is translated "I am he". Now that occurs in Isaiah chapter 43:10 "Yes are my witnesses, saith the Lord and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I *am* he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me". Ego eimi, "I am he".

Turn now with me to the New Testament to John's gospel chapter 8. This is the end of an argument between Jesus and the Jews. Jesus says verse 56 "your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day and he saw it and was glad. Then said the Jews unto him, Thou are not yet 50 years old and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you before Abraham was, I am". Now the words Jesus quotes there "Ego eimi" are exactly the words given as "I am he" in Isaiah where I have quoted from. The slight difference is due to the differences in the Hebrew language. If you want to know what that means, I will just quote from a scholar whom I by no means universally approve of but who gives an independent opinion from my own, when he says "before Abraham came into being, I eternally was, as now I am, and ever continue to be". A comment by a Jewish scholar on Isaiah 43:10 says, "I am he, that is, always the same, ever was, is and will be". Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today and forever. Ego eimi. I am he.

Now that brings me to the point about him dying for us. Of course, it was as a man that he died for us. I thought I had made that as clear as I possibly could, but evidently it needs repeating. It was as man he died for us. It was as man he bore the judgment for us. But you

see, for him to have borne the judgment of our sins would have broken him, if he had been a sinful man as has been suggested. His death would have been necessary for himself not for us. He came into conditions indeed where it was possible for him to die. He became into real flesh and blood, apart from sin. In him sin was not. And it is because he was perfect it was possible for God to use the scripture my friend over there quoted to "make him sin for us who knew no sin that we might become the righteousness of God in him". The Christian can face death without fear because he knows he has placed his trust upon the eternal Son of God and the one who has borne his sins. To quote the figurative expression of the Old Testament, those sins have been borne "as far away as the east is from the west" as Jehovah says. "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and…he was buried, and he was raised again the third day according to the scriptures:" and is now risen, ascended on high where it says, he ever lives to make intercession for those that call upon God through him.

I don't think I need to add anything more.

Concluding Remarks By The Chairman

Well, it just leaves me to thank you all for coming and to remind you that if you want a transcript of this, there is a yellow slip for you to fill in and to place in one of these boxes.

Once again, thank you very much for coming.

FROM THE FLOOR:

Mr. Chairman, May I be allowed to thank you and the speakers for the very reverent and patient way in which you have conducted these proceedings.

(Applause)

1-7 The Use of God's Name

We have seen that God's name and that of His Son Jesus has very deep meaning. When we speak of 'God' we are touching upon every aspect of His wonderful purpose of love and truth. That God's name should be used in vain as a mild expletive or expression of exasperation, is therefore one of the most insulting things a man can do to his Maker. For this reason everyone who wants to please God and honour Him will make every effort not to use God's name lightly. In many societies worldwide such blasphemy has become a standard part of modern language; to break out of what may have been the habit of a lifetime will not be easy. A heartfelt prayer for God's help in this will surely not go unheeded by Him. Those within our sphere of control and influence, e.g. children, could also be reminded of the seriousness of blasphemy: "For the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain" (Dt. 5:11).
On the other hand there are those who insist that the true Christian church must use the Hebrew words Yahweh or Jehovah in its name. By doing this, such people are using God's holy and marvellous name to fuel a kind of spiritual elitism, whereby they despise other people merely over the pronunciation or use of one word. This is not to say that the use of God's name is wrong; it is especially suited to our personal prayers once we are properly baptised into the name. The New Testament, however, does not give us any indication that this is necessary or even desired by God. He inspired the writing of the New Testament so that it was written in Greek, using only one word for 'God' - 'theos', meaning 'a great one'. No distinction is made in it between 'God' and 'Yahweh', nor is there any specific command concerning what believers should call themselves as a community. Peter speaks of a believer as a "Christian" rather than a 'Yahweh-man' or something similar (1 Pet. 4:16). An over-emphasis on the use of the name 'Yahweh' leads to a devaluing of the work and place of the Lord Jesus, in a similar way to which many 'evangelical Christians' over-stress the name and office of Jesus to the neglecting of the mightier place of God.
Other names by which the early community of Christian believers called themselves do not include the name 'Yahweh'.
? "The commonwealth of Israel" (Eph. 2:12)
? "The general assembly and church of the firstborn" (Heb. 12:23)
? "The church of God" (Acts 20:28)
? "The church of the living God, which is the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15)
? "The house of God" (1 Tim. 3:15).

1-8 "God is a Spirit" (Jn. 4:24)

God's spirit is His power or breath by which His essential self, His being and character, is revealed to man through the actions which that spirit achieves. Thus "God is spirit", as Jn. 4:24 should be properly translated (see R.S.V., N.I.V.), because His spirit reflects His personality.
God is described as being many things, e.g.
? "Our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:29)
? "God is light" (1 Jn. 1:5)
? "God is love" (1 Jn. 4:8)
? "The word (Greek 'logos' - plan, purpose, idea) was God" (Jn. 1:1).
Thus "God is" His characteristics. It is clearly wrong to argue that the abstract quality of love

is ‘God’, just because we read that “God is love”. We may call someone ‘kindness itself’, but this does not mean that they are without physical existence - it is their manner of literal existence which reveals kindness to us.
The spirit being God’s power, we frequently read of God sending or directing His spirit to achieve things in harmony with His will and character. Examples of this are numerous, showing the distinction between God and His spirit.
? “He (God) that put His Holy Spirit within him” (Is. 63:11)
? “I (God) will put My spirit upon him (Jesus)” (Mt. 12:18)
? “The Father give(s) the Holy Spirit” (Lk. 11:13)
? “The Spirit descending from heaven” (Jn. 1:32)
? “I (God) will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh” (Acts 2:17).
Indeed, the frequent references to “the spirit of God” should be proof enough that the spirit is not God personally. These differences between God and His spirit are another difficulty for those who believe that God is a ‘trinity’ in which God the Father is equated with Jesus and the Holy Spirit.
Very importantly, a non-personal God makes a nonsense of prayer - to the point where prayer is a dialogue between our consciousness and a concept of God which just exists in our own mind. We are continually reminded that we pray to God who is in heaven (Ecc. 5:2; Mt. 6:9; 5:16; 1 Kings 8:30), and that Jesus is now at God’s right hand there, to offer up our prayers (1 Pet. 3:22; Heb. 9:24). If God is not personal, such passages are made meaningless. But once God is understood as a real, loving Father, prayer to Him becomes a very real, tangible thing - actually talking to another being who we believe is very willing and able to respond.

1-9 The Historical Jesus

If, as some claim, there is no evidence that Jesus of Nazareth ever existed, then the very existence of Christianity is difficult to explain. It is asking an awful lot to expect anyone to believe that millions of people over the last 2,000 years have based their beliefs on someone who never existed, and to have such an intense faith in him that they were motivated to spread their faith in him world-wide, often at the risk of persecution and death. Christians and Jews generally have no difficulty accepting that Mohamed once lived, whilst rejecting his claims and teaching. Indeed we accept that most famous historical characters existed without demanding a critical review of the evidence. Frequently analyses have been made of widely accepted historical events, e.g. that the battle of Hastings took place in 1066, and have found the concrete evidence relatively hard to come by.
The fact that some so intensely deny the very existence of Jesus of Nazareth is surely indicative of an over reaction, a desire to find a convenient excuse not to face up to the reasons for accepting his Messiahship. This appears especially true when it is appreciated that the early Jews themselves accepted that a person called Jesus had existed in the first century.
The following historical evidences for the existence of Jesus of Nazareth show that in no way can he be dismissed as a theological invention of men. Much helpful information in this section has been gleaned from Gary Habermas, ‘Ancient Evidence For The Life Of Jesus’.
1. Tacitus was a Roman historian whose two major books about the first century (“Annals” and the “Histories”) both mention Jesus and Christianity. He wrote in the “Annals” (about 115 AD):
“A class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilate”.
The emperor Tiberius reigned from 14-37AD, during which period Christ was killed,

according to this record. Tacitus also describes how the beliefs of this group "broke out not only in Judaea, the first source of (these ideas), but even in Rome", and he goes on to describe how the Christians were widely hated, and many put to death in Rome. All this accords with the New Testament record of Jesus, the disciples and the apostles first spreading their teaching in Judaea, and then throughout the Roman world, including Rome, with great opposition to them.

2. Suetonius, another Roman historian, commented on the reign of Claudius (41-54 AD): "Because the Jews at Rome caused continuous disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, he (Claudius) expelled them from the city". "Chrestus" is another spelling of "Christ". Incidentally, Acts 18:2 describes how a Jewish couple named Aquila and Priscilla had to leave Rome because of the persecution of the Jews.

Suetonius comments later about the persecution of Christians at the time of Nero: "After the great fire at Rome...Punishments were also inflicted on the Christians, a sect professing a new and mischievous religious belief". This reference to the existence of a group called "Christians" in the first century suggests that a person called "Christ" existed earlier in that century.

3. F.F.Bruce ("Christian Origins" pp.29,30) draws attention to the fact that there are references to a history of the Eastern Mediterranean written by a historian called Thallus about 52AD. Bruce shows elsewhere ("The New Testament Documents", p.113) that a scholar named Julius Africanus quoted from Thallus, mocking his description of the darkness at the crucifixion of Jesus as due to the eclipse of the sun. This suggests that Thallus wrote an account of the crucifixion of Jesus which occurred some years before he wrote his history in 52AD.

4. Pliny, a Roman Government official, mentions at length the existence of a very active group of people called Christians in the latter years of the first century. Their keeping of the memorial service is referred to by him: "They were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when they sang in alternate verses a hymn to Christ" ("Letters of Pliny", translated by W.Melmoth, Vol.2, X:96). The Roman emperors Trajan and Hadrian both mentioned the problem of dealing with Christians. For references to this, see "Letters of Pliny", Vol.2, X:97 and Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History, IV:IX respectively. The existence of this group since the first century and their extraordinary tenacity during persecution would suggest that they were followers of a real historical character who lived in the first century.

5. The Talmud, a Jewish holy book, in Sanhedrin 43a refers to the death of Jesus. It is acknowledged that this part of the Talmud dates from the early period of that book's compilation (i.e. 70-200AD).

"On the eve of the Passover Yeshu (Jesus) was hanged. For forty days before the execution took place, a herald went forth and cried, 'He is going to be stoned because he has practiced sorcery and enticed Israel to apostasy. Anyone who can say anything in his favour, let him come forward in his behalf'. But since nothing was brought forward in his favour he was hanged on the eve of the Passover".

"Hanged" can be an idiom for crucifixion - it is used like that in the New Testament (Gal. 3:13; Lk. 23:39). This passage describes the Jews wanting Jesus stoned (in accordance with Mosaic law, presumably?), but mentions that actually he was hanged. The explanation for this is given by the New Testament description of how the Jews had to use Roman law to effect the death of Jesus - which would have been by hanging.

Sanhedrin 43a also describes how five disciples of Jesus were judged and sentenced to death, again showing that the Jews traditionally have believed in the existence of the historical Jesus. Sanhedrin 106b even says that Jesus was 33 years old when he died; exactly as required by the New Testament. Maier ("First Easter", pp.117,118) quotes from the fifth century Jewish document "Toledoth Jesu", which claims that the disciples tried to steal the

body of Jesus after his death, but a gardener named Juda heard of their plans and removed the body of Jesus elsewhere, handing it over later to the Jews. Justin Martyr writing in 150AD records that the Jews sent out special messengers to claim that the body of Jesus had been stolen ("Dialogue with Trypho", 108), and Tertullian ("On Spectacles", 30) has a similar account when he wrote in 200AD.
Between them these strands of evidence show that the Jews of the early centuries AD believed in the existence and violent death of the historical Jesus.
6. The Greek playwright Lucian, writing in the second century, pokes fun at the Christians who "worship a man to this day (who) was crucified" (Lucian, The Death of Peregrine, 11-13, in "The Works of Lucian", vol.4, translated by Fowler and Fowler).
7. Josephus is the most well known historian of the first century. In his "Antiquities", written 90-95AD, he mentions James, "the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ". He also speaks in another section of the same book in terms which clearly corroborate the New Testament picture of Jesus.
"Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man...For he was one who wrought surprising feats...He was Christ...he appeared to them alive the third day, as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him".
So pointed is this passage that some have claimed that it is an interpolation. That there is still reason for using this passage to support the contention that there was a man called Jesus of Nazareth who lived in the first century is provided by the following considerations:
? Eusebius (Ecclesiastical History, 1:XI) quotes this section of Josephus.
? Respected scholars support this first reading as being original, and can show that this section is written in the same style as the rest of Josephus' work (See Daniel Rops, "The Silence of Jesus' Contemporaries", p.21; J.N.D. Anderson, "Christianity: The Witness of History" p.20; F.F.Bruce, "The New Testament Documents" pp.108,109).
? There is no textual evidence for this being an interpolation.
? Professor Schlomo Pines claims that the Arabic edition of Josephus' works had been discovered which was almost certain to be the original. The passage referred to above occurs there, but without the obvious doctrinal statements concerning the resurrection and Messiahship of Jesus which were made in the extract given above. This seems reasonable, seeing Josephus was a Jew. Pines first made his findings public in articles in "The New York Times", Feb.12 1972, in which he quotes the debated passage of Josephus about Jesus from the Arabic version: "At this time there was a wise man who was called Jesus. And his conduct was good and he was known to be virtuous. And many people among the Jews and other nations became his disciples. Pilate condemned him to be crucified and to die. And those who had become his disciples did not abandon his discipleship. They reported that he had appeared to them three days after his crucifixion and that he was alive; accordingly, he was perhaps the Messiah concerning whom the prophets have recounted wonders".
This account fits in admirably with that of the New Testament.

2-1 The Devil And Satan What Does The Bible Say? Transcript Of A Debate

Saturday 24th October 1992
Garden Park Church of God, 5615 Madison Ave. SE, Grand Rapids MI USA

Debate speakers:
For the Supernatural Devil position: Mr. Mark Mattison (Church of God of the Abrahamic Faith)
Against the Supernatural Devil position: Mr. Duncan Heaster

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2-1-28 Salvation Issues

Mr. Heaster's Final Speech
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Note: It should be understood in the context of the devil-satan debate that Mr. Mattison was representing the Church of God of the Abrahamic Faith General Conference. The Church Of God Of The Abrahamic Faith congregations represented by the magazine 'The Abrahamic Faith Beacon' share the Christadelphian view of the devil, and are not in fellowship with the Church of God of the Abrahamic Faith (CGAF) General Conference. Mr. Heaster was not aware of this difference at the time.
Further note:
While the belief of the supernatural personal devil and demons is reported to be held by many in The Church of God General Conference, McDonough, Georgia, USA, (a.k.a. Church of God Abrahamic Faith, or COGAF), there remains an amount of others who do not support such a belief. On the contrary, as the Christadelphians, they support the belief that the devil and demons are not real supernatural personal beings. Furthermore, there are still others who have no stated position either way. The Statement of Faith of the Church of God General Conference does not include any statement concerning the nature of the devil or demons in its Constitution and By-Laws. Traditionally, the Conference has left the choice to each individual or church to make in regard to belief in the devil. Some are more outspoken than others concerning their belief and are even willing to debate the issue in opposition to the Christadelphian position. Although there are those associated with the Conference who are outspoken in favour of the personality of the devil, they do not speak for the entire body.

Mr. Mattison's First Address

2-1-1 Benjamin Wilson And The Diaglott

I would like to begin my presentation by thanking Pastor Ray Hall and the Garden Park Church of God for letting us meet here this afternoon.

I consider it an honor to be able to participate in this important meeting between Church of God folk and Christadelphians. I think that this gathering is significant because it represents more dialogue between these two sister churches.

The Church of God and Christadelphia share more than common doctrines; we share a common heritage as well, having both emerged from the nineteenth century American Adventist phenomenon. Touching on this point, I would like to read the first two and-a-half paragraphs from the foreword of the book, 'The Devil and Satan', which is a transcript of a debate held between Mr. Duncan Heaster and my friend Pastor Jeff Fletcher in England in 1989.

In 1855 when Benjamin Wilson published the prospectus for the " Emphatic Diaglott" he was associated with John Thomas, who earned the accolade from Wilson as being " our learned and esteemed brother."

They were both members of the " The Brethren" . In due course, it became necessary for religious organisations to have more distinctive titles and those associated with Benjamin Wilson became known as the Church of God of Abrahamic Faith, and those with John Thomas as the Christadelphians.

When the " Emphatic Diaglott" was translated, Benjamin Wilson did not believe in a personal being called the Devil. This Debate on The Devil and Satan, between the successors of these two men, becomes particularly interesting as it shows how these two groups have grown apart.

Now this can be interpreted to mean a couple of things: first, that Benjamin Wilson was the founder of the Church of God, and second, that the members of the Church of God originally did not believe in a supernatural devil but eventually accepted this doctrine and thereby drifted away from their historical convictions.

Of course we know that is not the case. Though the Wilsons were important figures in Church of God history, the idea of the Church of God was being propounded by Elder Joseph Marsh as early as 1840. In fact Marsh, undoubtedly the most important of our church's founders, had been publishing our truths long before the 'Diaglott' ever appeared. It is also known that Marsh did believe in a supernatural devil.

Thus, we see that from the very beginning, both views have existed within our Church. Throughout our history, many of us have admitted that the Bible teaches the existence of an actual, literal, supernatural person called " the Devil" , but some of us have not. We can tolerate both views. This is significant, because that is the issue that Mr. Heaster and I are here to discuss this afternoon.

My point is that these differences are not significant enough to prevent fellowship. Our two Churches have so much in common, such as our understanding of the one God, the human Messiah Jesus, the conditional immortality of man, and the precious promise of the Kingdom of God to be established on the earth. Our theological affinities far outweigh our theological differences. That is why I believe we must at the very least meet face-to-face, dialogue on these issues, build bridges, and get to know one another better. I know that there will be some differences of opinion here about that, but I believe it had to be said.

2-1-2 Ha satan

Now before we dig into the Scriptures to see what they have to say about the Devil and Satan, I'd like to explain how the article works in both the Hebrew and Greek languages of the Bible. In English, we use both indefinite articles and definite articles. Thus, we distinguish between " a chair" and " the chair" . When I speak of " a chair" , I'm speaking indefinitely, without a specific chair in mind. It may in fact be one chair of many. For example, I may ask, " Would someone please get me a chair?" On the other hand, if I speak of " the chair" , I have a definite chair in mind. I'm also assuming that you know " which" chair I'm talking about. This would be the case if I said something like, " Give me the chair."

Now Hebrew and Greek use the definite article only. Dr. A.T.Robertson writes: " The definite article is never meaningless in Greek...The article is associated with gesture and aids in pointing out like an index finger...Wherever the article occurs, the object is certainly definite."

This is important, because the presence or lack of the article indicates whether we are reading about **a** satan or **the** Satan, **a** devil or **the** devil.

You see, the Hebrew word 'satan' literally means " adversary" or " enemy" and the Greek word 'diabolos' literally means " slanderer" or " accuser" . When these words are used with the article, they always refer to a very specific Adversary, a specific Slanderer. On the other hand, these words may be used without the article to describe human enemies.

An example of the latter is found in 1 Kings 11:14. The New International Version reads:

Then the LORD raised up against Solomon an adversary, Hadad the Edomite, from the royal line of Edom.

The word for " adversary" here is 'satan'. Hadad the Edomite is described as **a** satan, **an** enemy. There is no article in the Hebrew. The word 'satan' is used this way several times in the Old Testament, generally referring to human enemies.

Now let's look at the use of the word 'satan' with the article. Our passage is Job chapter one, beginning with verse 6. I'll be reading through verse 12.

One day the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them. The LORD said to Satan, " Where have you come from?"

Satan answered the LORD, " From roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it."

Then the LORD said to Satan, " Have you considered my servant Job: There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil."

" Does Job fear God for nothing?" Satan replied. " Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. But spread out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face."

The LORD said to Satan, " Very well, then, everything he has is in your hands but on the man himself do not lay a finger."

Then Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.

The word 'satan' throughout this passage has the article: 'ha-satan'. Here we are not reading about **an** adversary or **an** enemy, but **the** Adversary, **the** Enemy. This enemy is presented as approaching God in heaven and challenging Job's integrity. Incidentally, that's why the Bible also calls him 'diabolos' or devil, meaning " slanderer" or " accuser" , and the Greek translation of Job here uses the word 'diabolos'. The Enemy or the Accuser approached God and accused Job of obeying God just because God had blessed him. To prove that Job's faith was sincere, God permitted Satan to take away Job's possessions.

Verses 13 through 19 describe Satan's attack on Job. Satan incited raiding parties to carry off Job's oxen and camels and to kill most of his servants. He sent fire from the sky to burn up Job's sheep and summoned a tornado to destroy Job's sons and daughters. But Job passed the test. After all his possessions were taken away, he still obeyed God.

Clearly Satan had lost this one, but he tried again. Let's read chapter 2, verses 1 through 8.

On another day the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them to present himself before him. And the LORD said to Satan, " Where have you come from?"

Satan answered the LORD, " From roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it."

Then the LORD said to Satan, " Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil. And he still maintains his integrity, though you incited me against him to ruin him without any reason."

" Skin for skin!" Satan replied. " A man will give all he has for his own life. But stretch out your hand and strike his flesh and bones, and he will surely curse you to your face."

The LORD said to Satan, " Very well, then, he is in your hands; but you must spare his life."

So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD and afflicted Job with painful sores from the soles of his feet to the top of his head. Then Job took a piece of broken pottery and scraped himself with it as he sat among the ashes.

Now " the Satan" here is clearly not a human adversary. No human adversary has the power to summon lightning and tornadoes and to strike people with sickness. Clearly this is a supernatural adversary.

Now let's look specifically at the source of Job's problems. Let me direct your attention back to chapter 1 verse 12. There the LORD says to Satan, " everything he has is in your hands." And in chapter 2, verses 6 and 7, the LORD tells Satan that a Job is in his hands, although Satan is not allowed to kill him. Satan then leaves the presence of the LORD and strikes Job with sickness. Clearly Job's problems were an attack of the devil.

But notice that these problems are also said to come from God. For example, in chapter 1 verse 21, Job said, " The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away." And in chapter 2 verse 3, God says, Job " still maintains his integrity, though you incited me against him to ruin him without any reason." Similarly, in verse 10, Job says that both good things **and trouble** come from God.

So what was the source of Job's problems? Did they come from Satan, or from God? The answer is: both. The devil was the **immediate** cause of Job's problems, but God was **ultimately** responsible. That is because God, in His sovereign wisdom, manipulates evil. The devil is an Adversary or Enemy to the core and intends to do evil, but to his frustration, he is ultimately subject to the permissive will of God, his superior. In his 'Summa Theologica" , Thomas Aquinas wrote, " The diabolical attack itself derives from the demons' ill will...However, the ordering of these attacks is due to God, who knows how to use evil designedly so that it is oriented to good." In his book " The Devil" , Corrado Balducci writes:

God could surely prevent the rebellious angels from doing any harm, butin his infinite wisdom and goodness he has permitted them to pursue their evil intentions. The later, much against their will, their evil intentions can be transformed by man into a stimulus and a means for moral perfection. In that way, says St. John Chrysostom, the devil, in spite of himself, becomes, as it were, an instrument and coefficient of holiness. This fits well into the divine economy which, in governing the world, is able to use everything--even the worst things--for a good end. Moreover, the dependence of the devil on the permissive will of God is part of God's universal government of the world...

From all this it is evident how wretched must be the condition of the demons. As Tirco says, " Having the power to attack very strongly and wanting very much to do so, they are not permitted to do so; they are in fact totally dependent on the will and permission of him they have hated most intensely." And to add to their vexation and confusion, the relatively little that they can do is always directed by God to some good end.

We are reminded of Romans 8: 28, which says that " in **all** things God works for the good of those who love him," and also of Joseph's comment to his brothers who had sold him into slavery: " You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good."

The devil is not in charge; God is. The devil can do nothing outside of certain limits which God has set. For example, 1 Corinthians 10: 13 says that " God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear."

Now let's move on to Zechariah chapter 3, verses 1 and 2. Zechariah writes:

“Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. The LORD said to Satan, " The LORD rebuke you, Satan!" The LORD, who has chosen Jerusalem, rebuke you! Is not this man a burning stick snatched from the fire?"

The angel of the LORD is called LORD in so far as he represents God; this phenomenon is not unknown in the Bible. So here we see Zechariah's vision, in which Satan accuses Joshua before the angel of the LORD, which is the same as accusing Joshua before God Himself. Again, the article is used here. This is not simply **a** satan, **an** adversary, or some discontent human person; this is 'ha-satan', **the** Adversary, **the** Accuser. As in the book of Job, Satan is accusing people before God. That is the primary role of Satan in the Old Testament: To oppose God's people and to slander them. This is also reflected in the well-known story of the temptation of Adam and Even, where the devil is depicted as a serpent trying to lead mankind astray.

I would also like to point out that everywhere in the Old Testament the word 'satan' **always** refers to an external, personal adversary; **never** does it mean simply " human nature" or " sin personified" . Whether the word is used without the article of a human adversary, or with the article to describe the supernatural devil, it **always** refers to a literal person. That point deserves to be underscored: In the Old Testament, the **word satan always refers to a literal, external person.**

2-1-3 Satan In The Gospels

Keeping that in mind, let's turn to the Gospels to see what role Satan plays in them. We first meet the devil in the wilderness temptations of Jesus. In Mark chapter 1, verses 12 and 13, we read:

At once the Spirit sent him out into the desert, and he was in the desert forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.

Now many of our Christadelphian friends will tell us that the devil who tempted Jesus here was actually Jesus' own human nature. In his debate with Pastor Jeff Fletcher, Duncan Heaster said that " these temptations were going on within the mind of Christ." He argued that the devil was a personification of sin, not a literal person.

But how well does that interpretation square with the facts? Remember that in the Old Testament, the word 'Satan' **always** refers to an external person. Now, suddenly, we are asked to believe that this 'Satan' is an internal temptation. But clearly, Satan is no less literal than the wild animals or the angels Mark talks about in his account of the temptations.

Incidentally, I'd like to point out that according to verse 12, it was the Spirit who sent Jesus into the desert to be tempted. Remember what we said earlier about the devil unwittingly serving the purposes of God; God wanted the devil to test Jesus.

This story is more clearly spelled out in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. Both Matthew and Luke record three specific temptations. I'd like to read Luke's account, which is found in chapter 4 verses 1 through 13:

“Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the desert, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry.

The devil said to him, " If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread."

Jesus answered, " It is written, Man does not live on bread alone."

The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And he said to him, " I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. So if you worship me, it will all be yours."

Jesus answered, " It is written, Worship the Lord your God and serve him only."

The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. " If you are the Son of God," he said, " throw yourself down from here. For it is written, He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone."

Jesus answered, " It says, " Do not put the Lord your God to the test."

When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.”

Now let me tell you how **I** interpret these verses. I interpret them to mean that the devil approached Jesus in the wilderness and talked to him, trying to tempt or test him. In fact I have little need to elaborate on these verses; I accept them as written.

Our Christadelphian friends, however, do not. Most Christadelphians, as I said, will tell us that this story should not be interpreted literally. Satan, they say, is a personification of sin.

" Personification" is a figure of speech in which something is represented as having human qualities. For example, " Proverbs 9:1 says that " Wisdom has built her house." Now Wisdom is not really a woman, nor she a carpenter; that is a figure of speech. Similarly, our friends argue, the devil here is a figure of speech.

I must go on record as strongly opposing that idea. That interpretation of this passage demonstrates a complete lack of sensitivity to literary styles. Where do we find the language of personification? We find it in poems, parables, allegories, and that sort of literature. But Luke 4 is a historical narrative. We don't find personifications and figures of speech talking to historical persons in historical narratives. Do we ever read of Jesus talking to Miss Bitterness? Do we ever read of Paul going into a city and meeting Mr. Depression? Do we ever read about the apostles travelling through the Swamps of Despair? No, we do not. We expect that sort of thing from a book like " Pilgrim's Progress" , but we don't expect it in Matthew, Mark, Luke, John or Acts.

Christadelphians often try to reinterpret Jesus' wilderness temptations by way of an analogy. According to Hebrews 4: 15, they will point out, Jesus was " tempted in every way, just as we are." Since we don't carry on conversations with the devil when we are tempted, then Christ wasn't literally carrying on a conversation either. But let's follow this line of reasoning to its logical conclusion. If Hebrews 4: 15 indicates that the circumstances of Jesus' wilderness temptations were exactly like our own, then we could just as well argue that Jesus wasn't really tempted in the wilderness, since most of us don't go out into the wilderness to be tempted.

Let's face it; Hebrews 4 doesn't mean any of that. Hebrews doesn't tell us that the circumstances of Jesus' temptations were identical to our own; it tells us that he was tempted with the same types of temptations with which we are tempted. Hebrews 4: 15 does **not** argue against a literal interpretation of Jesus' wilderness temptations.

Christadelphians grasp at many other straws to explain this passage away. For example, they may draw our attention to the fact that according to the Bible, the devil took Jesus to the top of a high place where he showed him all the kingdoms of the world. Since it is impossible to really see all the kingdoms of the world from the top of a mountain, they argue, this must not be a literal event. But I think the key to this is found in verse 5. Luke writes, " The devil led him up to a high place and showed him **in an instant** all the kingdoms of the world." The key phrase here is " in an instant." This indicates that what the devil showed Jesus was in fact a vision. Our conclusion is still that the passage is literal; the devil literally took Jesus to a high place and literally showed him a vision of all the kingdoms of the world.

Some Christadelphians have resigned themselves to the inescapable fact that the devil here was really a person who spoke to Christ. For example, in his book " Christendom Astray" , the noted Christadelphian Robert Roberts wrote:

Some think the devil in the case was Christ's own inclinations; but this is untenable in view of the statement that " When the devil had ended all the temptation, he **departed from him for a season**, (Luke iv,13). It is also untenable in view of the harmony that existed between the mind of Christ and the will of the Father. (John viii, 29).

Now if the devil of this passage was not Christ's own desires, then who was he? At this point Christadelphians begin grasping at more straws. Some have suggested that the tempter was a Jew, or the high priest, or a Roman soldier. But what Jew or footsoldier had the authority to offer Christ political power and authority? The devil offered to give Jesus all the kingdoms of the world. With this thought in mind, Roberts mentions another possibility:

It has been suggested, from the fact that the tempter had power to allot the provinces of the Roman world, that he was as leading functionary of state, or the Roman emperor himself.

This is even more incredible! Jesus had not even begun his ministry. He was unknown in the world. I find it most difficult to believe that the emperor of Rome jumped on a ship and rushed over to dirty old Palestine to offer his kingdom to some Galilean he didn't even know. Personally, I find it must easier to believe that the devil here was a spiritual tempter.

This fact has also been admitted by Christadelphians. For example, in his book " Elpis Israel" , Christadelphian founder John Thomas suggested that the devil in this passage was not one of God's ministering angels, because they don't appear on the scene until **after** the devil has left. The only viable alternative is to admit that the devil here was an evil spiritual being. In other words, the devil or Satan was really an accuser or adversary and he really approached Jesus and really tempted him.

The many Christadelphian explanations of Luke 4 tell us something about their method of interpretation. Some have said that the devil was Jesus' human nature; some have said that the devil was a Jew; some have said the high priest; some have said a Roman soldier, some have said the Roman emperor; some have said an angel. What do all these interpretations have in common? Nothing, except for the fact that they reveal a remarkable stubbornness to accept the Bible for what it really says. At this point we see that the Christadelphian interpretation of the Bible is determined not by a consistent principle, but thy their theology. This brief exercise proves that if the Bible does not teach the existence of a supernatural devil, then the passages which speak of him cannot be intelligibly understood.

Let's move on to Luke chapter 11 to see what else we can find out about the devil. In this passage, we read that Jesus was casting out demons. Some people then accused him of casting out demons by the power of Satan. Jesus responds in verses 17 and 18:

Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them, " Any kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and a house divided against itself will fall. If Satan is divided against himself, how can his kingdom stand? I say this because you claim that I drive out demons by Beelzebub."

This entire passage revolves around exorcism. Jesus basically argues that it would be stupid for Satan to cast out his own demons. Therefore, it was not Satan's power that he was using. But I would like to draw your attention to the fact that, according to Jesus in verse 18, Satan has a spiritual kingdom. He has power and authority and demons who serve him. But Jesus doesn't stop there. He goes on to tell a remarkable parable in verses 21 and 22:

When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are safe. But when someone stronger attacks and overpowers him, he takes away the armor in which the man trusted and divides up the spoils.

In this parable, Jesus compares the devil to a strong man, and he describes himself as a stronger person who attacks and overpowers the devil. This is a very important point, and it is reflected in other passages of the Gospels.

For example, in Luke chapter 10 and verse 17, we read: " The seventy-two returned with joy and said, 'Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.' He replied, 'I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.'"

While the disciples were out exerting authority over the demons, Jesus had seen a vision of Satan falling from heaven. This symbolises the fact that in Jesus' ministry, the power of the devil was being mitigated. Satan had lost his power wherever the work of Jesus was at work.

This same fact is also described in John's Gospel. In John 12:31, Jesus said that " Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out." 'The prince of this world' is Satan, and in John 12 his defeat is tied in with the crucifixion of Christ. We are reminded of Hebrews 2: 14, which says that Jesus destroyed " him who holds the power of death--that is, the devil."

Now we may want to ask the question: When did Jesus defeat the devil? In the wilderness temptations when he proved himself? In his ministry when he and his disciples exerted authority over the demons? In the cross when our salvation was secured? The answer is: All of the above. In Jesus' ministry and crucifixion, the devil was judged and defeated.

If the devil was defeated, why is he still active today? The answer is that although judgment was pronounced and his fate was sealed, and that although his power was limited by Jesus two thousand years ago, he is still allowed to rule his spiritual kingdom and continue his fight until judgment day, when according to Matthew 25:18 he and his evil angels will be thrown into the lake of fire. The decisive battle has been won, but the war continues to rage until Christ's return.

Now this raises another set of questions, which we will deal with as we move on from the Gospels to the rest of the New Testament. In Acts 26: 18 Jesus tells Paul that he is sending him to the Gentiles " to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God." There's the idea of Satan's kingdom once more. The kingdom of the devil is a kingdom of darkness. The same thought is expressed in Colossians 1:13, which says that " he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves." The New Testament tells us about the conflict between good and evil, and it also contrasts this present evil age with the age to come. That's why in 2 Corinthians 4: 4 Paul calls the devil " the god of this age."

Our Christadelphian friends find this language most offensive. Are we resorting to dualism at this point, positing that good and evil are equally-matched forces? This is the charge brought against us. Are we now saying that there is more than one god? That Jehovah is the good God and Satan is the bad god? The answer is, absolutely not.

I agree wholeheartedly that the Bible rejects the sort of dualism that was popular among the Persians. Their idea was that the powers of good are not presently capable of overcoming the powers of evil. They really did believe in a " good god" and a " bad god" who are more or less equally matched. This idea cannot be found in the Scriptures. Remember what I said when I was talking about Job's trials: God is in control, and he not only permits evil, he manipulates it to His end.

However, the New Testament **does** present us with a **mild** form of dualism, and I don't think that any of us would deny this. The Bible talks about good and evil, light and darkness. In 2 Corinthians 6, verses 14 through 16, Paul writes:

Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? (Belial was the name that the Jews used to describe the devil.) What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols?

Now Christadelphians argue that if we believe in a supernatural evil person, then we are compromising God's sovereignty. For example, in his debate with Jeff Fletcher three years ago, Mr. Heaster said, " God is all-powerful and...there is no supernatural being at work in this universe that is opposed to Almighty God. As far as I am concerned, if you believe that there is, you are questioning the supremacy of God Almighty." But I would like to pose a question to Mr. Heaster this afternoon. Are there mortal men and women around who are opposed to Almighty God? I think we would all agree that there are. Does this compromise God's supremacy? I think we all agree that it does not.

Then Why Does The Existence Of A Supernatural Opponent Compromise God's Supremacy?

As long as God is Almighty, the devil and all the forces he can muster pose no threat to God. On the contrary, God is in fact manipulating them. That should cause us great comfort. Our destiny is not one huge question mark. Remember " that in all things God works for the good of those who love him."

Mr. Heaster's First Address

2-1-4 The Origin Of Evil

Mr. Mattison, Ladies and Gentlemen, Good Afternoon

I'm afraid I have to start off taking very serious issue with something Mark that said to start off with when he said that what we are talking about today is not something that affects our fellowship the one with the other. Now I would suggest to you that if anyone stands up in a public debate and says, well, the thing I'm talking about is not actually fundamentally essential to Bible truth and to fellowship in the Lord Jesus Christ, I would say that is an indication that such a person is not completely convinced from the scripture as to what they believe. Because if you are convinced that what you believe is absolutely fundamental, then it's a truth that you've underlined in your scriptures time and time again the reasons why you believe what you do.

Now this debate then is not an academic debate. We believe that this debate is a debate about the almightiness of God. We are told in Hebrews 2: 14 which is a passage we will be coming back to, and it's a passage I believe the Abrahamic Faith Church can't really handle: in Hebrew 2:14 we are told that when Christ died on the cross he destroyed the devil. Now that shows that understanding the devil is related to understanding the atonement. It's related to understanding the whole basis and the crux of our salvation.

Now the first point I'd like to make is to talk about the powerfulness of God, and then to talk about where evil and disaster come from, and then to talk about where sin comes from. I want to talk about the whole nature of angels, and then to talk about what these words devil and satan mean and about the principle of personification.So, let's start off then about the powerfulness of God. Well, as Mark as rightly pointed out there is this very common belief, a pagan belief, that has got inside Christianity that there are two gods - there is the force of light and of power and of goodness which is God, and then there is this source of evil and darkness which is the devil. He spoke in his talk about the kingdom of darkness which he says belongs to the devil, etc. Now that view, although he says that the Abrahamic Faith Church don't really believe that, in practice you must do, if you say, okay, here is God, and then okay here is this person called the devil who has got the power of temptation and has got the power of death, he is a personal supernatural being. Well, effectively you are believing in two gods, and so Isaiah 45 really answers that in verse 5, where God says, " I am Yahweh, and there is none else, there is no God - no source of power - beside me. I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and I create evil." So then God is creating evil / disaster in this world. Now if God is all powerful, then we have to come to the conclusion that the god of this world which Mark says he calls the devil, well, we have to come to the conclusion that that person called the devil is actually given power by God and that God actually enables that person to work. So I've got a number of questions that I'm going to give to Mr. Mattison which if you are interested in finding truth, you will want to see those questions answered.

One of them says, Where does Satan get his power from? because I submit that God is all powerful. God is the source of power. Secondly, does Satan do God's will or his own will? What makes Satan tick? What energises him? If it is God, well we've got this terrible idea then built up that God is somehow tempting us, God is somehow bringing temptation and sinful situations into our lives. We know that God doesn't tempt anybody. Now if Satan is the tempter and the devil is the tempter, well, we can't say that God is empowering Satan to tempt us because we are told that God does not tempt us. Now, because God is all-powerful, there is no other source of power there in heaven. Because of that the will of God is done in heaven. " Thy kingdom come, that thy will be done on earth **as it is in heaven"** . Now if the devil is against God, if the devil is not doing God's will, well, then he can't be in heaven because God's will is done in heaven. Yahweh cannot behold evil in His presence. He cannot have any sinfulness in His presence; so the idea of there being some sinful forces up there in heaven with God is quite anathema to the teaching of scripture.

And so then, where do we get disaster from? Well, Mark has suggested to you that we get it from God via this evil being called Satan. But all through, we are told specifically that evil, for example Micah 1: 12, evil came down from the Lord upon Jerusalem. Amos 3: 6 - " if there is evil in a city, God has done it" . So you would have thought that it would say that the evil came from Satan or the devil, and ultimately from God. But we are told all the time that in fact God is the one who is responsible for these things that happen in life.

Now looking at Job, which we will talk about in our second talk, that point is emphasised time and time again, that the Lord brought disaster upon Job. So then we can't say really, can we, that Satan is somebody in opposition to God? According to Mark's kind of theology that was presented to you just now, Satan is a kind of puppet of God and that is quite contrary to the very clear descriptions that we have in the New Testament of a battle between God and Satan. Very often we are told in scripture that our sufferings, our tribulations, in the long term make us more righteous people. Hebrews 12 verse 6 he says " whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth" , and that chastening yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness.

It's for that reason that in 1 Cor. 5: 5, we are told that people could be delivered unto Satan that the spirit might be saved. 1 Tim. 1: 20: people were delivered to Satan that they might learn not to blaspheme. It doesn't say to **a** Satan, it says there to **the** Satan which is what Mark is trying to tell you is this personal being who is bent on causing temptation and is bent on destroying people's spirituality. Well if that is really so, and that is what you are being asked to believe, if that is really so, well then how come those passages say that satan, **the** Satan, has a positive spiritual effect on somebody? How come: if this person is in fact the source of temptation in guiding people into sinfulness, which is what the Abrahamic Faith Church believe?

2-1-5 Angels As Ministering Spirits

Now I want to talk about angels, and I suggest that angels is a subject that the Abrahamic Faith Church are very nervous about because they can see there are a lot of problems there. He did mention that he believed that the devil is the king of sinful rebellious angels. Well, I want to show that the Bible does not make a differentiation between good angels and bad angels.

When you read in the letters of Peter when he says angels bring not railing accusation against the Lord, he doesn't say the good angels, he just speaks about angels. When it says, praise him, all his angels in the psalms, or Psalm 103: 19 that in heaven God's kingdom rules over all, praise the Lord, it says, all his angels that do his pleasure. The angels, says Heb. 1: 13 are **all** ministering spirits helping us to reach salvation. So **all** the angels he says are ministering spirits. He doesn't say the good ones are helping you to get to salvation and the bad ones are trying to turn you away. He says **all** of them are trying to help you to reach salvation. So we can't entertain this idea of sinful angels.

Another of my questions I would like to present to Mark is, did Satan fall from a righteous state to a sinful state, and if so, when did this happen, what is the history of Satan? Now, if Satan didn't fall in the sense of sin, and I know some of the Abrahamic Covenant people say that Satan is an angel that never did actually sin, then I suggest to you that you have the idea, the conclusion that God actually created a sinful being with the power to go and tempt people. And that's a very, very serious thing to believe and quite anathema to scripture. So I want to know, did Satan sin, did Satan fall from a righteous state to a sinful state? What is his history, when did he fall, and is Satan a sinful angel?

Now God is not the minister of sin. God cannot be understood surely as being someone who has agents who are sinful demons or a sinful Satan that goes around making you sin. So then, we are told several times in scripture that Satan fell and we looked at one of them in Luke chapter 10. Now you read several times of Satan's fall. Now I would suggest that the fact that

it talks of Satan falling at several different times is an indication that you can't take that as something dead literal. That is referring to the power of some adversary being overcome.

Mostly importantly in regard to angels, we are told in Luke 20: 35,36 that they which shall be accounted worthy to inherit the kingdom will not die because they are like the angels, they are equal unto the angels. So therefore angels can't die. If angels can't die, they can't sin, because we are told that the wages of sin is death. If you sin, you have to die. Now if angels cannot die, it follows they cannot sin. So then, does Mark believe the devil is mortal, or immortal? The Bible, I would suggest, says that sin brings death, therefore, we are told that because angels can't die, angels can't sin. Therefore, I would suggest the devil cannot be an angel. We are told in Heb. 2: 16 that Christ didn't come to save angels. They don't need salvation; it is us who need it.

2-1-6 The Origin Of Sin

So then, where does sin come from? And this is another question I would put to Mark. What is the origin of sin, what is the origin of Satan, where did this Satan come from, where does sin come from? Well, we are told explicitly in Mark 7: 15 - 23, he says there is nothing from without a man that entering into him can defile him because from within, out of the heart of man proceed evil thoughts. All evil things come from within. So then our sinfulness comes from within.

The idea that temptation to sin and some sinful spirit is located outside us, is really not in scripture. By saying that, we are really trying to shift the blame from us onto this being called the devil or satan. We are told that the wages of sin is death and so why you and I die is because of our sins. It's not...it would be unfair surely if we had to die for someone else's sins. If Satan enters people and forces them to sin, then surely it is a bit unfair that we have to die because really the fault of sin is with this person called Satan. But we are told that the heart is the root of all evil. We are told in James 4: 1, he says " where do wars and fightings come from, come they not hence, even of your lusts?" James 1: 14, he says, " Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his **own** evil desire and enticed." Notice that, notice the words there: he is tempted when he is drawn away of his **own, his own,** desire. It is not a desire that is put into you from outside you; it originates inside you, it is your own evil desire. That we are going to suggest is what the Bible calls the devil.

We are told in Romans 5: 12 that by one man, Adam, sin entered the world.This was the origin of sin. It goes on six times in Romans 5 to say that sin came into the world by one man; it is by one man's offence, by one man's transgression. He emphasises that the origin of sin was with one man. Now Adam didn't even talk to the snake so you can't start connecting Adam with the snake. So it was by Adam that sin came into the world. That is what we are told. We are not told anything in Genesis about Satan, Lucifer or the Devil, or things like that. So that is another question that we need to have answered.

Now, there are many examples in the Old Testament about people sinning. In the time of the Judges lots of people sinning, going wrong. But never is there any indication in the Old Testament that the people were sinning as the result of this spirit being called Satan affecting them, tempting them, leading them into temptation. There is a complete silence there.

That is a very, very significant point I think, because if this person has always been around and he was actually destroyed by Christ on the cross, which Hebrews 2: 14 says he was, then

really you should read a lot about this evil being called the Devil in the Old Testament in his heyday as it were before he got destroyed by Christ and then you should read hardly anything about him in the New Testament after he was destroyed. But of course it is the other way around. So why is there this silence about the Devil and Satan in the Old Testament? I would say it is because the Old Testament antecedent of the Devil, what I understand to be sin in human nature, is just sin in human nature. That's what the Old Testament talks about. You come to the New Testament that is personified.

Now a very significant passage you may like to have a look at is in Romans 7. I see we all have our Bibles, which is a good thing - Romans chapter 7. In this whole passage from verse 15 down to 21 you have got Paul locating the origin of his own sin. And there's not a word about Satan, not a word about the Devil in the whole thing. He says, " In me - verse 18 - that is, in my flesh dwelleth no good thing. The good that I would I do not, and if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." He doesn't say, " When I want to do good and I find myself doing sin, well, it's this devil and he enters me and possesses me." No! He says, " When I want to do good and I do evil and I do sin, why? Because of sin that dwelleth in me. " I find then a law - a principle within me - that when I would do good, evil is present with - i.e., within me. The sinfulness and evil was there inside him. That's the root of sinfulness, that's the root of his problem - not, as Christ said, not due to anybody outside you possessing you. So in Eccl. 9: 3 we are told " the heart of the sons of men is full of evil." Time and again the Bible emphasises the danger of the human heart and the sinfulness of it.

And it is, I suggest, the idea of a personal supernatural devil does right away with man's responsibility to try and change his own thinking; which is why this debate is not an academic debate. I don't think it is just an academic disagreement: this is something that affects every minute or every hour of your day - how you think and how you use the word of God to work on your mind. In Galatians 5: 19 we are told that our sins are the works of the flesh. Our sins are not as a result of us becoming a puppet of this person called Satan. Our sins are created by - are the works of our own flesh.

So let's come and think about these words, satan and devil. Now Mark has obviously told you what the words mean - that satan means an adversary and the devil means a false accuser. Now I would like to ask Mark to show us just from one verse or perhaps one or two verses an explicit definition of what he really is trying to tell you what the devil is. Let's have some verses that explicitly say that satan means this, that or the other or the devil means a supernatural being. I would be interested to see if he can actually explicitly define from one or two verses in plain English what he really thinks the devil is. I would point out that nowhere does the Bible say that satan is a spirit. Now is satan a personal being, or is he a spirit? You can't say he is both because the Bible does not countenance the existence of a spirit world. All existence is in a real bodily form.

Now, this word satan, then, an adversary. Well, what I want to know is...if we are going to accept that the devil is a personal being, as this is what we are being asked to accept, does that mean that every time when you read in the Bible the word satan or the word devil, you have to say, Ah this big personal being, who's responsible for temptation? Well, I think Mark knows full well that you can't really say that. It's an untenable position. When Christ says to Peter, " Get thee behind me Satan" , well, he was talking to Peter. Peter was an adversary. I would like to know what his view of the definite article is there. Or when Jesus says, " I have chosen twelve of you and one of you is a devil" . He is talking about Judas. Well, obviously,

you can't look at the word devil and say, Oh yes, this supernatural being. Of course not. I think Mark would agree with me that it's just a word that means a false accuser, slanderer, an enemy. And it's used as a noun or an adjective and I think there is no doubt about that. As he said, " The Lord stirred up an adversary (a satan) to Solomon" - this man Hadad. 'Satan' there just means an adversary, it doesn't mean anything other than adversary.

Now, very significantly, and this is very significant, when you go to 2 Samuel 24: 1 - you may just like to flick there - 2 Sam. 24: 1 - " The Lord moved David against Israel" to take a census. Now the parallel record of that is 1 Chronicles 21: 1 - " Satan stood up against Israel" and provoked David to take a census. Satan made him to take a census. God made him take a census. So you can't say that when you read the word the Satan, " Oh that that's talking about some personal supernatural being of evil" which is what you have just been told, because it says there quite clearly that it was God who was acting as **the** Satan in this particular instance. God was the adversary. Well, you can't say that Satan always refers to some person or supernatural being.

2-1-7 Sin Is Personified

Now, we then come on to this question of personification. Now, one of my questions to Mark is: Is sin personified? Is sin personified? And I would submit to you that it's quite obvious sin is personified. " The wages of sin is death" - sin is personified as a paymaster paying out your wages - death, **death**. Now Mark has made the point that you only read the idea of personification in poetical books. Well, Romans isn't a poetical book and you have got loads of personification there. It says " sin has reigned unto death" . Is sin a king? Well, that's personification. " The wages of sin is death" - is sin a paymaster? No, it's personification. So then, the book of Romans is shot full with that. To say that personification is only used in the poetical books is nonsense.

Now, if sin then, is personified, and I think there is no way round it, sin **is** personified, although we will have Mark tell us what he thinks in a moment - if sin is personified, and if as Mark admits really that the word satan just means an adversary, what is the objection to my saying " sin is personified" and the name of that personification is satan? What is the problem? What is the problem of accepting that? Sin is personified, yes, and it has got a name. A personification has a name. Nothing unreasonable about that, and it's called understandably, the enemy, the adversary, the false accuser. Because that's just our Number 1 enemy, isn't it? Ourselves, satan, evil desires within us, that personification that's inside us. All the times you read these descriptions throughout the New Testament of sin's personification, and all the times you read of things like " the devil is a big dragon" or " the devil is lion" or " the devil is a snake" or " the devil is a king, or sin, or whatever."

Now, you can't turn a personification into a person. That is something I've probably got to say to you several times this afternoon, that I feel the CGAF turns a personification into a person. Now if they say they don't do that, well what do we do when it says, " the devil is a roaring lion" is he a lion? or is he a person? He can't be both. Now, if we accept that all these things are figurative language - he's a lion, a lion-like force, a snake-like force, a dragon-like force, well then, we are getting more at the whole purpose of personification, that the Bible is constantly trying to tell us how sinful our nature really is. And so it likens it to a big angry lion, or to a subtle serpent, or to a big dramatic dragon. You can't take all those figurative pieces of language and take them dead literally - take all those personifications as a literal person.

Now let me just give you some evidence as to why Christadelphians believe that satan or the devil does refer to our own sinfulness. Well, we come back to Hebrews 2: 14, which is the verse I would quote to specifically define what I understand is the devil. It says there that Christ had human nature, that through his death, he might destroy him that hath the power of death, that is the devil. So the devil has the power of death. But we know that sin has the power of death. Temptation creates sin, which creates death, James says in chapter 1. So then, the devil must be related to our own internal sinfulness. It says Christ had human nature so that by his death he might destroy the devil. If the devil is a person, well how could Christ's death destroy him? I would have thought his life might have destroyed him. How could his death destroy him? How can a man's death have power over another personal being?

Now we are told in Romans 8: 3, that Christ was of our human nature so that he might destroy the power of sin, in the flesh. Here in Hebrews 2 it says that Christ was of human nature that he might destroy the power of the devil. So I suggest that sin and the devil are related by that parallelism. Hebrews 9: 26, we are told that it was by his death that Christ destroyed sin. Hebrews 2: 14, " by his death he destroyed the devil." Sin and the devil are definitely related. Now we can't say, it is very difficult to say that they are not related. And as I say, it is difficult to say that sin isn't personified. If sin is personified, and if sin is the devil, and the devil is a title that can mean adversary or enemy, well then I would say that the Christadelphian position is pretty watertight.

So then, we are told in Acts 5: 3 that Satan filled the heart of Ananias and it goes on in the next verse to say that Ananias " conceived" this thing in his heart. So then satan filling that man's heart is the same as his conceiving sin within his own heart. So then he conceived that sin, like a woman conceives a child, it didn't get into her from outside her, it begins, just like sin begins inside you. And so, in 1 John 3: 5 and 8, we are told that Christ was manifested to destroy the works of the devil, and then we are told that he was manifested to destroy our sins, as if our sins and the works of the devil are the same thing, which is what Galatians 5 says, the works of the flesh - these are what our sins are. The devil therefore, is our innate sinfulness. Now Christ destroyed him that hath the power of death. There is a big personification there.

I'm surprised that the CGAF has such a problem accepting what Christadelphians are saying about personification, because they accept in common with Christadelphians that you have got another massive personification right though the New Testament based around the idea of the Spirit. Because we don't believe the Holy Spirit is a person and I don't think that you do either, so when you read about the new man being formed inside you, that is a personification of the spiritual man. It says, we read about Christ in you, the hope of glory, it talks about the new man of the spirit, the spirit or Christ in you. These are personifications of that new man in Christ Jesus that is created inside you. In the same way, there is that massive personification running through the New Testament which the CGAF accept.

(Note: a few words are missing at end of first side of tape) the person and that is the reason I suggest why sin is personified and that is why is so important that sin is personified to make us realise that with more self knowledge as we grow in Christ to understand that in fact we have got two sides to our character, two people within us, and the new man has got to overcome the old man. There is this spiritual warfare going on inside us, not out in the sky somewhere, or up in the cosmic regions, it is there inside our heart. That is the fundamental purpose of Christianity, to overcome that evil man, those evil tendencies inside us, personified as a person. Now we are told that evil thoughts proceed from the heart in Mark 7.

They proceed from within. It doesn't mean that our evil thoughts are literal people but they are spoken of as somebody, or something, that proceeds from inside you, that walks out, as it were, from inside you. We are told that a man's lusts drag him away - James 1: 14 - when he is tempted. His lusts drag him away. That's a personification again, you see, the Bible is riddled with it. It's not just in poetical books, the Bible is riddled with personification. But our evil desires, or lusts, drag us away. They proceed out of our heart and come up to us and drag us away.

There is a fight, a battle between us. It says that some people are dragged away by their own lusts completely we are told in Timothy, whereas others resist that. " Resist the devil and he will flee from you." If you resist the preying temptations that prey on your mind, as we all know or we should do from our own spiritual striving eventually those temptations will go down. The devil, the real devil, will flee from you.

So then, finally, I would just like to summarise what I've been saying. I've been saying that these words, devil and satan, refer to adversary, or mean adversary, or false accuser, that the origin of disaster in our lives, evil if you want to look at it in that way is of God, and that God brings those problems into our lives. He may use His angels in order to do that, but those angels are not tempting us to sin, they are not associated with sinfulness, but they are there to bring problems into our lives, which make us better people. I've said that the origin of sin is inside us, not in any spirit being outside us, but that sinfulness which is inside us, is personified, and I'm asking for clarification from the CGAF whether they accept this personification of sin, and if they do, then I do not understand why they are unhappy with calling that the devil or satan. I would like to know how Satan can be described as having a positive spiritual effect upon somebody. So then, these are the sort of questions which I put to Mark and I put them on a piece of paper and I would like to see them answered.

Now the problem with debating is that the person who is debating can build up in his own mind the tremendous belief in what he believes and you can keep on and on justifying your own side without picking up the things the other person has said. In my next speech I trust I will be able to look at some of the things, some of the good points, I believe, that Mark raised, and I won't attempt to answer all of them because there isn't time in 15 minutes to do justice to all he said, so I would like to introduce you to a booklet I wrote a while ago which comments on each of the major passages which talk about the devil and satan. It is called " In Search of Satan" and it will be on display on the bookstall at the back.

Mr. Mattison's Reply

2-1-8 Does Satan Do God's Will?

Thank you very much. After his presentation, Mr. Heaster handed me a list of questions which I hope to deal with as I follow a brief outline. I categorised these questions into three or four different subject headings. The first series of questions are as follows: Where does Satan get his power from? Does Satan do God's will or his own will? How can Satan have a positive spiritual effect upon someone?

Now the comments that Mr. Heaster has made about God's powerfulness, His supremacy, I think don't contradict at all what I was saying. I think I covered that pretty well in my presentation that God is ultimately in control of everything. Yes, in accordance with Isaiah 45, God is the source of good and also, ultimately of all trouble. However, it also true that

this trouble is carried out through free-will agents who are not God Himself. This includes people, as I pointed out at the end of my presentation and this also includes the devil. Now does Satan do his own will, or God's will? The answer is both. Satan does his will. He pursues his own interests, but to his frustration, God ultimately uses him, and God manipulates his actions.

I believe that in the third question - how can Satan have a positive spiritual effect on someone, when after all his intent is to destroy us - I think we can illustrate this principle by talking about another verse I alluded to in my presentation found in Genesis 50 when Joseph said to his brothers, " You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good." Now what was the story behind that? The story was that his brothers who intended to harm him - they hated him and wanted him out of the way. What was the best way they could think of to get rid of him? They sold him into slavery. They had very evil intentions in mind; however, God was ultimately working in all of this to provide a future for the people of Israel, because the ultimate result of that was that Joseph eventually down in Egypt came to a very high political power and was able to provide for his people later on. So God intended that for good, although his brothers had intended it for evil. I would suggest to you that is precisely how this principle works between Satan and God. Satan intends to do evil but God is the one who is in control, much to his frustration.

2-1-9 The Origin Of The Devil

So we pass on from the idea of God's supremacy to the idea which was next addressed, which is that of the devil's origin. These questions are: Did Satan fall from a righteous state to a sinful state? If so, when? What is his history? Is Satan a sinful angel? I do have some thoughts on these, and I have reflected on them. I don't think it is wrong to reflect on them. In fact I have written a paper on this topic, but I would suggest that these are peripheral questions, designed to draw us away from the main question at hand because the Bible does not really address the origin of the devil.

We were asked then to produce a verse which definitively states what or who the devil is, and I would like to answer this challenge by turning to the Gospel of John 8th chapter and 44th verse. And we read there Jesus' definition of the devil. He says to the Pharisees, " You belong to your father the devil and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language for he is a liar and the father of lies." I believe this is the definitive verse. One scholar commenting upon this in the Greek said that - I believe the quotation was something like this: The devil is determined by the fact that he is the devil. Questions about his origin, nature and being are not relevant. What is relevant is that he exists. I believe also that the descriptions of Satan, Adversary, and Diabolos, Accuser, are appropriate in that sense because they describe Satan's essential being. It is not really important what his name is, or where he comes from. The Bible doesn't really address that. However, the Bible says he does exist and that is the point we need to focus on.

2-1-10 Fallen Angels

Moving along from that we move on to the question of fallen angels which was, I believe, the second point of Mr. Heaster's outline. There are a couple of points here; verses such as Hebrews 1:14 were referred to which say that **all** angels are ministering spirits. Incidentally, there was a very interesting comment made that there is no spiritual realm or something to

that effect, perhaps I misunderstood, only corporeal beings, or something like that - perhaps I just misunderstood, but that sounded very foreign to me because I do believe angels are spirits and Hebrews 1: 14 says angels are spiritual beings apparently without physical bodies and that sort of thing. That's what Jesus was getting at in Luke 20 which we will get to in just a moment here.

But in Hebrews 1: 14, this is a good point - - it does say that **all** angels are ministering spirits. So then does this seem to rule out the existence of evil angels? I believe it does not. I believe that this is a figure of speech and we have been talking about figures of speech a lot so I guess we will talk about this one. It is called synecdoche. This figure of speech is a figure in which the all is used for a part, or a part for the all. For example, in John the Baptist's preaching, all Judea went out to hear him preach. Now did every last man, woman and child in Judea go out to hear John preach? No they did not. But the greater majority of them did. There the word all is used in a figurative way to describe large crowds of people. Similarly, I would suggest that Hebrews 1: 14 uses this figure of speech to describe most of the angels who are God's ministering spirits.

Now the statement was made that the Bible does not distinguish between good angels and evil / fallen angels. I believe that it does. For example in 1 Timothy 5:21, we read of elect angels. Now if there are elect angels, it follows that there are angels who are not elect. We also read about evil angels elsewhere. For example, Matt. 25:41 which says that the devil and his angels will be destroyed in the lake of fire.

Now, moving right along, the next argument that was laid out about angels not being able to sin was based on a logical construction from Luke 20 and Romans 6:23, I believe. Luke 20 which states that in the resurrection we will be made like the angels because they do not die, and if death is the wages of sin, and angels cannot die, therefore angels cannot sin. It sounds like a good argument but I believe that it is based on a false premise. It is based on the premise that immortality is predicated on one's inability to sin. That is to say, that immortality is predicated upon one's lack of free will. In fact what Jesus meant there was not that angels are incapable of dying. Clearly they are, because God can destroy them. The Bible talks about that. What Jesus is talking about, and we must balance this scripture with other scriptures, such as Matthew 25:41. Jesus' point was that angels do not grow old and die and they do not suffer injury like we mortals with our bodies do; but in fact, they are do not die in that sense. However, God can certainly destroy an angel of His own creation. If God cannot destroy a single angel, certainly He is not very powerful.
I believe this is also strengthened by reference to 1 Timothy 6: 16 which says that God alone has immortality. That means immortality in and of Himself, innate immortality. Now the immortality of the angels is not innate immortality but derived immortality. They derive their immortality from God and God can take that immortality away at any time. But I do believe in fallen angels. I don't believe the Bible talks very much about them, but I believe it does talk about them a little bit. As I've said, I have written a paper about that which will be available later on.

2-1-11 External Temptation

Moving right along, I'll go on to this point: The figure of speech known as personification was addressed quite a bit, and the question was put to us: Is sin personified? We were referred to the Book of Romans for example, as well as other passages. My answer is, Yes, sin is personified. However, I think I was misinterpreted. I did not say that we find the

language of personification only in the poetic books. What I said was that we find the language of personification, we find that particular figure of speech in particular types of literature. I specifically mentioned parables, allegories and that sort of thing, but I didn't say that personification is not used in the epistles.
What I did say is that the language of personification is not used in historical narratives. I believe that point deserves to be taken seriously. I would like anyone to produce for me any historical narrative anywhere in the Bible where a personification talks to a person. No such passage exists. I have no problem at all with personification and figure of speech. Indeed, I believe the Bible is filled with it; however, I do believe we must remain sensitive to the literary text of the scriptures. There were several references to metaphors that are used throughout the scriptures; for example, the devil is roaring lion, the devil is a dragon, that sort of thing, and of course those are not personifications. Just for the record, those are metaphors and those metaphorical uses of course do not argue against the personal existence of such a devil.
Let us see, the question was also asked if the words Satan and Devil can be used just as descriptive nouns without referring to the supernatural devil. I also addressed that in my presentation and I believe that they can. For example, John 6: 70 was cited in which Jesus called Judas a devil; however, in that case, and the other cases in which we find this, as I stated, the article is not used.
Now Matthew 16 and verse 23 was cited in which Jesus called Peter Satan. Now I don't think that Jesus intended to call Peter just an adversary there because of course in the Greek New Testament the word 'satanas' is a direct transliteration from the Hebrew word 'satan' and it is being used almost as if it were a name - the enemy - and I believe that Jesus was using a figure of speech known as antonomasia in which someone is called by a name to imply something about them; for example, if I said to you, " You are a Hitler" , what I am implying is that you are a very cruel person indeed. This figure of speech is used several times in the Bible; for example, I believe it was Jezebel who called Jehu Zimri, not meaning that his name was really Zimri, but meaning that he was a murderer. This was that figure of speech. I believe that Jesus' point is that Peter's suggestion had such radical consequences for God's plan of salvation that it can be characterised as having come from the great arch enemy, the devil himself.
Let's see, okay, next we move on to the origin of sin. Several passages were referred to in this context, Mark chapter 7, Romans chapter 7 and also James chapter 1. Now I would like to go on record as saying that all of these passages are quite irrelevant and they only relevant if they are based on a misunderstanding of what temptation really is. For example, our Christadelphian friends often go to Mark chapter 7 and say sin comes from within and then they reason well, if you can prove that sin comes from within, then the existence of an external tempter is thereby refuted. Well, that is only if temptation and sin are identical, but the Bible does distinguish between these two things. Temptation often comes from without, and I would like to offer an example: in Genesis 3 when the serpent tempted Adam and Eve, the temptation came from without, the sin came from within and there is a difference. I would like to turn for example to Romans 7 where it talks a great deal about our struggle with sin. The devil isn't mentioned, no, and he doesn't need to be because the devil does not make us sin. In fact there was a statement made to the effect that Christianity teaches a form of dualism, but I think one will find that the Church by and large does not teach such a doctrine and one cannot find in the systematic theological text books the teaching that the devil makes us sin.
James 1 was referred to so let's turn over there and see what we read there. Chapter 1, verses 13 through 15: " When tempted, no one should say God is tempting me, for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He tempt anyone but each one is tempted when by his own evil

desire he is dragged away and enticed. Then after desire is conceived it gives birth to sin, and sin when it is full grown, gives birth to death." Now the Christadelphian argument from this passages is, as Christadelphian author Peter Watkins has admitted, actually an argument from silence, because the text here does not rule out external temptation; what it says is that temptation is temptation because of wrong desires.
For example, if you were to wave a packet of cigarettes underneath my nose I would not be tempted by that, because I have no desire. On the other hand, if I did have desire for that, I would find that to be a temptation. To give another example: if you are on a diet and I know you are on a diet and I know you love chocolate and I want to tempt you I can wave a chocolate bar underneath your nose. Now if you like chocolate then I am leading you away by your own lusts. It's your own desire that makes this a temptation, but without those desires, I would not be able to tempt you, but if you have that desire, I am tempting you. You then have a decision to make, are you going to eat the candy bar and suffer the consequences of bad complexion, weight gain and all the rest of it, or are you not going to eat the candy bar. Whatever you do, you are responsible for; I am not responsible for that. I am tempting you but you are going to suffer the consequences of what you have to do, and similarly, I would suggest the Bible does not rule out external temptation, because it clearly teaches this. Also in Christendom Astray, p. 179 I think it was, Robert Roberts talked about external temptation. So if men can tempt men, and this is not ruled out by James 1, why cannot the devil be a spiritual tempter who tempts men.
I don't know if I've reached all my notes, but I'm sure my time is up, but I would say one last thing. We referred to several verses, for example, a comparison of Hebrews 2: 14 and Romans 6: 23 - a verse snatched from here and a verse snatched from there and we looked at words and we said, " Okay, this word and this word are identical, well, I don't think that is a very sound method of interpretation. I think if there were a single passage which said, " Here is sin and here is the devil" and it makes the equation that would be a little bit different, but to take verses from different authors and say that these words are parallel, that's not necessarily the case. And there is some more to say, but maybe we'll get to it in questions and answers. Thank you very much.

Mr. Heaster's Reply

2-1-12 Satan And God's Will

Mr. Mattison, Ladies & Gentlemen, Good afternoon again. Well, I would like to pick up first of all on something which Mark was talking about earlier on. He made a big deal of it; it seems the Abrahamic Faith's position rests on this idea that Satan is only an agent of God, and that Satan is actually doing God's will. Now he said that in his answer. I am glad he addressed the question but he said that Satan is doing God's will. Now how can that be the case when time after time, we are told that there is a conflict between God and Satan; that Christ was manifested - 1 John 3: 5 - to destroy the works of the devil. That's not the devil doing God's will. If the devil is doing God's will why does he have to be destroyed? Hebrews 2: 14 - on the cross he destroyed the devil. Why did he have to die on the cross? The devil was only doing His will.
Revelation 12 which I think is a passage incidentally that the CGAF fight shy of - it is very difficult to prove their point from there. Revelation 12, you've got Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon who is the old serpent, the devil and satan and his angels. So you've got Michael fighting with the devil. Now that language of conflict and the language of the devil being thrown out of heaven with his angels with him, is that, does that give you the impression that the devil is doing God's will? Oh, come on, it doesn't does it?

2-1-13 Ho diabolos

Now he's also completely sidetracked a very fundamental issue. He started off saying in the Old Testament you've got where it says **the Satan**, that that is always talking about this supernatural being called Satan. He made a lot of emphasis on that point. But I would like to point out that there is only three or at the most four cases where you read about **the Satan** in the Old Testament. You certainly don't read about the devil at all. So you don't get none there, but you've got at the most four, probably more like two or three references to **the Satan** in the Old Testament. And that is what the CGAF are pinning their beliefs on - that there's this supernatural being called Satan which they say is referred to **the Satan** who is going around bringing all these problems into people's lives and is the source of temptation, is a spirit being and has always been active right up until the point when he was destroyed by Christ on the cross and yet they are pinning it on two or three verses in the Old Testament.

Now the point I made about God being called 'the Satan', that's gone unanswered. I would like to bring up another one in the Septuagint. Now Mark referred to the Septuagint to prove that diabolos and satan are equivalent in the Old Testament, so he obviously accepts the Septuagint. Now in the Book of Esther you read in the Septuagint of **ho diabolos** - the devil, referring to Haman, not to this supernatural being. So the claim that was made, I submit, and it was a claim that is at the basis of Mark's presentation, that when you read about **the** Satan**, the** devil,that is talking about the person outside you called the supernatural devil. Well, I'm sorry but that doesn't hold up because there's cases where you read it with the definite article and it just doesn't fit in with the theology that's being hung on it.

Now I was very disappointed that he didn't answer the questions about where did Satan come from, or did Satan fall, because okay, if he is going to say Satan did not fall, and I know that some of the CGAF people say that Satan didn't fall, then we have this conclusion to draw: that God created a sinful being. If Satan, or whoever it is, didn't actually sin, if he didn't fall at any time, well then, you have the question well where, sorry, if he didn't actually fall, then you have the conclusion that God actually created a sinful being, God created an agent of temptation. Well, that's just not on because God tempts no man. You really have got to expect us to believe that God created an agent of temptation. So if Mark doesn't know whether Satan fell, or he doesn't want to talk about that one, what does he make of Revelation 12, Satan being thrown out of heaven, Satan falling as lightning. Now this fall of Satan occurs two or three times. So you can't say that there was a specific time when Satan fell from a righteous state to a sinful state. So therefore you have to say Satan didn't fall, so therefore you say, well if he didn't fall, well God created him just as he is. That's an untenable position.

Now Mark then quoted from some commentator about John 8: 44 and said that Satan's being is irrelevant. Well, that is what this debate's about! Who is Satan? Well, he says the being of Satan is irrelevant. That surely is an admission of weakness.

2-1-14 The Devil And Cain

Now he pinned all his hopes on John 8: 44 as the verse he would choose. Like I choose Hebrews 2: 14, he said he would choose John 8: 44 to prove his point that this was his definition of the devil.

Now it says there: " Ye are of your father, the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning. It says, " he was a liar, and the father of it." It might have slipped your notice that all through there he is alluding back to Cain, he's not alluding back to a snake, or anything like that, he is alluding back to Cain. Who was the first murderer? The devil, or Cain? The devil, sorry, Cain. Cain - was the first murderer. Now, we read in Mark 7 that all evil things including lies, he says, lies, lying, comes from within, out of the heart of man. It says here that the devil is the father of lies. In Mark 7: 15 it says your evil heart is where lies are conceived. Think of the man who told a lie - Ananias. What does it say? " He conceived it in his heart" . It says here that the devil is the father, the genderer, the conceiver of lies. So then, I would say that John 8:44 fits in perfectly with my view that the devil is fundamentally talking about our innate sinfulness, because it is that which causes us to lie, it is that which causes us to be untruthful.

2-1-15 Where Sin Comes From

Now, I would like to briefly look at Job. I want to talk about Job and the wilderness temptations, and as I say, the other passages which Mark commented on are explained in this book. (In Search of Satan). Now, it seems that what Mark is trying to say, and maybe I'm misunderstanding him, but what he seems to be saying is that Job had a Satan, and that adversary, that Satan, was this person called Satan, a supernatural being, and that God brought these problems into Job's life via this evil sinful being called Satan. Now again, if that's what we're really asked to believe, then we are saying that God's has a puppet who is actually sinful and that is just completely contrary to what the Scripture teaches.

Now if what Mark is really saying is disaster and evil in the sense of calamity like your house falls down or these sort of things, if he is saying that those things come from God through his angels, well, yes, that is exactly what we believe. God uses angels to bring about evil in the sense of disaster. But this debate, I mean really that is a bit of a smokescreen I suggest, that Mark says, sure we believe that the angels and Satan bring about disaster oh yes, we would agree, if you want to call an angel a satan and say the angel brings about disaster in your life, yes, that's quite true. But the point at issue, and this is what the smokescreen rather hides, the point of issue between Christadelphians and the CGAF is 'where sin comes from'. It is no good Mark saying that where it comes from is irrelevant, it' not irrelevant. That's what the whole point of this debate is about.

Now we're told that sin comes from within and it is **sin** which we do not believe comes from an angel, and it is **temptation** which does not comes from an angel. Now that is what Mark has said, and then he has changed his tack and said oh well, it is actually disaster that comes from angels and Satan. Well, yes, we agree with that but we don't agree with this thing about **sin** coming from an angel, because for one thing no proof has been given, we're still waiting for the proof. Secondly, we have given a whole load of evidence which shows that in fact sin comes from inside us.

So then, Job. Well, the assumption was made of course that Job's Satan was an angel. Well, that's an assumption, because that phrase 'sons of God' does not always refer to angels. The sons of God can refer to the true believers. Now if we're saying that Satan is in any way sinful, and we have shown plenty of connections between Satan and sinfulness - if Satan is a sinful person or being, well, he could not have been in the presence of God Himself in heaven, because we are told that " God is of purer eyes than to behold evil" - Habakkuk 1: 13. Psalm 5: 8 (should this be v.5?) - it says that God cannot abide evil in his presence. So we cannot say that Satan is a sinful being up there in heaven. We would suggest that the presence of the Lord though is a phrase more often used about God's presence manifested through the priest, or something like that, and it has been suggested that Satan

may have been an actual worshipper, one of the sons of God.
But who Satan was there in that particular text in a sense is irrelevant, because if the Satan was under God's control, well then, therefore, the Satan was not a sinful being. Now Mark said that human adversary can't smite people with illness, well, look at the Acts of the Apostles. What did Peter do to Ananias and Sapphira? He smote them with a crippling illness. Now again, he used the power of God to do that. We cannot say that human adversaries can't smite people with problems. Of course they do.

2-1-16 The Temptations Of Jesus

Now, let's go on then and think about the temptations of Jesus. This is obviously a very big thing in the CGAF theology - the temptations of Christ. Now I want to make the point very strongly that you cannot read the record of those temptations absolutely literally, that you can't read them absolutely literally. The idea that the Devil there is a personal being depends completely on a literal reading of it. Now here are a few reasons why I don't think you can read that literally. We are told he was taken up into a high mountain to see all the kingdoms of the world in their future glory in a moment of time. If the devil just gave him a vision why did he take him up on the top of a mountain to give him a vision? I don't see any point in that. Now, if you compare the records of the temptations in Matthew 4 and Luke 4, you will see that those three temptations are presented in different order. In one, you've got, for example, say the temptation to make stones into bread, that comes first and then in another record, you will find that is second or third. So then, that means that those temptations occurred more than once. Now we are told another proof of that in Mark 1: 13 it says that Christ was in the wilderness forty days tempted of Satan. The temptations of Satan went on for the forty day period. Now Matthew 4: 3 says that after the forty days had finished, then he was tempted by Satan. So then, you can't avoid the conclusion that those things happened far more than once. Now, for Christ to go up to the highest mountain, well I mean even Hermon in the north would have been the high mountain in that area, he wouldn't have had time to walk up there, come back down again, experience all those temptations in just a matter of a few days. Now, you've also got the idea of the devil leading Christ through the streets of Jerusalem and climbing up this pinnacle of the temple which seems to me to be a preposterous thing to take literally. We're told then, that the devil said to Christ, " I can give you all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time."
I believe there he was actually being given a vision of the Kingdom of God because he saw the whole kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And he says the power and the glory of those kingdoms I can give you. But time and again we are told the power and the glory of the kingdom belong to God and God alone. " Thine is the Kingdom, the power and the glory." But we are told in Psalm 2: 7, 8, God says to Christ in prophecy, " Ask of me and I will give you the kingdoms of the world" - ask of me and I will give you all the kingdoms of the world, for your inheritance" . Now Christ knew that that was possible. He only had to ask God and he would get it. So then the devil had no power to actually offer him those things. What it was then was his own mind tempting him to ask God as Psalm 2 said he could for the Kingdom, the power and the glory there and then without having to go through the cross. Now Christ didn't turn around and say, " Come off it Satan, you haven't got the power to give me those kingdoms, the kingdom belongs to God" - no! he had to exhort himself: Don't tempt the Lord your God. Now we are told that all power and all authority is given to Christ by God - the devil was not involved in it. The devil didn't sort of make a handover of all authority and power when Christ died on the cross. No, God gave Christ that power and authority.

Now because the Lord Jesus Christ had our human nature and he had those temptations arising within him, he had that human man, the man, the natural man inside him, and yet his spiritual man was separate from that natural man. When you think of it, there was no way in which the record of the temptation of Christ could be announced to us in any other language apart from to personify those evil desires which he had and yet which he overcame. Therein is the basis of the atonement that it was through his death and through having that man of the flesh inside him, that overcoming that, we are able to have salvation.
One final point. Mark said that when it says that the spirit led Christ into the wilderness he said, well there you are, the devil is a spirit: the devil led Christ. Now Mark I know believes in interpreting scripture by scripture. It must have occurred to all of us who have studied this passage that every time Christ is tempted, he quotes from the Old Testament and he quotes every time from either Deuteronomy 8 or 6. It is always in the context of Israel in the wilderness. So there you are, Israel were led by God, by the angel, the Spirit, if you like, into the wilderness for forty years, just like Christ was led for forty days in the wilderness, and then he was hungry. It says in Deuteronomy 8 that God allowed Israel to go hungry in the wilderness so that they might learn His providence. And so it was exactly the same with Christ. That's why he keeps quoting from Deuteronomy. So there is a definite parallel there between the experience of Israel in the wilderness and the experience of the Lord Jesus in the wilderness. Now Israel were not led into the wilderness by the devil, they were led by the Spirit, by Yahweh's angel, the spirit manifest in that angel. They weren't led by somebody called Satan or the devil. And so in the parallel with the Lord Jesus, he was led not by the devil, but as it says, by the Spirit.

Questions From the Floor to Mr. Mattison

(Some questions have been paraphrased. The recording was not always sufficiently clear)

2-1-17 Why Doesn't Satan Give Up

Q. If Satan is an intelligent being, as a fallen angel we would assume he would be, he would know about the power of God, as is seen in Job, and knows he cannot win. Then why doesn't he give up his cause in view of what is said in Gen.3:15 and Heb. 2:14? What kind of hope does the devil have?

A. Okay, so the question is, if the devil is intelligent and if he is a fallen angel, sure he must be intelligent, and he knows God is more powerful than he is, and if he knows about his curse and his judgment and that he is going to lose, why doesn't he just give up now? That is your question, right? Well, there are many examples of our own human history of people who have fought battles knowing full well they are going to lose. The devil knows his judgment is sure, yet the sort of thing we read about in Rev. 12 - the sort of angelic battles - I think are the futile last efforts of someone who knows that he practically doesn't stand a chance and I think he doesn't have a hope. Does that seem to answer your question?

Q. Well, for now.

2-1-18 Personification In Historical Narratives

Q. You mentioned about personification not being used in historical narratives?

A. Yes.

Q. Is this what you would say is a historical narrative or not? Christ says, the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness. Kingdom, which is the kingdom of God, is not a parent, not a person, which has children. There is this personification...

A. Okay, so the question is, if personification is not, if the figure of speech of personification is not used in historical narratives, then what figure of speech, or what did Jesus mean when he said, when he talked about the children of the kingdom? My answer is, yes, that is a personification, but that's being narrated in the context of historical narrative: that's within Jesus's quotation, that's Jesus's language, what he is saying. There is a difference between that, a report of someone's language. Because we use figures of speech in our language all the time, personification, metaphor, all sorts of figures of speech. However, in the historical narrative describing what these people do, no, we don't find personification in that context.

Q. Shall I try one more to see...

A. Sure.

Q.When we read about the waves tossing the people...

A. The waves tossing the people?

Q.Right, Matt. 14:24, " the ship was now in the midst of the sea tossed with waves" , as if the waves were a person, tossing them about. This is very common way of describing the phenomena, and I submit that is personification in the course of this ordinary description.

A. Now, what was your reference?

Q. Matt. 14: 24. There are two words, waves tossing and wind being contrary. Contrary is a human attribute, wind is of course, wind, and is personifying, I would submit, waves and wind...

A. So the question is, that in Matt. 14: 24, we read that the boat was buffeted by waves and wind and buffet is something that people do, and so personification is used in this historical narrative.

Q. Read the next phrase as well, wind...

A. Okay, my New International Version says, " buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it."

Q. The only word there that would be personification would be 'buffet'. Would you accept that as a historical description and buffeting being a human action?

A. Well, it is obviously a historical narrative as far as buffeting, I don't know, I mean, inanimate objects can buffet, can it not, I believe it can.

Q. I'm sure as normally used, it is a word for people's action. I'm submitting that personification is something that is part of everyday speaking, including historical narratives.

A.Okay, I disagree. Back here?

Q.I just to make a comment. The wind and waves are physically moving the boat and that there is no need for personification there. The wind and the waves are physically performing the act.

A. Okay, so Mike's point, I'm speaking into the mic for the transcript's sake, Mike's point is that the wind and the waves are moving the boat, and that is not personification.

Q. I want to pursue the historical use of personification. Could you read 2 Chronicles 28: 23 in your version. I thought I had a good one to ask you, but your version changed the wording. 2 Chronicles 28: 23 regarding the gods of Damascus.

A Okay, 2 Chron. 28: 23 reads: " He offered sacrifices to the gods of Damascus who had defeated him, for he thought since the gods of the king of Aram have helped them, I will sacrifice to them because they will help me. But they were his downfall and the downfall of all Israel." Okay.

Q. We all agree that these gods did not exist as gods, right? They were idols.

A. I believe that the gods of the surrounding nations may very well have been demons.

Q. Do you think that when it says these gods smote him, it was in fact personal demons smiting him?

A. I would have to read the context to really answer your question and sit down and read the chapter.

From the floor: Mark, could I make a comment:

Mr. Mattison: Okay, Mike has a comment.

From the floor: Reading that passage, it appears to me that it was Damascus who had defeated Ahaz not the gods. He offered sacrifices to the gods of Damascus because Damascus was able to defeat Ahaz. Ahaz assumed that it was their gods that had given them that power to defeat him.

A. Okay, my comment is that it was not the gods of Damascus who defeated Ahaz, it was Damascus who had defeated him, and he was thinking of offering sacrifices to them. Now we had a question over here?

2-1-19 Can Immortal Angels Sin?

Q. This idea that God would use Satan for his own purpose, I think you would recognise that Satan is far more successful...(few words inaudible)...but I think it

stretching it to say that an angel rebels against God and God turns it around to uses it positively. In the great majority of cases, that isn't what happens. But just by way of interest, the concept that immortal angels can sin and God can destroy them, would that happen to us, if we had gained immortality?

A. Okay, the question being posed to us is: If angels can sin and die and if we are to be made like angels in the resurrection, is it possible that we can sin and die? Is it hypothetically possible? Sure. Because we would have free will. Will we sin? No. Because the Bible describes the eternal state as being without sin, so we will choose not to sin. God will choose not to destroy us. I believe that God is so powerful that he can do what He wants to. I believe He can destroy us after He gave us immortality if He wanted to but He's not going to, so therefore it's a mute question.

Q. Does the same reasoning apply to immortal angels?

A. Okay the same reasoning applies to the immortal angels? Yes, that's right, it does.

Q. Unless God created an evil angel?

A. Personally, for my own thoughts, I mentioned this earlier, that questions about the origins of the devil and fallen angels and that sort of thing was quite irrelevant. I still think it is, but yes, I do tend to think that the devil was probably a fallen angel although the Bible is not very clear about that at all. We have a question up here?

Q. In your first speech you spoke in the context of Job, I think the phrase you used was Satan approaching God in heaven, how do you reconcile this with the quotation Duncan made from Habakkuk 1: 13 " thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity...?"

A. So how do I reconcile this statement that Satan approached God in heaven with Habakkuk 1:13 that says that God cannot look upon evil? Habakkuk 1:13 is a description of a metaphor. God doesn't tolerate His people to do evil.

Q. He asked my question basically, but I had another thing here. You said that immortal angels could sin.

A. Yes, I said an immortal angel can sin.

Q. When Christ was being tempted and they asked him about this man who had a wife and so on and so forth and whose wife would she be in the kingdom, and he said, " Ye do err, ye shall be as the angels in heaven" . Now if we get to be as angels in heaven, God's going to fix us a little bit different, so we wouldn't sin like...things we talked about sin?

A. I think God is going to give us immortality. I don't think...

Q. We still...we are going to be like the angels...?

A. Yes, we are going...

Q. We will be able to sin?

A. Yes. Theoretically, but we are not going to sin. I...

Q. (inaudible)

A. Well, because...Okay, are you telling me that immortality is predicated on our lack of free will?

Q. Absolutely. Because...

A. Okay, then why...

Q. Because sin is death, obedience is life.

A. Well, why did God create us with freewills if His ultimate purpose for us was to turn us into a race of robots? Why didn't He create us like that at the beginning?

Q. Angels have free will...

A. But you just told me that angels don't have freewill.

(Comment from floor: The debate is over...)

Q. It is demonstrated that " he stayed the angel's hand" . The angel was going to do the righteous thing which was to kill, but the mercy of God stayed his hand. Now I don't think that when we get in the Kingdom, if I get in the Kingdom, that I'm going to be able to sin, I'm not going to want to, I'm going to made so I can't.

(Comment from floor: I would submit that now is the time to ask questions to get answers, not to have a debate. Mr. Mattison: Okay, next question?

Q. I would just like to get something clear on your position about angels. The verses cited in Hebrews 1, the angels are all ministering spirits, your explanation was...all not being all.

A. My explanation of Hebrews 1: 14is that there is a figure of speech here known as synecdoche, in which the whole is used for the part.

Q. What was your explanation of Psalm 103 where it speaks of angels obeying God?

A. Okay, I can give you a couple of explanations. On the one hand, even the evil angels ultimately against their own will obey God in a sense.

Q. In connection with being like the angels to die no more...

A. Okay, back to that again.

Q. There was Luke 20: 36: " We shall be made like unto the angels to die no more" ... You are saying does not mean what it says?

A. I'm saying that verse needs to be balanced with other verses, so we can get an understanding of what Christ was talking about. Jesus was meaning there that the angels are not going to die from old age or injury like we are going to die.

Q. What is the verse that says they are going to die?

A. There are references for example in Matthew 25: 41 which describes the devil and his angels being cast into the lake of fire. There are other verses involved in this. We could debate this from here to kingdom come and probably would if but we don't have the time for it. 2 Peter 2: 4 and also in the Epistle of Jude, which also talks about the future destruction of fallen angels.

Q. Are you aware that the word 'angels' does not always refer to the angels of heaven, but sometimes to messengers?

A. Yes, I am aware that the Greek word 'angele' can refer to human messengers. Yes, I am aware of that. Yes?

Q. You referred to Zechariah 3 - Satan standing at the right hand of the angel of the Lord to resist him - What is your explanation of what that applies to in the context of Zechariah?

A. I haven't studied it very in depth.

Q. But surely one must see it in the context of the history of Israel at that time? The great adversary of the work being done at this particular time were the Arabs who were opposing the rebuilding the city of Jerusalem. This is brought out by the context - v.3: Even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem - the emphasis is upon the city and on the opponent, the adversary, or Satan, who is opposing the work being done by the returned exiles.

A. Okay we are talking about Zech. 3: 1, 2 and the suggestion is being made that the Satan here - 'ha satan' - are Arabs. Okay, well, we have a number of figures here, we have Joshua, he is a person is he not? We have the angel of the Lord, he is a person, is he not, and now we have 'ha satan' the enemy, the adversary. Why wouldn't he be a person?

Q. He was, being Sanballat, Tobiah and Rehum and these other opponents.

A. Oh, but those were several people.

Q. They were men who mocked the Jews and said they were going to write to the King and get that work stopped and they did write.

A. Right, now those were several people, not a single person, single adversary.

Q. That is true, but collectively they were a force that was opposing Israel. They were the adversary, they were the Satan.

A. Yes, they were.

Q. They were the adversary, they were the Satan, the Satan.

A. I can definitely see the possibility that the Satan was working through human adversaries as he often does.

Q. 2 Corinthians 11:14, what's your understanding where it says Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light?

A. I don't know that 'transformed' is the best word there in 2 Cor. 11: 14. The New International Version reads " masquerades as an angel of light" . Now I would have to pick up a Greek Testament and Lexicon to go into that and check it out. My version says he masquerades as an angel of light, he pretends to be an angel of light. I don't know if the devil is transformed from an angel of evil to an angel of light and back and forth again. I do like the idea of masquerading as this version presents it.

2-1-20 Does The Devil Induce Sin

Q. Does in your opinion the devil induce people to sin?

A. In my opinion, the devil does not make people sin. The devil tempts people to try to get them to sin, but the devil does not make people sin.

Q. Was Israel warned about the danger of the devil seeking to get them to sin?

A. I'm not aware of a verse that says they were.

Q. Were they warned about giving in to the lusts of their evil heart and their own imaginations?

A. Yes, they were. Other questions?

Q. In the context of Ananias and Sapphira, it talks about Satan filling the heart and the idea being conceived in the heart, and it was Duncan in his talk who spoke about conception as having origin within the person. What's your comment in the context Satan being an external force, the opponent, adversary, and this thing coming from Ananias' own thinking?

A. Okay, the text is Acts 5: 3 & 5, and as Mr. Heaster pointed out in verse 3, Peter tells Ananias that Satan has filled his heart, yet in verse 5, it says that he has conceived evil in his own heart. I would reconcile that by saying that Ananias himself conceived the idea and after he conceived the idea of evil, then the devil filled his heart subsequent to that. That's how I would reconcile that.

2-1-21 Teaching Not To Blaspheme

Q. In the context of angels being manipulated by God and doing God's will, the illustration came about someone being cast out to Satan to learn not to blaspheme. The purpose of that in the context of the New Testament where it is given is that individuals do it. The illustration you gave from the Old Testament was about Jacob's brothers. Their whole purpose behind their dealings with Joseph was that he would be destroyed, not that he should saved. My comment is that the example from the Old Testament is inadequate to explain what was meant in the New Testament.

A.Okay, I will have a difficult time repeating all of that so I will just answer your question. I think it is fully adequate because the devil's intent for us is not to save us. The devil intends to destroy us, however, to his own frustration, God uses his actions for God's own purposes.

Q. How could the devil teach someone not to blaspheme?

A. What happens is that someone is cut off from the community and placed back into the world out of the church, back under the authority of the evil one and there must suffer the consequences of his being cut off from the church. Hopefully, in so doing he will come to his senses and seek admission back into the Kingdom of Light.

Q. I couldn't help but comment that that's exactly the way I would explain it, only what I would mean is that he was sent back into the forces of evil within the world manifested in people and so on through their evil hearts, and that he would learn that there is nothing out there and he would be brought back into the ecclesia of God.

A. Right, that's wonderful comment and I think it illustrates something which I think should have been coming out in this presentation that these differences between us are not so very great. We all believe that God is supreme and He is the one who is in control and as far as I am concerned, some of these differences are pretty small, I so think it is an excellent comment. Other questions?

2-1-22 The Devil And Sin

Q. Would you agree that in 1 John 3 the word devil is used for sin?

A. Okay, 1 John 3, which verse?

Q. Verse 8.

A. Is the word devil being used to mean sin? I would say no. He who does what is sinful is of the devil. That doesn't mean that he is the devil.

Q. Is it used as the cause of sin?

A. No it is isn't. It is not used as the cause of sin either. Sin comes from within ourselves.

Q. What is the relationship here between the devil and sin?

A.The devil sins and those who sin are of their father the devil in the sense that they are patterning their behaviours after the behaviours of the devil. Remember what I said earlier, temptation and sin are not the same thing.

Q. (change of tape, few words missing) ...depending where you are coming from and how the church values your faith, you're coming more from that perspective, it's airtight, there are no problems with it, and there are no weaknesses, and the respective positions are considered to be impregnable, where's responsible?

A. I don't know, I would have to think about it. Good comment. Are there comments or questions? Sorry, I'm not always very good at thinking fast on my feet. Yes?

Q. In Hebrews 2: 14 when the apostle speaks about the devil being destroyed. What does he mean in your understanding of this topic in the context of this debate?

A. I would relate that to John 12: 31. The devil was judged at the crucifixion of Christ, although ultimately his literal destruction will not be until the future in which he is cast into the lake of fire. That's my understanding.

Q. Could you elaborate on that for a moment? Why did the death of Christ affect the devil? What was the reason?

A. The death of Christ affects our salvation and in that the forces of evil are overcome.

Q. What did his human nature have to do with this process?

A. What was your question?

Q. It is stressed in Hebrews 2: 14 that he was of our nature, and likewise took part of the same. What's that got to do...

A. Simply this. Jesus couldn't have died for our sins unless he was a man. He had to be a man, a last Adam, to reverse the errors committed by the first Adam. That is why Jesus had to be a man and that is why the atonement is effective. Was there another question back here, oh okay.

Q. We have sin and the cross of Christ. Where is the devil involved here? Since he does not cause us to sin, where is the devil involved?

A.The devil tempts us.

Q. I see. Where does it say that?

A. Well, for example, in the wilderness temptations, in Genesis chapter 3, there are various other references to the devil's activity in relation to man.

Q. Genesis 3 says that?

A. Genesis 3 says the serpent which is interpreted by Paul and John as the devil.

Q. Where do we read that?

A. Well, in 1 Corinthians 11 in that passage Paul identifies the serpent who deceived Eve, in I think it is verse 3 or 4, with the...well, let's see, let's turn to the passage to get the specific verses. 1 Corinthians chapter 11, I'm sorry, 2 Corinthians. Very good. He talks in verse 3 of the deception of Eve by the serpent and verse 5, let's see, approximately 5 through 10 are a parenthetical section somewhere around that area, in v. 14 he sees Satan masquerading as an angel of light, also in the Epistle of Romans Paul alludes to Genesis 3: 15 talking about Christians trampling Satan underneath their feet and John's reference of course is in the Book of Revelation, particularly for example, I think it is chapter 12: 7 or 9, which identifies the serpent as the devil or satan.

Q.You just made a point there that Satan is going to be trampled underfoot, well, in Genesis 3: 15, it doesn't say that the snake is going to be trampled underfoot, it says that the seed of

the snake is going to be trodden underfoot. Now, how do you see the difference between the seed of the serpent and the serpent, you can't say that both of them... ?

A. Okay, Genesis 3: 15, the enmity between the offspring of the woman and the serpent. To tell the truth I haven't thought about it, I would have to think about it.

Q. Micah 4 (not sure of the verse) talks about the wicked, the wicked will be trodden underfoot, and that is the work of the Lord as you mentioned, seems to tie sinners to " you are of your father the devil" ...

(Comment from floor) What you are saying is the wicked are the seed of the serpent. I would agree with you. (Few words inaudible).

Mr. Mattison: Other questions. Yes?

Q. Let's get this out - the devil tempting us - that's the connection between the devil and sin - is based on Genesis 3 and Matthew 4, the temptation of Christ, okay, those are your verses, right?

A. Those were verses that I referred to, let's see, I've written a thesal commentary in which I dealt with all the verses in the Bible which talk about the devil and satan, and which also summarises the devil's activity by referring to all these verses. This will be made available after the debate and you can pick up a copy and have a look at it, and you probably find more verses. Those were verses which I came up off the top of my head, yes.

Q. The point on the temptation of Christ rests on the fact that personification is not used in the Bible in a historical narrative.

A. Not only on that. That was one of my main points which so far has gone unanswered, but it is really based upon a plain, literal normal interpretation of scripture.

Q. You agree that the entire narrative in Matt. 4 is not literal because there is a lot he couldn't see - all the kingdoms of the world.

A. I believe the entire narrative is literal. I have question over here?

Q. Romans 6 - there are three verses there which if the devil were the cause of our problems would be highlighted, I think. It says there, Rom. 6 v. 16, " Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey, whether sin unto death, or obedience unto righteousness. But God be thanked that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered unto you. Being then, made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness." There's no indication there that we are serving sin, or the devil there, the problem comes from within ourselves.

A. Certainly that's true. Your argument is an argument from silence. Other points or questions? Okay, that's it. Thank you very much.

Questions From the Floor to Mr. Heaster

2-1-23 Children Of Disobedience

Q. I have a question but first I want to thank you for the opportunity that we as Christians can dialogue. Not in all countries would we be allowed to do that. I am curious, sir, as to your understanding of Ephesians 2: 2 & 3.

A. Well, Ephesians 2: 2 & 3 says that " wherein in times past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience among whom we all had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind and were by nature the children of wrath even as others." Well, the first point I would make there is you don't read the word devil or the word satan there at all. I would suggest that in those verses you have got a kind of parallel. I think in Rotherham's translation he brings it out very well. He says, " In times past ye walked according to" - there's a colon -he says, " the course of this world" underneath " the prince of the power of the air" underneath " the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" .
So those three things I would suggest are parallel, that walking in the course of this world, walking according to the prince of the power of the air and walking according to the spirit of the children of disobedience - that they are all descriptions for our carnal life before we were converted - because the parallels to that verse 2 is in verse 3 where he says, " We all had our conversation - our way of life - in time past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and mind and were by nature the children of wrath."
So I would say this is a marvellous combination of what we are putting over to you - that you have got the prince of the power of the air - which is a prince - something being personified as a prince - now you can't take that dead literally - the prince of the power of the air - what's the power of the air - the stuff around us? No. You can't have a prince of the gas called air. It must be referring to something more figurative than that. As I say, it is wedged there in the middle of two other parallel expressions, the course of this world, the prince of the power of the air, and thirdly the spirit that works in the children of disobedience. That is defined for you in verse 3: the lusts of our flesh living in a way of life that fulfils the desires of the flesh and of the mind due to our sinful nature, being by nature the children of wrath. So then I would say again that the prince of the power of the air is a personification of what rules this world, and what this world is governed by is the evil principles of the flesh.
Now politically, God is in control of this world, but God has delegated political power to the rulers of this world and those kingdoms of this world then become the Kingdom of God and of Christ as we are told in Revelation 11. But I don't think that we can say that the world is ruled by an evil spiritual ruler, no. The world, the motivating force in this world, the idea that rules this world if you like, is the flesh, the thinking of the flesh. People are not serving anybody else but themselves, or their own evil passions. That is the god of this world. I would say that these verses confirm that because the idea of the prince of the power of the air is sandwiched in between parallel expressions - the spirit or the attitude of mind that is in the children of disobedience and walking according to this world.
Now you might just like to jot down in your margin there 1 Peter 4: 3 which I believe is almost an inspired commentary on those verses, it is certainly an allusion to them. 1 Peter 4: 3, where again Peter is talking to another group of believers about what their past life was like. He says the " time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wines" etc. etc. So the time past of our life, he said, we just did, we walked in lusts, our own natural desires. And in Ephesians 2 it says " in time past - see that's the point of connection - we walked according to the prince of the power of the air" , fulfilling v.3 the " lusts of the flesh" . So I would say that confirms the...our understanding. Okay?

2-1-24 The Dragon And The Lake Of Fire

Q.I would like to make this comment on Revelation 20: 10 where it appears to me that there is something physically being cast into the lake of fire.

A. Revelation 20: 10 - it says " he laid hold on the dragon, the old serpent which is the devil and satan and bound him a thousand years" and then the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire where the beast and false prophet are. Well, we then have to ask the question if we are talking about something physical here, are we talking about a literal lake of fire, or are we talking about a literal beast, a literal false prophet? If anything the false prophet ought to be a literal physical person; whereas the way the devil is spoken of throughout Revelation is most certainly the language of metaphor, personification.
We are told that all these things, this is going to happen in the future, I'm sure we would all agree with that. Now there's obviously a connection between Revelation 20 and what we are told in Revelation 12 where again you've got the dragon, that old serpent which is called the devil and satan. So those things there I would say are political powers of some sort because we are told that the beast has 10 horns and those 10 horns we are told are 10 kings. So then this is a metaphor to describe a political power. That political power is going to be completely destroyed. Now because as I say you can't have abstract diabolism - we have got it inside us - and yet the whole world, the nations and empires are structured around the desires of the flesh and it is for that reason that you get these beasts which clearly describe political powers also being called the devil, because they are embodiments - the nations of the world - are embodiments of the principles of sin.
So as I say the fact that, okay, you've got the beast, the dragon, the devil and satan all tied up here and then they are thrown into - the beast which is the devil according to Revelation, that is, it's metaphorically the devil - it's thrown into this lake of fire and I would say that the devil, the beast in Revelation must be a political power because it has got horns, and those horns are 10 kings, and so when you say it is something physical, well, yes, it is referring to something material, but it doesn't actually mean that one literal being is going to be thrown into the lake of fire. Yes?

2-1-25 Good And Bad Angels

Q. I thought that your comments you made about what Karen brought up in Ephesians, while I'm not convinced there is more to be said about that, I thought your comments were good. I have two questions actually. In Hebrew 1: 14 was made some application to the effect that the word " all" is used there, and I was a little confused by how you used that, because it appears to me there is another context, in fact numerous contexts in the scriptures where the word " all" is used where certainly not " all" is meant. I think a good example of that is in 1 Corinthians 15: 22 where it says, " For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive" . I think we all agree that the word " all" there doesn't mean that all who have fallen in Adam, all of those will be saved in Christ - be made alive in Christ - but that I guess my point is, isn't the context just as important, if not more important, in giving an indication of what the word " all" really has reference to, rather than just using the word " all" itself? All the world to be taxed" doesn't mean everybody in the whole world with reference to the Roman Empire.

A.Yes, I would quite agree with you that the word " all" doesn't always mean all but I think in 1 Corinthians 15 you have picked a bit of a bad example because surely what he is saying is that all those in Adam are going to die, but all those in Christ will be made alive - but that's, I

suppose, academic. Now the point is with angels, if, I mean, the corollary of what you are saying, I mean the word " all" does sometimes mean all - you can't say it doesn't always mean something else - but if you are saying we ought to interpret this meaning " some" of the angels are ministering spirits, then, that implies that there is this massive differentiation between sinful angels and good angels, and its that differentiation which, if that exists, then I would expect that whenever you read about them in the Bible that it would actually have a marker to indicate whether they are sinful or bad. Why doesn't it say, the fallen angels, or the good angels, or whatever?
If you are going to suppose there is this differentiation between them then we have to come up with some explanation as to why the Bible so often doesn't even use the words '(all) angels', it just says angels. 2 Peter 2, " angels which are greater in power and might, do not bring railing accusation against the Lord" . Now Peter speaks of angels as if we all know what he means by angels.

Q. In Hebrews 1: 13, " but to which of the angels said he at any time" does he have 'all' of the angels in mind in that context?

A. Well I would say so, because if you look back in verse 4, you've got " being made so much better than the angels" . It doesn't say Jesus was made better than the good angels. The whole point of Hebrews 1 and 2 is to show the supremacy of Christ over angels, not over just some of the angels, but over all of them. Again, why in verse 14, if " all" doesn't mean " all" and it just means some of them, what is the purpose of that word 'all' being inserted? Why doesn't he say, " Are they not ministering spirits?" One would've thought that would have flowed naturally. But he doesn't. He says, " Are they not **all** ministering spirits? Going back to verse 4, and then verse 5, " unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son" . He's saying, " any of the angels" , so I would say " any of the angels" in verse 5 is parallel to " all" of the angels in verse 14. Yes?

Q. I think you sized up the question concerning Romans, 1 Corinthians 15, because there it is speaking of a large differentiation, when it says " as in Adam all die" , so also in Christ shall all be made alive" . We know that is not parallel but the word 'all', each time the word 'all' appears to have reference to that which it is in relationship to, either Adam, or Christ, and I guess the point about Hebrews 1: 14, if Hebrews 1: 14 is considered to be an interpretative control of the context, then everything else is understood that way, would fall into the category of 'all' the angels which he had in view, which are the ones who are ministering spirits. Now, I think you can differ on that, but I had another question, you may not have understood my comment.
I had another question regarding the verse saying something to the effect that God is of purer eyes than to behold evil. Now does that mean that God does not look upon evil, or cannot see evil, or what does that mean? You can't take that literally because God of course sees all things that are going on, and I guess the verse I would bring up is in Genesis 6: 12, " And God saw the earth, and behold it was corrupt" . Well, corrupt is certainly indicative of evil and sinfulness and God certainly saw it and when he saw it he beheld it, so I think you'd have to look at that verse from Hosea I think it was in possibly a different way, in the sense that God will not countenance evil, or whatever. To say He doesn't behold it in the sense He doesn't see it, is certainly not the case.

A. Right, your question, basically is, when I quoted verses which say that God doesn't tolerate evil in His presence, you're saying but God does look upon sinfulness, so therefore it can't mean what I'm saying it means. Well, those passages that we looked at is God saying

that He does not behold, does not tolerate sinfulness **in His presence**. Now that's the point. If you look at Psalm 5: 4 - " thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee. The foolish shall not stand in thy sight." Habakkuk 1 is saying the same thing. In fact the context in Habakkuk 1 is Habakkuk saying because God does not look upon sinfulness, He does not have it in His presence, He is therefore going to cast Israel out of the land.
Now that is very common throughout the Old Testament. God will not have sinfulness in His presence, and in those days in the Old Testament Yahweh tabernacled in Israel in the Temple and the eyes of Yahweh, we are told, were there beholding what was going on in the land. We are told the eyes of Yahweh run to and fro throughout the land of Israel. And so, God would not tolerate sinfulness there, so therefore He threw them, cast them out of His presence. So the world generally, is not in the presence of God in that sense. But the point we are making that in heaven, which is the dwelling place of God, in which we are told the will of the Father is done in heaven, then what we are saying is that God therefore cannot tolerate any kind of sinfulness.
So when Mark was saying the devil actually does his own sinful will which is against God's will, although he says at the same time he is doing God's will which is where I am still mystified - if somehow the devil is doing the will of sin, sinful will, well then he can't be up in heaven, because he cannot be operating in the presence of God, where the will of God is always done. So it is fair point you are making, that God is aware, is aware, of the sinfulness of man on the face of the earth as He was in the example you quoted in Genesis 6, but there is a difference between that and God actually having sinfulness in His personal presence in heaven itself. And it is that which I think the passages we quoted are referring to. Okay, right at the back here.

Q. First of all, I would like to submit that you were looking for earlier a linguistic marker for good and bad angels and in the Greek language there is such a marker. Good angels are referred to as, in most cases, angels. Bad angels are called demons. Within that language that is the marker they use.

A. Okay, the statement has been made that there is a linguistic marker, I think that's the phrase you used, between good angels and bad angels. You're suggesting that perhaps when you read angels, that means the good ones, and when you read.

2-1-26 Angelos And Daimonos

Q. Right, there is one place where you read of the devil and his angels, so the word angelos is used in connection with the bad guys. But in most cases it's otherwise, the word is daimonos.

A. Okay, let me come back - you said the good angels were just called angels and the other ones, the bad ones, as you see them, were called demons, or the devil and his angels. Well, I would suggest that there is really very limited connection, if any connection, between angels and demons. That's a missing link in the CGAF's reasoning, that you have got to prove there's a connection between demons and angels - sorry, sorry, if I can just actually complete my answer to your question - and then you've got to prove that the devil and his angels equals demons. Now, that's something that people have got to think about.
Now in this passage about the devil and his angels, well the point has been made that the word 'angels' - angelos' - can refer to men. I don't think there is anyone who would dispute that. When you read about the angels that sinned - and that is quoted by the CGAF as relating to the angels, the bad guys, shall we call them, well there it doesn't talk about demons that

sin, it just says the angels. You just said that when it says 'the angels' that's talking about the good angels. I would suggest that when you say this is a linguistic marker that indicates good angels and bad angels, that is not the case. It's an interpretative marker which you are placing. Well, let's just take a case: the angels that sinned. Well, what's that, good angels or bad angels? According to you, that's the bad guys, but then you say the linguistic marker means it's the good guys, so I think you are in trouble there.

Q.I would qualify that and say most cases, but there are one or two situations where it's otherwise, but most cases apply.

A. If you are down to a 'most cases' argument, you are not talking about linguistic markers. If I might point out, the CGAF has gone wrong twice in this debate on that. You have just made a bit of a bloomer there and Mark was obviously on about this linguistic marker business, when he says 'the satan' means, always means, the personal supernatural being called satan. Well, again, we've shown that isn't the case. So I think you had better replace the idea of linguistic markers with the idea of interpretative markers. Yes?

Q. I am curious as to your understanding of Luke 8: 27 through 37.

A. Well, the question is Luke 8: 27 through 37. Well, this is the issue of demons, and as I had to say in my last debate with Jeff Fletcher, this debate is not a debate about demons. It's not that we can't handle it, and there is bags written about demons in this booklet, and my other booklet on display, but I'd rather not get involved in discussing this whole issue of demons, because I think that is a completely different subject. It would be nice, I think, to have a written debate about it in Mark's magazine, but that's another story. So it's not that I can't answer it, but it's because I don't want to be drawn onto this issue of demons, because I don't that's actually what this debate is about. We're talking about what the Bible says about the devil and satan, so perhaps we can talk about it afterwards.

2-1-27 Man As A Sinful Creature

Q. You spent quite a bit of time on questioning the origin of Satan and the question of whether God could create such a being. My question is, God did not create man a sinful creature, did He? God created man along with the rest of creation, He looked at him, and he was very good, he was exactly what He wanted. Man was not a sinful creature at that point.

A. He was very good, yes.

Q. But he became a sinful creature later by his own action; therefore he was cut off from God, he was cast out of the garden, cast from God's presence because of what he became after his creation by what he did to himself. Therefore, God created a being originally with the intent of his being good, if that being later on chooses to rebel and reject God, I don't see God being responsible for that being's evil. I don't see God being responsible for my sin, I am, because it is something I do of my own choice. If there is a being that is satan who has chosen to rebel against God and reject Him, and try to destroy the rest of God's creation,

God's not responsible for his evil.

(Comment from floor - You got a question?)

Just a response to that observation.

A. Okay, I'm not sure what your question wasbut I think you've made a few points there on the idea that the devil basically went his own way and God, I think you used the word intended, God intended him to be good but he ended up pretty bad. Now that's okay in regard to man because God made him good but he sought out many inventions. But the problem is with the idea of the devil is that you are talking about a supernatural being there. To say that God intended this supernatural being to be a force for good and he ended up a force for evil, if what's you're saying is true, then we really saying the presence of evil or sinfulness was not really part of God's plan. God actually intended - that's the word you used - God intended something else for man, but it all turned out sinful. Now that's a big assumption you are making.
You seem to be arguing for the idea that Satan did actually fall, which is what I put to Mark and he didn't want to answer. But it seems what you're saying is that satan did fall. Now, if you are saying that Satan fell, well, where does it say that? If you say that Satan fell back in Eden and it is that which led to the temptation of Adam and Eve, well, you're completely without a shred of any Biblical evidence. That's of course the classical orthodox position that Satan fell in Eden, or just before Eden, and then was the tempting agent within the snake, which again would mean that the devil should have been punished when God meted out the judgments to the snake, and to the man and to the woman. Well, why didn't the devil get paid off as well? I mean there is no hint, the words devil and Satan don't occur in Genesis.
In a sense you are being intellectually honest, because you are coming back this conclusion that there must have been a fall, that Satan must have fallen, but that just opens up more problems. For one thing, the scriptures don't say anything about Satan falling in the Garden of Eden. For another thing, it talks about satan falling several times -Luke 10 in the ministry of Christ and Revelation 12 in the future. Now nowhere does it say satan fell in the Garden of Eden, and the whole language of falling from heaven must be used figuratively. For example Lucifer was thrown out of heaven. It means the King of Babylon was thrown. And you accept that, I think the CGAF don't dare use Isaiah 14 about Lucifer to prove their idea about the devil being thrown out. I mean that's a sort of Jehovah's Witness business. I think you understand quite clearly that Lucifer being thrown out of heaven does not have any reference to the devil being thrown anywhere. So you accept the thing thrown out of heaven is symbolic, and so when it talks about Satan being thrown out of heaven in Luke 10 and Revelation 12, I think surely there you must also, if you are consistent, you must accept that also is a symbolic fall from power. It can't be taken to prove any literal floating down of Satan down onto this earth and tempting Adam and Eve. So the point is, by one man, Adam, sin entered the world, and death by sin, and Romans 5, as I said, six times uses that phrase, 'by one man' and he is highlighted as the origin of sin. Again you have to actually prove that the snake was sinful, if you are on about

this business about the snake being related to the satan and the satan falling which is the line you are arguing down then you've got, apart from proving the connection between the angel and the snake, you've got to prove that the snake was a real sinner. I would argue that the snake was amoral, that it didn't actually have moral sensibilities, it spoke - the phrase we have in English anyway - he speaks as his belly guides him, he says whatever comes into his head, he uses his natural instincts, not necessarily sinfulness.

Mr. Mattison's Final Speech

2-1-28 Salvation Issues

Okay, so I have ten minutes. I don't know if I will use all of it, but we will see. There are a couple of points I would like to begin with. One is, I would like to correct some misunderstandings that were apparent earlier. For one thing, I never said that the issue of where sin comes from is irrelevant. I think it's very relevant. What I said was that the issue of where the devil came from is irrelevant. As I indicated earlier I do have some thoughts about the origin of the devil. Those are not set in concrete, nor do I believe it is really important, because the Bible doesn't make any issue out of that.

Let's see here, also we talked about Mark chapter 1, I wasn't trying to imply that the spirit which led Jesus into the wilderness was the devil. I believe the spirit there was the spirit of God. The point was that the spirit of God led Jesus into the desert where God knew the devil would approach him and tempt him. I stated that God wanted that to happen. Incidentally, there was a great interesting point made that the temptations of Jesus had a number of parallels to the Old Testament. There is one more parallel I would like to draw out and that is, that there is a very strong parallel between Jesus' temptations and the temptations of Adam and Eve in the garden. If the first Adam was literally tempted by an external force, who as I stated earlier I do believe was the devil, then it logically follows that in this parallel passage in which Jesus was tempted, he also was literally tempted by an external force.

A couple of other random statements. For one thing, I am, I think there is a difference between being convinced and turning it into a salvation issue. Let me give you an example: personally, I am convinced that the Gospel of Mark was written before Matthew and Luke were ever written, but I am not going to make that a salvation issue. If you think that the Gospel of Mark was written after Matthew and Luke, I think that's fine, I think it's pretty irrelevant. Similarly, I am convinced that the devil teaches the existence of a literal devil, but I don't consider that a salvation issue, briefly addressing that point.

Also when I said earlier that the question of Satan's being is irrelevant, I would clarify that. I wasn't meaning his existence, what I meant was, his mode of existence is irrelevant. The relevant point is that the devil exists.

Let's see, my point I believe, about the use of the article in Hebrew and Greek, I think still stands. Earlier it was suggested that was an interpretative marker, not so much a linguistic marker. And yes, there is an element of interpretation there, but still linguistically, I think, my point was never answered, that indeed there is a great difference between the times when we find - and this I think I can say as a statement right across the board - in the Old Testament when you see the word 'satan' when it does not have, when the word 'satan' in the Old Testament has the article, it always refers to the supernatural adversary, and in the New Testament, when the word 'diabolos' has the article, it always refers to the supernatural adversary. I believe that holds true.

However, this one exception was pointed out from the Septuagint in the 7th chapter of Esther in which once or twice Hadad is called diabolos with the article. Of course, that is still consistent with the principle of what the definite article means. The use of the definite article means that you are talking about something which is well understood. If you look at the context of Esther 7 there, in the Septuagint version of Esther, you will see a great deal of emphasis is placed upon the wickedness of Haman, and so that is why the article could be used, because Haman was definitely **the** accuser of that context.
Now on the other hand, when we look at other passages, similarly we would expect that when the article is used, some well known frame of reference is in mind, not just some unknown accuser, as for example in his book " Christendom Astray" Robert Roberts talks about the temptations and says " We don't know who this tempter was, we don't know who this accuser was." But Matthew and Luke both use the article in that case. He wasn't saying **a** devil, as Roberts seems to imply. He talks about **the** devil. What devil? As I mentioned earlier, or perhaps alluded to, Christadelphians seem to do a pretty good job of telling us what the Bible doesn't teach in many cases, but not always a very good job at telling us what it does teach. And the temptation stories are an example.
Aside from that, that's probably all I have to say in conclusion. I've enjoyed being here. I've enjoyed the discussion. I think it has been very fruitful and profitable, and thank you very much.

Mr. Heaster's Final Speech

2-1-29 The Need For Proper Understanding

Good evening. I would like to tell you a little bit about one of the stories you will hear from the old folks in London in Southeast England where I am originally from. They talk back to what it was like in the war in 1940-41 and they will tell you how they used to go out into the backyard and look up at the sky at night and they would see the British fighters fighting the bombers and whenever one of the German bombers came down there was a kind of cheer went up and a sort of praying for our boys up there kind of thing. It seems to me that's what the Abrahamic Faith people are doing. You are looking out of yourself all the time, up, to where this battle is going on, this evil spirit being outside you, and all the time you are missing the real point, the real enemy. The real enemy is not outside you, the battle is not going on up in the sky somewhere. It is going on here, inside you, in your own mind, in your own heart. That is why I think this issue is not academic.
This thing is fundamentally practical because if you take on board this idea that the devil is indeed your own human desires and all these metaphors spring into life - it's a roaring lion, it's a snake hissing through the grass towards you - and it makes you realise the urgency of being spiritually minded. I suggest to you that that's where true Christianity is different from any other form of religion in the sense that we realise the importance of spiritual mindedness and of developing the mind of Christ and doing battle within ourselves.
Now, Mark is saying this isn't a salvation issue. Well, I'm not so sure about that because anything that has implications with the sacrifice of Christ is very important. Christ destroyed the devil by his death on the cross because he had our nature. Now I would suggest that is very fundamental because he goes on to say that Christ did that for the sake of the seed of Abraham. Now the seed of Abraham is something that you know quite a lot about. He says that Christ was not of angels' nature but he was of man's nature so that he could save the seed of Abraham by means of the fact that he had human nature and that he overcame that devil, that human nature, in his death on the cross. So then if we are the seed of Abraham, then we have got to understand these things. This is why we must be baptized into Christ by full

immersion into his death, into his resurrection, so that we share in the death and resurrection of Christ. We must be baptized so that is he our representative, so that because he had our own bad nature, the devil within him, and because he overcame it, if we are in Christ, then we also will be able to overcome sin and to reach salvation. That's an important point that Christ was not a substitute as I believe the Abrahamic Faith Church teach, but he was our representative.

So then, those promises to Abraham and to his seed were that they should inherit the earth for ever and it's only by properly becoming the seed of Abraham that we can be saved. I suppose we have to say to you like Christ said to the Jews, " Don't immediately think once you hear me say that, oh we're okay, we are the seed of Abraham" because I would suggest that our baptism is only valid by reason of the beliefs that we held when we went under that water. I would suggest that unless we properly understand the nature of Christ, the nature of the Atonement, and indeed, our own nature, then I would question whether we really had that correct knowledge at the time of our baptism. Please, see the need for proper understanding.

Now, just a couple of final points to wind up with, we are told this issue is not particularly that important; it is as academic, Mark told us, as when the Gospel of Mark was written. Well, some of the things that have been said are not that academic. For example, that we can hypothetically sin in the Kingdom of God. That's fundamental, absolutely fundamental to gospel of the Kingdom of God. It doesn't sound like much good news to me if hypothetically we can sin, if we have not escaped the devil, if we have not escaped human nature. If we can theoretically sin through eternity, then for eternity theoretically the devil is still alive. If the devil theoretically makes you sin, and he has told us that theoretically you can sin in the Kingdom, then theoretically the devil is alive, the devil has not been destroyed. What happened on the cross? If the devil was not destroyed theoretically, he's there for ever.

You are very touchy obviously about the fallen angel question, and I suggest why the Abrahamic Faith Church is so touchy when you start talking about " did Satan fall, was he an angel" is because they are faced with this problem of " Did God create Satan?" Mark more or less admitted that is a real problem area. Of course it's a problem area if Satan is a sinful personal supernatural being and God created him - well, that is an affront to almighty God. Is this a debate about academics? Are we talking about semantics here? I don't think so, I think we are talking about the holiness and the righteousness of God in day by day living.

Now, Mark admitted that in the Old Testament, there was no warning to Israel about Satan causing them to sin, but he admitted that there was a warning about our own natural desires causing us to sin. By baptism, we are the new Israel, so I would suggest that for the believers today the issues are still the same. There is no being prowling around actually physically going to try to make us sin, but what we have got to watch, just as Israel had to, was our own human nature, and to overcome it. Now as I have said, sin is personified. We agree on that. Now the point I would like to leave you with is: if you agree that sin is personified, and come on it must be personified, you can't get away from it - as a king, as a paymaster, etc. - if sin is personified, and as you also admit that the word Satan and Devil can just mean an enemy, an adversary, it doesn't always have to mean this supernatural being outside you, then what's your problem in accepting what we are putting to you, that sin is personified, and that personification has a name - the devil, the enemy, Satan, our great enemy, which is ourselves. Now if then think of this problem of evil in the sense of disaster, calamity, like Job having all those problems, if you feel that angels are bringing those problems into your life, fine, fair enough, so they are, but as long as you don't say that those angels are actually sinful beings, or that they are some supernatural force of evil or sin outside you, and that are somehow against the will of God. I think in some ways, Mark had a very hard job this afternoon because there are so many contradictions that he's got to grapple with and that he has to persuade people of. What I suggest is that what has happened or what the Abrahamic Faith

Church do in your literature about the devil, you pick a lot of passages like " the prince of this world, the god of this world, Satan transformed as an angel of light, Satan fell from heaven" - things which superficially have a bit of ring to them about Satan and sin falling from heaven, and you put them together and come up with the conclusion you do. But I suggest that when you analyse passage by passage what those particular scriptures mean, you are in trouble, because you realise that they cannot all refer to the same being or to the same incident. For example the passages that talk about Satan falling from heaven. You can't line them all up and say, yes, they are all talking about the same thing. There's problems.
And so, in conclusion, then, we do have a lot of respect for you, for your enthusiasm for Biblical scholarship, and your desire to get back to Bible teaching. What we are saying, is that there is a very fundamental difference here and it is important as far as we are concerned, and yes, we do believe it could affect salvation. And so we put the message out to you quite clearly today that you have got to re-evaluate whether you really understand the cross of Calvary, whether you really understand the blood of Christ, and whether you really are " in Christ" by having been properly baptized into him; whether you really understand his victory over sin, whether you can enter into the degree to which he strove against the sinful tendencies inside him, the sinful nature, and the glorious degree to which he overcame.
That is our Hope, that's the thing which motivates our lives so that we can live in the true knowledge that Christ has conquered sin and that we are not worried about some spectral battle up in the sky, but we know what he has done for us and we know what he has achieved in prospect for the whole human race. And so it just remains for me to say, we really do mean it, may God bless you, may God open your eyes to the scriptures, may God give you travelling mercies as you all go home. We do hope you will stay afterwards and chat with some of us. Our desire is that eventually, we might all walk in his Kingdom.

Chapter 3

The Holy Spirit

Are The Miraculous Gifts Of The Holy Spirit Possessed Today?

A Debate Transcript (With Marie Battle)

Public Debate On “Are The Miraculous Gifts Of The Holy Spirit Possessed Today?”

A Debate Transcript (With John Liliekas)

3.1

Are The Miraculous Gifts Of The Holy Spirit Possessed Today?
Transcript of a debate with Marie Battle

Saturday, 27th January 2001

Garner Historic Auditorium, Garner NC, USA

Speakers: Against Holy Spirit possession available today: Mr. Duncan Heaster

For Holy Spirit possession available today: Pastor M. D. Battle (Pentecostal Praise Temple Church)

Chairman: Mr. Gary Burns

Introduction

Duncan Heaster's First Speech

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3-1-2 Name It And Claim It
3-1-3 What Are The Gifts Of The Holy Spirit?
3-1-4 Slain In The Spirit?
3-1-5 That Which Is Perfect

Pastor Battle's First Speech

3-1-6 Praise God For The Spirit

Duncan Heaster's Second Speech

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Summation By Duncan Heaster

3-1-17 False Claims Of Spirit Possession

Summation By Pastor Battle

3-1-18 Jesus Is The Answer

Introduction
CHAIRMAN:

Good evening, everyone. And allow me to introduce to you our speakers for our debate concerning, "Are the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit possessed today?" On my left (on your right), the pastor of the Praise Temple in Raleigh North Carolina, Marie D Battle, and on my right is Duncan Heaster from Vilnius, Lithuania. I suspect he's probably not originally from Lithuania but we'll give him the benefit of the doubt. He kind of has an English accent, but we won't hold that against him too much.

I would like to explain the format to you this evening, so that you'll understand how this debate will be carried out. We will allot 25 minutes to Duncan to begin with, to deny the proposition. We will then allow Marie 25 minutes to affirm the position (or the proposition). We will then have a 5-minute break. After that break, we will have a 10-minute rebuttal by Duncan and then a 10-minute rebuttal by Marie. After that we will have 10 minutes of question & answer by each of the speakers, Duncan and Marie. We will alternate questions for a total period of 20 minutes. Now if you'll notice, there are boxes on each side of the stage. If you have a question for either Duncan or Marie, please write that question down and put it in the appropriate box. Of course, the question for Duncan over here (points to Duncan's box), a question for Marie over here (points to Marie's box). And I will sort through those and make sure they get the questions and they'll have the opportunity to look them over and answer. To finish, we will allow each of the debaters 5 minutes of summary; Duncan going first, and then we'll let Marie have the last word.

I have a handy little timer here, and we're going to hold very strictly to the time limits. About 2 minutes before the time is up I will signal to each of the speakers that they have about 2 minutes before the time is up. So with that in mind, let us know (staying seated) let's bow our heads in prayer and offer the Father's blessing on this evening.

PRAYER

Our most righteous and eternal heavenly Father, hallowed be they name. Heavenly Father we approach thy throne of mercy to offer unto Thee all thanksgiving, praise, honor and glory. Heavenly Father, we pray that Thou would look down upon this evening, that Thou would bless it, that Thou would give us all respectful and reverent hearts before Thee. That the things that we do and say here this evening would redound to thine honor and Thy glory. We pray, as always, for Thy Kingdom to soon come, and Thy will to be done on Earth as it is in Heaven. For we ask our prayers and give Thee all thanksgiving and praise through the name of Thy son, the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.

Now what we will do because of the situation with the microphone, is I will let Marie have the microphone from here, and she will address you seated. And with that we'll call upon Duncan to start us off.

Duncan Heaster's First Speech

3-1-1 Holy Spirit Gifts Not Now Possessed

Ok. Well, Marie, Gary, ladies and gentlemen, as you know, I'm here tonight to talk to you about the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit, and the proposition that I put to you is that the Holy Spirit gifts are not now possessed. They were possessed in the first century, but have now been taken away. However, I'm not here to push anyone into any corners with argument. I'm not here to engage in any kind of dialectical argument in that sense with anybody. I'm here to talk to probably a tiny minority of the audience that's here tonight. I'm talking to the person who's come here because they're seeking the truth, because they're searching, because they have heard the claims on one side and those on the other; they have searched the scriptures and they are searching for greater truth. And it's to those people that particularly, in the end, ultimately, I address myself.

On the one hand, there's the issue of the Holy Spirit gifts, and I wish to put to you from the Bible tonight that the claims to possess those gifts are certainly not supported by Biblical testimony. But what I want to go much further to submit to you, is that actually this issue of Holy Spirit gifts is actually the tip of an iceberg. That the claim by many churches and individuals to possess gifts, which actually on close analysis (it turns out) is actually not the teaching of the Bible, actually is revealing a whole iceberg of other issues. For there are many other doctrines and things which are claimed in many churches today, that on the surface level appear to be credible and right, but actually under closer analysis, you realize that there is a whole system of error in Christendom generally.

So, to come, then, to the issue of the Holy Spirit, one thing we're not here to discuss tonight is whether God answers prayer. We believe, and the Bible teaches that God answers prayer. There's no question about that. We're also not here to discuss whether God is active in His church today by His spirit. Of course He is active in his church today by His spirit. That is not under any debate or discussion; that is clear. What we are talking about is the possession of the miraculous gifts. I want to discuss this under the following headings, which you see there on the overhead.

I'm going to look, first of all, at the purpose of the gifts, then to analyze the claims of those who claim that they possess those gifts today. And then to talk about what the Bible says about those gifts being withdrawn, and then to talk about how actually the spirit of God is active in our world.

But starting off with defining this word "spirit". The word "spirit" essentially in Hebrew and Greek really carries 2 ideas. One is of the mind, of the thinking; and the other is power. The doing of things. God says in Isaiah 14:24, "As I have thought, so shall it come to pass." And it's so also of a man or woman's spirit: that as a man thinks, so he does, in his actions. And so the spirit of God is His mind, His breathing, the essence of God by which He also does things, because He does according to His thinking. By His spirit, He garnished the heavens, Job says (26:13). The spirit of God, the finger of God; these things are paralleled in the Bible. So then the spirit is the power of God. And so God is active in this world today.

3-1-2 Name It And Claim It

And yet there are times when the spirit of God has specifically worked and God has given gifts of Holy Spirit to men and women to do *specific* things. And he bestowed this power upon individuals. Now, my whole point with this is that the gifts of the Holy Spirit were to do specific things at specific times. They were not constant possessions of a believer throughout the course of their spiritual life. And never were they in the form of a blank check that you

can have what you like, just “name it and claim it”. That’s never how the Holy Spirit was used.

And so there’s some specific examples here: When they built the tabernacle they were filled with the Spirit of Wisdom so that they might make Aaron’s garments. Bezaleel had these gifts in order to work in gold, etc. Also so as to do specific things, Samson had the gift come upon him to kill a lion and to kill 30 men. The spirit wasn’t possessed by him constantly. The gift came upon him to do a specific thing and then it was taken away. Now when he was there facing the lion, he knew full well what the gift was given him to do. It was to *kill that lion*, and then that was it. The gift did not continue after the lion.

When you come to the New Testament, it’s the same thing. The gifts were given, but they were for specific reasons. Christianity, humanly speaking, had no chance of success. These men went out to preach the gospel not knowing the languages and with no credibility. They preached that a man who lived in Palestine had died and risen from the dead. And so they were given these gifts to confirm the message that they spoke. The Lord Jesus gave gifts unto men for the perfecting of the saints, the developing of the saints, for the work of the ministry, to build up the body (Ephesians 4). They were given (Paul says in Romans 1) the gifts to *establish* the early church. The Lord promised the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, to the disciples to bring all things to their remembrance “whatsoever I said unto you”. So that was something specific to enable them to write the gospel. To remind them of the words that Jesus said in his ministry. So all the time, you can see from these references, the Spirit was used to confirm the preaching of the early church. They went forth and preached everywhere and the Lord worked with them, confirming the word with signs following (Mt. 28, Mk. 16)- different to 'name it and claim it'.

3-1-3 What Are The Gifts Of The Holy Spirit?

So when you take Peter, for example, as somebody who had been given these gifts. The Spirit came upon him and he was filled with the Holy Spirit at Pentecost to speak in foreign languages, and then when he’s arrested by authorities in Acts 4 the Holy Spirit again fills him up, and then when they released him from prison, again the Holy Spirit fills him up. And so, the whole purpose of the gifts was to achieve something specific and then it was taken away.

I want to consider, then, in more detail those gifts; and I want to compare them with the claims of possession today. They had the gift of prophecy, the gift of speaking forth the word of God. And so prophets came down from Jerusalem unto Antioch and made a specific prophecy about a famine that was going to happen. Now according to 1 Corinthians 12, the early church was like a body with parts. Each part of the body like fingers, hands and legs represented a different gift. And in the body, all the gifts were possessed. So it’s no good focusing just, let’s say, on the gift of tongues; to say, “our church has the gift of tongues”. It’s got to have all the gifts if it is a valid, 1st century, spirit-filled church. And I ask, where is the gift of prophesy, in the sense of forth-telling God’s word. Because if it’s there, what is said by those people who claim to have it is capable of being written down and treated as the word of God.

There was the gift of healing. And these miracles of healing were done in the eyes of men and women. The lame man who was laid daily at the gate of the temple, he leaps up and he’s healed by the Holy Spirit. They did many of these signs and wonders amongst the people. Now this did not go on in some back-street church. I get a little bit tired of Pentecostals and

others saying to me, “Come to our church, you’ll see a miracle”. There’s no question of going to a church – these miracles were all done openly, publicly, up front. There was no question about these things. And you’ll notice that the Jews said that indeed a notable miracle hath been done. It’s manifest for all them that dwell in Jerusalem. Those who heard the apostles speaking in tongues were confounded. The Jews, themselves said, “this man doeth many miracles”. So, it’s not possible to say that there should be any question about possession of the gifts. Actually, this debate shouldn’t even have to occur if the real gifts of the Holy Spirit are possessed, because when there *were* possessed, the people who actually saw them happening – even the cynics and the unbelievers said, “we agree that a miracle is being done” (Acts 4:13). And that to me is highly significant, because I am not an unbeliever. I am more generous to the claims of the Pentecostal movement than lets say, umm…then let’s say the Jews were of Jesus in the first century. And yet one of the features of the Holy Spirit gifts is that there’s no argument about it. These things were clearly possessed and miracles are done clearly. No debate about it. And yet, where are these miracles today? Done openly, publicly, in the eyes of unbelievers, so that everybody, even the most hardened cynic can say, “I cannot deny that this has been done”...? And there were no failed healings in the first century. This was the whole nature of the miracles that were done.

When we come to the question of tongues: in Acts 2 the apostles were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues. And everyone came together and was amazed because they heard them speak in their own language (and there’s a long list of the languages). And they said, “how hear we every man in our own tongue” (the same Greek word translated languages) “wherein we were born?” And the Greek word that’s translated “tongues” there is used later on (in Revelation for example) about people of every tongue and nation…languages. So they were speaking foreign languages. It wasn’t an unintelligible utterance. It was, for example, the ability for you to go to, say Turkey and speak in Turkish, Greece and speak in Greek. And no wonder people were amazed. Now I’ve heard many times the so-called speaking in tongues that happens today and I’m not confounded, I’m not amazed…neither is anybody else. People are maybe mildly fascinated. If I could speak to you suddenly in your native language (let’s say you don’t speak English) it would definitely arrest you in your tracks. But notice, though, that tongues were not that important in the early church. The list of the spirit gifts in Ephesians 4 doesn’t even mention it and it occurs at the bottom of a similar list in 1 Corinthians 12. There are only 3 times in the New Testament when the gift of tongues is spoken of as being used.

3-1-4 Slain In The Spirit?

Now, Paul also says that in the church, the gift of tongues is only one gift. There’s no way that everybody has got the gift. He says, “Does everybody speak with tongues?” No they don’t. In the early church each person had a different gift. So it cannot be that, as some Pentecostals teach, that you must receive the gift of tongues to be saved and if you don’t have the gift of tongues you’re not saved, because that’s not what the Bible says. In fact I consider that abusive, sending people on a guilt trip if they can’t speak in tongues or if they don't fall down 'slain in the spirit'. They didn’t all have the gift in the first century. And apart from that, all this hype about tongues is simply not reflecting the Biblical status that’s given to it. Now if you were to turn to the 1st of Corinthians chapter 14, there is there a clear outline of how those gifts should be used. And again there clearly the gifts relate to foreign languages. And having given a load of commands about how the gift of tongues should be used, Paul concludes by saying, “If anyone thinks that he’s spiritually gifted, he must agree that what I said is really so”. So with that background, let’s have a look at what he says. He starts off by

saying, “You guys in Corinth are using the gifts wrongly because you are jabbering away in languages that cannot be understood, as per 'slain in the spirit'. And what’s the point of this” he says, “If I don’t know the meaning of the voice, I’m like a barbarian.” And so he says, “If you speak in an unknown tongue” (in another language)… “Unknown” is a wrong translation there- it’s just added in by some translators. “If you speak in a tongue, you must pray that you can interpret”. So there was a gift of interpretation.

In other words, let’s imagine that…that we’re here preaching to you and…and you’re say Russians and you don’t know any language apart from Russian. And so I start to speak to you in Russian, and some guy walks in and he speaks only in English. So what’s the point for me to speak to you only in Russian when the guy there doesn’t know the language? There must be an interpreter to interpret back into the other language so that the whole church is kept together. And this he points out, going on in this: “We must do these things with understanding. The words that you speak by the gift of tongues must be words obviously that you understand. Or otherwise, when you pray, how can somebody say ‘Amen, so be it, I agree with it’, if it’s a load of sounds and noises that you can’t possibly understand?”

And he says, “I thank God I speak with tongues more than you all.” Why was that? Because he travelled so much in the preaching of the gospel that he used this gift of tongues (of languages) more than any other person did. But he says, “I’d rather speak five words that are understandable so that I might teach somebody else than 10,000 words in a language you don’t know.” Verse 22 “Tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe”, not in some back-street church when believers get together…where one starts to speak in tongues and they all start doing it. They are a sign to those who don’t believe. Acts 2 is the great example. So it’s not something to confirm the faith of those who already believe. “Now, if you’re all speaking in tongues”, he says, “if everybody’s speaking (you in Korean, you in Chinese, you in Russian, you in English, you in Spanish) all at the same time, what is the point of this?” he says. “If anyone speak in a tongue, it only needs to be 2 or 3.” Why 2 or 3? Because it’s unlikely that there will be more than 2 or 3 language groups in any meeting. For example, here there might just be somebody who’s a Spanish speaker who knows no English. Ok, we would then use the gift of tongues to speak it in Spanish to that person, and then to translate back into English for the rest of you. It’s unlikely there would then be another language group that knew neither Spanish nor English. And there must be an interpreter. And he goes on, “but if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent.” But this is not the case in the Pentecostal movement. People do speak in tongues, in languages, without an interpreter at all.

“The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets”. Does that sound like ‘slain in the Spirit’? It doesn’t to me. God is not the author of confusion. I’m sorry to say this, but Paul goes on to say, “Let your women keep silent in the churches”, and the context is that they should not speak in tongues. It is not permitted unto them to speak (in tongues) in the church. And yet this is simply not obeyed. It really is not obeyed. And don’t forget we started off by Paul saying, “If you don’t accept that these things are so, then you’re not really gifted.”

So, the gifts of the Spirit were given in the early church and they were then taken away. All the gifts of the Spirit were in order to achieve specific things at specific times. But actually there are other reasons to believe they were taken away. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are going to be poured out when Jesus comes back. Hebrews 6 talks about the gifts as the “powers of the age to come”. And in Joel, we read that during the last days, the gifts are going to be poured out again, after Israel have repented and been invaded by a northern invader. So then the gifts are going to be given when Jesus comes back. So therefore, they’re not going to be

now possessed *before* he comes back, if they're going to be given *when* he comes back, yet they were possessed in the first century. So there must be a time between the first century and the last days when they've been withdrawn. And that is exactly what Paul talks about in 1 Corinthians 13 when he says, "Wherever they are these gifts of prophesies and tongues, knowledge they're going to finish." Now he says, "we know from parts". Someone had a gift of prophesy, they gave the Word of God and the knowledge of the early church was built up sort of incrementally, by all these different prophesyings that were made under the Spirit. But he says, in contrast to that, "There is going to come, something which is perfect", he says there. And perfect really means complete. It does not mean sinless. That's the context in which it's being used. It's a poor translation, which goes through into the English translation, sadly. Just to confirm that, just look at these other times when this word that's translated "perfect" is used. In Hebrews 5 he talks about the early believers were not *yet perfect*, were *not yet* of full age; as if they soon *would be* and they should be mature enough (or "perfect" enough). In Philippi some of them, along with Paul, he says, had reached the "perfect" or mature state. "We speak wisdom (1 Corinthians 2) amongst them that are perfect." In understanding be men, be mature – it's all the same word. Be complete. So, "when that which is complete is come, there will be no need for the gifts of the Spirit any longer". So there was going to come a time, according to 1 Corinthians 13, when the gifts would be taken away. And we submit to you that the…the thing that was complete, the completed prophecies of the New Testament church: is the New Testament. That once the New Testament had been completed, the prophecies, the knowing things "from parts", had been completed. Ephesians 4 says the same: That Jesus went to heaven and gave the gifts of the Spirit unto men for the building up of the body *until* we come to the knowledge of the son of God…. unto a mature man. Those in Philippi had got there. Paul himself had got there. So they were no longer children tossed to and fro.

3-1-5 That Which Is Perfect

My point is that the gifts are given *until* something happens. And that something is not the second coming of Jesus. Because we know that when Jesus comes we're going to be given the gifts of the Holy Spirit. *When he comes*, we get the gifts of the Spirit. So, whether you like my idea or not about the completed Bible as that which is complete, (or perfect or mature or finished), the fact is that at some stage between the first century and the second coming, the gifts are going to be taken away. 2 Timothy 3:16 says that, "Once you've got all scripture it enabled the man of God to be perfect (or mature). So then once all scripture was completed, the church was equipped, or as Weymouth puts it "was fully equipped", for the ministry. They were no longer a bunch of fishermen out there to convert the world. They had a Spirit-given book, the New Testament, behind them, confirming what they were preaching.

And so we come to this question of, "Well, how is the Spirit operating today?". I've said the gifts of the Holy Spirit *did* exist, the Bible said they would be taken away, they have been taken away; and they will be given again when the Lord Jesus comes. And I said that the claims that are made as to the possession of the Spirit do not match up today…do not match up with the experience of the first-century church. The Lord Jesus said that if you have the Comforter (which is the Holy Spirit) greater works than these shall ye do. *Greater Works*. And I'm not asking anyone to do a miracle tonight…I am simply making the point that anyone who has got the Comforter will do greater works. Not *might do*, but *will do* greater works. And anyone who's got these gifts will not just be displaying them in some back-street church, they will be displayed as the gifts were in the first-century in the eyes of the

unbeliever, to the cynic (maybe include me as a cynic if you want). They will be displayed to their eyes and those who see them will not be able to deny them.

However, that may all sound very negative – but we believe definitely that God is working in our lives. That God is definitely at work; that the Spirit of God, of course it exists. The power of God is at work. And so where is the mind of God? Where is the Spirit of God? Where is the power of God? The gospel, Paul says, is the power of God under salvation to all those who believe. So therefore, the Spirit of God is there in the gospel, it is there in the Word of God. And I want to draw your attention to the fact that the Bible is written by what Paul calls "in-spirit-ation". The Spirit of God was there in those words. The Bible that you have is not just like any other book, it is not just print on white paper. Here you have the Spirit of God written down. Here you have the Spirit of God speaking to you from those words. And just see all the links there are between the Spirit and the Word. "The words that I speak", Jesus said, "they are spirit" (Jn. 6:63). We are born again by the Spirit, we are born again by the Word of God. The Old Testament prophets spoke "the words which the Lord of Hosts hath sent in His Spirit by the prophets". "I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you". The Spirit and the Word are connected.

Now this isn't just a couple of passages. "My Spirit that is upon thee and my words which I put into thy mouth", "for thy word's sake and according to thine own heart" (your own spirit, your own mind) "I'll put my spirit within you…I will put my law; my word in their hearts". So then God is at work today, through His Word. And not only through His word, but He is at work today. What we're saying is that those miraculous Holy Spirit gifts that were given to enable specific things, by their very nature do not now exist, because they were to do something specific. The job was done. The spoken word was confirmed and written down, by the Spirit, in the New Testament. So that which was from parts (that which was partial knowledge) the ministry of the Spirit gift of prophecy, the miraculous ministry from the Spirit was ended when that which is complete (that is the completed prophecy of God) in the New Testament, was written and completed.

CHAIRMAN

Two minutes.

DUNCAN HEASTER

So…I rest my case.

3-1-6 Praise God For The Spirit

CHAIRMAN

Now we might also make mention of the fact that if…if our speakers decide to cut their presentation short, in this case Duncan by two minutes, then he will have an additional two minutes later, should he desire to take that. The same with you, Marie, if you decide that you want to bank that time for a little bit later, we'll credit that to your account as well. So we'll now turn it over to Marie.

Pastor Battle's First Speech

Praise the Lord, everybody.

AUDIENCE

Praise the Lord.

PASTOR BATTLE

We thank the Lord for being here this afternoon, this evening. Of course we can get to witness and talk to men that we wouldn't come in touch with out in the public. But I was glad for this opportunity and I'm here to say what the Word say. Praise God, it said that once a…a lady was visiting another lady and she had a parrot and every time this lady would say something and the bird would say, "That's what the Word say…that's what the Word say." So I'm here to tell you what the Word say…Praise God. God's Word is all that we have to go by.

I don't see where God will change…God has changed His church. Jesus came and said he will build his church upon this rock. I will build *my* church and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it. So..uh…he said I will give the key to Peter, and that key, we realize, that key was used on the day of Pentecost. Praise God it was. And as the brother have said there were over 120 men that spoke in other tongues and that's not even counting the women and the children at that time. But there were others at other times, Praise God for the Spirit, Cornelius, and uh…there was, Paul spoke more than they all did, Praise God.

And there's a difference in the gift of tongues and the initiative, evidence of you receiving the Holy Ghost. Because when the Holy Ghost comes, He's a witness and he will make himself known….known that he has made his destination within us. And so, the Word tell us that you must be born again, of the water and of the spirit. Praise God. One verse, a scripture, tells us, praise God, that…umm…thank the Lord, that He doesn't, God doesn't change His ways. Praise God, thank you Lord. So we are looking forward to continuing in the words according to advice that's given by the inspiration of God. Thank you Lord. And we can just think in our minds about this. This was spiritual. Praise God. It was given by the inspiration of God and whenever the men wrote they had…the Spirit of God came upon them to write this. And so, the gifts were given, as Jesus had promised. He said, thank you Lord, that the signs would follow them, those that believed. And he spoke of those tongues in Mark 16th chapter, Praise God, …it's seems I got up here it seems like everything got missing…But anyway, when you receive the Holy Ghost. Now I have received, you can say, Holy Ghost, Holy Spirit, Comforter, whichever you want to. I believe there's power, so much power in God and in His Spirit, in His way to even the very book of Genesis tell how the spirit moved on the water and the waters divided. And I think, "He has all power, praise God. And He wants to use His people, Praise God, He gives us those gifts that they can ..uhh…that the church can profit with them. I'm not talking about our little individual place, but the church that Jesus said He came to build. And uhh…they had these gifts, after the Holy Ghost they came upon them, praise God, they began to, uhhh…. work. They said at one point, when Jesus was walking with them and they wanted, somebody wanted to know, why couldn't we do it? And Jesus said, "this kind come by fasting and prayer." And after receiving the Holy Ghost and this is the early church; this is what Paul was teaching…Paul was teaching on this. Praise God,

about the gifts of the Spirit, the nine gifts of the Spirit. And I believe that Paul had it, had all nine of them.

And it's possible now that God can use whosoever will that present themselves to Him a living sacrifice, as the Word of God has said. Thank you Lord. So he said the manifestation of the spirit is given to every man to profit with them. To one is given the spirit of the word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge by the same spirit. Another faith (the same spirit), to another the gifts of healing by the same spirit. To another workers of miracles, another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another diverse kinds of tongues, to another interpretation of tongues. But all these worked in one and the same spirit, dividing every man severally as He will. Uh..and the gifts, God give the gifts in the church, I do believe, Praise God. I believe He gives some the gifts of tongues, Thank the Lord, and this is done by the Spirit of God. This is not anything, that I can say for myself, that I can make up. I don't know any foreign language, anything like that But whenever the Spirit of God within me want to speak, Praise God. Sometimes tongues are for to, need interpretation an interpreter. But then there again are times when you're edifying yourself, Praise God. I've seen Holy Ghost use people, singing in tongues, praying in tongues, using them in various ways with the tongue. And I believe that tongue, tongue still exist – I know they do. Praise God. Thank you Jesus, Praise God. And uh…when Jesus left, he ascended up on high. He left captivity captive and he gave gifts unto men. He didn't give gifts just then to stop there. Praise God. You are in His church, He can use who He will whenever He want to. And He will not, Praise God, take away the gift from men. Amen. Glory to God. So the tongues that you use, Praise God, isn't to profit with. Nothing for ourselves, not anything to edify ourselves, or make us see great or anything, but their given to profit with uh…God's church. With uh..grow, we edify, it will help the unbelievers and all. Thank you Lord. That another one – the faith. One man may have the gifts of…of tongues. It like every time he starts talking he goes off in tongues. You might that that he's just, oh he's just…that they're just fanatics. Can't open the mouth without a tongue, but that's a gift of tongue. And nobody have to teach you this. It says, "as the sprit of God give utterance". I would try, if I didn't have it, I would try to see if I could get the real Holy Ghost. Thank you Jesus. Praise God.

And these are the last days, Praise God, that we're living in now. Amen. It said in the last days, Joel has said, "in the last days, we're gonna pour out his spirit upon all flesh. Your sons and your daughter, they shall prophesy." Thank you Lord. And so the gifts are not taken away and they *will not* be taken away, Praise God, and start back over again. And we're looking for the rapture of Christ. Of course we don't see that word rapture, but we're looking for Jesus to come back, and we want to be caught up to meet him. Amen, thank you Lord.

To another the faith, faith by the same spirit. There are some born-again Christians that they just have faith. Praise God. It's not a natural thing, this is spiritual, Praise God. Whatever come or whenever is needed, that's when the gifts should be used anyway – at a time when they're needed. God knows, we don't know the time, Praise God, He knows when to use. Amen.

And to another the working of miracles. Also this work and to another prophesy. Amen. And so prophesy is still at work. Praise God. Spirit of God come on upon you, Praise God. Not only upon you. See before we got it, we had ….it would come upon us. But now, in these last days, we have it on the inside. Praise God, thank you Lord. So this began to work. Praise God, the working of miracles. And I believe in miracles – I know God is a miracle worker. Praise God, I'm an example myself. I could give you the doctor's name, the place where they

are. Over in 1989 they said I had an aneurysm on my heart. And no one hardly lives with that. They put a patch on my heart and said I wouldn't live over 6 months. Now this is a miracle. They doctors – if there were here today – would tell you that's a miracle. That it's happened.

And God loves us, Praise God. He wouldn't just give His gift to one part of the church then let the rest not have it. Thank the Lord. He said, "when the Spirit of truth comes, he shall lead you and guide you into all truth". Praise God. He's going to take things of his and give it to us. The Spirit, Praise God, of course works in many spirits, have gone out. And He tells us to try the Spirit. Praise God. Some say try the Spirit by the Spirit. No, I wouldn't do that. Praise God. Try the Spirit by the Word of God. Thank the Lord.

[Someone in audience speaks in tongues] There it is! See there, that go on. Thank the Lord, Praise God.

But uh…thank the Lord. The self-same spirit that…all of them's done by the self-same spirit. Someone's said one time that it's like…when the Holy Ghost came, he brought his bag, and he..he brought his bag…he gave gifts to us. And he used us, used whom he will, Praise God, in these different gifts. And we do need them in the church today, Praise God. Thank the Lord. But all were self-dividing, every man severally as he will. And uh…said there are a diversity of gifts. But the same spirit. Praise God. It all have to work by the same spirit. I cannot say I was a natural-born child that could sing, not that type of thing. This is not a calling type of thing. I'm talking about the Spirit, the power of God working in your life. Thank you Lord. And it is *necessary* that you have the gifts. Is definitely necessary, Praise God. All those disciples, when Jesus told them to go forth, Praise God, they began to preach and teach and miracles were done by them. Miracles are still at work today. Praise God. Thank our Lord. I don't say that you can't use a doctor or anything of that sort, but whenever a miracle is needed, Praise God, by His supernatural power – He works. He moves in. But number 1, Praise God, I don't even believe that we can say, Thank the Lord, that He is Lord. It's what the Word say. We cannot say He's Lord without his Spirit. We can say we think him, we think of Him this way or that way, or we read about Him, Praise God. But He said, without my Spirit, you are none of his. And He's the one that Give us His Spirit. Don't just try to get it, thank you Lord, by some that please and ease and satisfy your mind. But we want to please the Lord. We want to please Jesus. Praise God. We want to walk according to the Word of God. Amen, thank the Lord. And of course, Praise God, there's one Lord, one faith, and one baptism. But when you come to it and start counting, there's about 300 or 500 or 1000 baptisms. Some sprinkle with flowers…some do things with…Praise God. One picture was shown of John standing in the water and Jesus was with him. He took a cup of water and was pouring it over his head. Praise God. And if that wasn't right, Praise God…I know a baptism of the Holy Ghost, Praise God, (still talking about the Holy Ghost) and also the baptism with the water also. Praise God, thank the Lord.

So one faith, and that one faith is Jesus. That one Lord is Jesus. Praise God, say how can that be? Lord is the father. Thank you Lord. Jesus is the son. Christ is the mediator. Praise God. So try not, thank the Lord, if you please, Praise God, be supposing that you can make it without this. And be supposing that you don't *need* the Holy Spirit. That you don't need the gifts in the church. We need the gifts. So many greatly error, Jesus taught, because you know not the scriptures. Praise God. They worked, Praise God, and miracles was done, so wherefore he said when he ascended upon high, wherefore he led captivity captive. And he gave gifts unto men. You think he went away and folded up his arms? He gave some gifts, Praise God, and the gifts are still…still working. Amen. Now that he has said it, what it is but

that he descended first. And to the lower parts of the earth. Praise God, he went down first, and came up. Amen. Then a few days, he ascended on high. Praise God. Thankfully he that descended is the same that ascended above all heavens.

(You gotta let me know when it's time to stop.) Thank the Lord. Praise God. Thank our Lord. Ahh…Amen, thank you Jesus. Oh, we love you tonight Lord. Thank Him. God bearing, uh…was bearing these people a witness (Hebrews 2:4) God also bearing a witness, both with signs and wonders. Amen. God is not going to do what we think that we can do. Amen. I think one verse said: man's extremity is God's opportunity. Thank the Lord. As long as we think we can make it without Him, then He's not gonna do it. He say why we don't see these things happening? Because, Praise God, maybe you have not presented your body a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God. Thank the Lord. He said no man can like this speak evil of me…in other words, be able to do one of these miracles or signs. Praise God.

Think about how the earth was without void and God was moving on the face of it. And the same God today, yesterday, and forever. That Spirit of the Lord moved, Praise God. You can think that his spirit doesn't move anymore, his spirit doesn't work anymore, his spirit doesn't speak anymore? I don't believe he gives out a dumb Holy Ghost. Thank you Lord. Amen. But when a Holy Ghost is within you, I believe he's gonna speak, Praise God. But believe everything else you've been taught, but just don't believe, Praise God that this isn't in action today. But it, Praise God. So uh..and it came to pass, at the last days, God said he would pour Spirit upon all flesh. Are you flesh? You're flesh, Praise God. And we're living in the last days, don't fool yourself. Everything that he said was coming to pass, it's happening. Parents against their children, children against the parents, time to stop? Thank you Lord, Praise God. Thank you Lord. So let us, Praise God, accept God's word at church. (It's hard to sit here and try to tell you in 2 or 3 minutes, Praise God, about what we have.) So there are 3 that bear record in heaven. The Father, the Word and the Holy Ghost. And these three are one. There's also that, Praise God, the three that bears record here. And that record is bared within us, through us. Praise God. God bless you, thank you Jesus. Thank you Jesus.

CHAIRMAN

Thank you Marie, thank you Duncan. We will now take a five-minute break. Let me just ask that you not go too far. Remember the question boxes on either side for our forum.

NOTE: HERE THERE IS A GAP IN THE RECORDING OF THE DEBATE

Duncan Heaster's Second Speech

3-1-7 The Spirit On All Flesh

…where translated baptism means to dip or immerse. And it must mean that because we are baptized into the death and resurrection of Jesus. So then, sprinkling is not baptism; it's sprinkling. Now, the point was made that those who believe receive, and if there isn't enough faith then the miracles don't happen. I can remember living in Zambia for a couple of years and all the time the posters for miracle crusades would say, "Come [to the meeting] expecting a miracle". And if it didn't happen, well you didn't have faith. And I can't see this at all, because some of those healed in the first century did not have faith. Do you remember the man who was lame. And they say to him after he's healed, "Who's the man (it was Jesus) who said take up your bed?" But he who was healed didn't know who Jesus was. Later on,

Jesus says to a blind man who's been healed. He finds him afterwards and says, "Do you believe on the son of God?" and he says, "Well, who is he that I may believe on him?" The miracle was done but that man didn't believe. The widow's dead son, when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her…but the son didn't believe, nor apparently did she. Or when Peter cuts off the ear of the high priest's servant… and the Lord heals the servant. The servant didn't believe and yet the miracle was still done. So all the focus on 'You've got to believe, you've got to believe and then you'll see a miracle' is not quite so. That's not how it was in the first century.

Now again, maybe I didn't quite understand this right. But the point was made that we're living in the last days and according to Joel the gifts are going to be poured on in the last days. I don't deny that, that is indeed what Joel says. But let's just see, in more detail, what he says. Israel is going to be invaded (I can see that happening any moment now) and the attacking army is going to be destroyed. And then they repent and they live in fellowship with God. Now that's not so yet, Israel has not yet repented. "And it shall come to pass afterward (that is after these things), that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh". Now that's not been fulfilled now, and it's pretty clear it hasn't because the spirit isn't poured out upon all flesh. Not upon flesh, but upon *all* flesh. Now it seems to me the context is specifically talking about all the nation of Israel. Now, the fact that one or two people may claim to possess the Holy Spirit does not mean that "all flesh" has received the Holy Spirit. So I really don't think we can apply Joel 2 as being fulfilled now because it's going to be fulfilled after certain things have happened.

Now, we've been referred to the Comforter, that this is in fact what's possessed today. But the Comforter, as I've said, will enable you to do *greater* miracles, the Lord said, than what he had done. Now, the dead were raised, men without limbs were given limbs, and I really challenge anyone to say that those miracles are done today. The less visible, internal healings which are claimed, I'm not denying any of these things…I can't deny them. But what we're saying is that miracles done after the pattern of the first century by the miraculous gifts... Where are they? Because where are limbs being restored? Where are the dead being raised? It simply is not happening.

So are we saying that those wonderful words about the Comforter have absolutely no relevance to us at all, but it was all like a piece of Bible history? No, we're not saying that. The Comforter did in it's first instance refer to the miraculous gifts that were possessed in the first century. For example, "he shall bring all things to your remembrance, whatever I said to you." And that, as we say, could only apply to those who had actually been with Jesus in his ministry. The Comforter, we're told, will guide you into all truth. It will guide you to all truth. But how is it, therefore, that those who…

CHAIRMAN

Two minutes, four minutes total.

DUNCAN HEASTER

3-1-8 Catholic Charismatics

How is it therefore that those who claim to have the Comforter are believing different things? Catholic charismatics believe they have the Comforter, speak in tongues, do miracles. And

yet they're insistent that Mary is the mother of God. They're insistent that the Pope is God's representative here on earth. Why is it on the issue of the Trinity that there is division between those who all claim to have the Comforter in the miraculous sense? It can't be so that they've all got these gifts. It can't be so. Because the Comforter was to lead to "all truth".

And yet we're not saying that in no sense do these words apply to us. In the first century, in it's miraculous sense, yes those gifts have been withdrawn. But actually when you look at the language the Lord uses… "I'm going away, but I'm not going to leave you as orphans, I will come to you in this Comforter and it will abide with you or in you." Yet all the time in John's record, he speaks about how *the words* of Jesus will abide in you. "The seed of God, or the Word of God, abides in you". "The Truth abides" in us. And Jesus says, "My Word is Truth"…God's Word is Truth (Jn. 17:17). The Word of God abides in you, the gospel abides in us. But the Comforter abides in us. So you see then the parallel between the Comforter and the Word of God.

Now another thing that I'd like to bring to your attention is the way that the gifts were passed on in the first century… by the laying on of hands, by the Apostles. That's why when Simon saw that by the laying on of the Apostle's hands the gifts were given, he offered them money. Paul said he wanted to visit Rome, to lay his hands on them and give them some spiritual gift. He tells Timothy of the gift that he put in Timothy by the laying on of his hands.

CHAIRMAN

Two minutes.

DUNCAN HEASTER

And so when the first century Apostles started to die out, there's no evidence at all that that power to lay on hands existed beyond them. So at most, the second generation after Jesus no longer had those gifts. And I want to ask you a question, and I ask this in all intellectual honesty: You'll probably be aware, all of you here, of the Lord's own words where he says that when he comes again there will be people who will say, "Lord, Lord. Didn't we do miracles in your name?" (Mt. 7:23-25). And he'll say, "I'm sorry, but I don't know who you are." There are going to be… "many [who] will say this", *many people, from Catholic Charismatics to well meaning Pentecostals*. Not a couple of misguided people, but many people will think that they had the gifts of the Holy Spirit, but will find tragically all too late, he doesn't even know them. Now who are these people? Now, I'm not pointing fingers at anybody nor judging any individual. But what I'm saying is, there's going to be a lot of people in this position. And I plead with you, because my heart burns for you…if you might be in that category, to think again. Because I do not believe that, despite the confident words, that "Yeah, we do miracles, yeah it all happens down at our church", I do not believe that underneath, in that un-shareable self which we all have, that you are that confident. As you lie awake at night (like I do), looking up at the ceiling, looking up at the light socket, thinking about who you really are and about what you really believe. I do not believe that underneath there is not a doubt. That "Is this whole thing valid or not? Or is it just a paradigm that we bought into?" …won't go away. And I submit to you that that's what it is. And when you rationally analyze against the scriptures that those things that are called miracles are not really being done. And I sincerely submit to you that those things have been withdrawn and that now we can't use those miracles as a crutch for our own faith. But what we have is God's

Word. And it is a man or a woman and his Bible, that's what they have. It's what you have and what I have.

God bless and I hope to pick up in our summing up. Thank you.

3-1-9 Holy Spirit Gifts Not Taken Away

CHAIRMAN

Thank you Duncan. We will now turn it over to Marie. And Marie you will have 10 minutes, plus you have 1 minute that you banked from your first portion if you desire to take that.

Pastor Battle's Second Speech

Ok. I don't see why God would take away His gifts, using His children now as He did then. Holy Spirit gifts were not taken away. I don't know if some claim to have gotten greater than God, that we don't need Him anymore. The Word tell us that these things were written for our ammunition, for our example. And I believe that whatever was done in the Bible, I believe it that much, that it can be done today; if you will allow it. You must be born again….you must be born again is what Jesus told Nicodemus. And don't just be supposing that we have it. But be sure, very sure that we go according to God's Word. In reference to faith, there sat a certain man at Lystra, it pulled him to his feet, being a cripple from his mother's womb who never walked. And in Hebrews it tells us faith come by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. You read, study God's Word, hear the Word, Praise God.

When I look and see how God divided the Red Sea, Praise God, he caused the axe head to swim; so many great things that He did. He's the same God to me today, Praise God. And He can use… He's still using whom He will. Uh…and this didn't just stop with this man's feet; the one whose feet got healed. He's healing feet today. Praise God. We need our feet today too don't we? But it takes faith. Even if you're using the podiatrist or whoever, you still need faith. You need faith. To believe for your healing. And we believe by Jesus' stripes, you are healed. Praise God. And I believe healing goes right along with salvation. When Jesus was here, he talked as much about being saved, heavenly salvation. And he did…. whenever he did more miracles too of healing the sick, raising the dead, and maybe we don't need that today. Maybe you don't need to raise any dead. But that is enough for me, to look in the Word of God. To believe that God is the same God and has all power in His hands. He loves you.

I don't see why He'd just take your goodies from you now, in a time that we need it and then give them back to you when Jesus comes back we don't need it. We're gonna be like him. We're gonna be changed in the twinkling of an eye. We're gonna be changed from mortal to immortality. In the twinkling of an eye. We don't need it then! Of course tongues and prophesy and all that cease, you live long enough it's gonna cease. Praise God, knowledge and all that. You get older and you can't, Praise God, you're not where you were when you were younger. God is the same today, Praise God. His gift and His calling is without repentance. God *has not* changed, He *will not* change, He *doesn't* change. Thank the Lord. And the same here Paul speak, who steadfast beholding him and perceived that he had faith to be healed. That faith has to be there first. Everybody's doesn't have the faith. But if you listen and …to truth, the Word of God, your faith will be built…it will be built, so that you can believe. Praise God. The Word say, how can we believe in him who we have not heard?

Praise God. How can you believe if it's not being told to you, not being preached to you these days? Praise God. So uh…let us hold on to faith, Praise God. Seek God for faith. Faith is the evidence of things that's hoped for. Praise God. Thank you Lord. Faith is the substance of things that we don't see. That what you see – that what you think you see? That's not faith. Faith works with…you don't see anything. Praise God. You just believe – believe God's Word. And they say here, Paul and said with a loud voice, "Stand up here on your feet." And he leaped and he walked. He still, Praise God, I believe God is doing the same thing today. Amen.

In reference to healing, they brought to the Pharisees him that was blind. He healed the blind. Praise God it was the Sabbath day and when Jesus made the day…the clay and put it on his eyes, Praise God. And he doesn't have to put any clay on our eyes today, Praise God. That was for that man, a way to be healed. And for us, the looking and seeing an example of how he can work. He works instantly. He told some said, as you go, and they will be healed. Once again, it's faith. Praise God, it's faith. And a prayer of faith shall save…it tells if any sick among you, then call for the elders of the church. If the elders of the church don't believe in it, if the elders of the church don't preach it, well you have to call for somewhere else. Thank you Lord. And also, Praise God. And a prayer of faith shall save. And let them pray over him, anointing him with oil, in the name of the Lord.

Well, what I'm hearing here this evening, you don't use any of these things. You just live. You just live that's all, just live. But Jesus, he has his eyes on us. He said my ears are not too heavy that I can't hear. My hand's are not too short that I can't save. Praise God. He is still working. Amen. Thank you Lord. Is there any sick, they should call for the elders of the church. A prayer of faith shall save the sick and the Lord shall raise him up. If he has committed sin they shall be forgiven him. It's funny how, thank you Lord, how they can believe they can do sinful things daily, over and over, over and over. And I can just get down at night (someone says) and get forgiveness, Praise God. And cannot get forgiveness for the other things, how God is working with us here. Praise God. As I have said, I talk about myself, Praise God. Telling you what God has done. How He brought me this far, Praise God. And I'm out here to lift him up, Amen. I didn't stop witness. I wasn't there when he told…sent forth the people, Praise God and said go. Thank you Lord, he said go out there and witness…you shall be my witness after the Holy Ghost has come. He didn't take the witness from me. I got the witness. Amen. Thank you Lord, according to His Word. And according to the Spirit of God, the power of God is now working in me. You may can't see it, that's the trouble, to many are looking at outward appearance. But God looks at your heart. [begins speaking in tongues] Glory. I don't mean to do this. Praise God, thank you Lord. Yes, Lord, he's a witness, himself. He witnesses, he backs up his word. Thank you Lord. He promised he wouldn't let you be made ashamed, Praise God, neither be confounded. Amen. [Time to stop?]

CHAIRMAN

You have 10 seconds.

PASTOR BATTLE

[Ten seconds?] Oh, you're gonna make us shout then. Shouting is *in this*. Glorifying God *is in this*. Praising God *is in this*. Thank you, Lord.

CHAIRMAN

Thank you.

PASTOR BATTLE

And HE wants His people to do this.

3-1-10 Receiving The Holy Spirit

Questions from the floor

CHAIRMAN

Thank you very much, Marie. We are now in that part of our program for questions and answers. Now I'll go over here and see what sort of questions we have. Well, either Duncan has done really well or really badly, because we have just one question. And the question to you, Duncan is, "Have you received the Holy Ghost since you believed?"

DUNCAN HEASTER

The whole idea of receiving the Holy Spirit, I understand in terms of the receipt of the Holy Spirit that occurred in Acts chapter 2, when the disciples were given the gift of speaking in tongues, to go out and heal for example. They received those gifts, as I've tried to show, as specific things at specific times. To confirm the Word that they spoke. They went out into this world to preach the gospel, God worked with them, once the written New Testament was completed then that whole working of God changed. Marie has quite rightly quoted that it's the same spirit that works, but in different ways. So in that sense, yes the Spirit of God is still at work. We're not saying it isn't at work. But those people like Peter who received it received it for a specific purpose. When that purpose was finished, they maybe were given it again, as in Peter's case we showed 3 times he was filled with Holy Spirit to do specific things. When he'd done the job he didn't need to have that gift. So in terms of have I received the Holy Spirit…I'm submitting that nobody has received miraculous Holy Spirit gifts because we're now in a completely different dispensation. What we are called upon to do is develop the mind of Christ, the spirit of Christ within us. As Paul says, "if any man hath not the spirit of Christ, he is none of His". And so we're not saying that we should be without the spirit in that sense. We are saying that that one spirit operates in different ways. In the first century it operated through miraculous gifts. Now it's completely different. We're in a different ministration and different dispensation. We're asked to develop the mind of the spirit. And that's not something that can be achieved by being possessed, in that sense. It's something that we develop. How? For instance, I've suggested that the Word of God, the Bible, is the focus of God's spirit in these days. And through attention to that Word, through making the Word of God become flesh in us as it was in our Lord, so the spirit of God can be manifested in our lives. Now I hope that's not too long an answer, but that's the position that I have on that subject. Thank you.

3-1-11 The Spirit Intercedes

CHAIRMAN

Do we have any questions for ….oh. [Sees many questions for Marie] I see Marie has got quite a few more questions here and only ten minutes to answer. I think that we're going to have to be rather selective about the questions here. And we're not going to (as I sort through these here) we're not going to hold this against your time. Ok. [Speaks with audience as more questions are brought forth for Duncan and Marie] Marie, in Romans 8:26, what is your interpretation of the scripture that says, "The Spirit intercedes for us with groans that cannot be uttered". Romans 8:26.

PASTOR BATTLE

Uh, the Spirit intercedes for us. When we start praying, seeking God, and uh….then sometimes we can't get the words out. The words will not come that you need, those of you that ain't used to praying. You may moan a little bit, "Lord Jesus" and the Spirit, he makes intercession for us. Praise God. He makes the intercession… we tell it, talk to him, try to talk to him all we can't say and he takes it to the head place. Praise God, for us. That was it. Thank you Jesus.

3-1-12 Born Of Water And Spirit

CHAIRMAN

Duncan, one for you. Uh….Doesn't John 3:5 clearly say born of water and of spirit? What does spirit refer to here, if not Holy Spirit gifts?

DUNCAN HEASTER

Thank you. If you have your Bibles, you may like to just remind yourselves of the passage there in John 3. Clearly the Lord is alluding there ("born of water") to water baptism. But I think what he's saying is that water baptism alone is not enough to guarantee salvation, entry to the Kingdom. He says that one's got to be born of water *and* of the spirit and then they will enter the Kingdom of God. It seems to me that the 1st of Peter, chapter 1 alludes to this and defines in more depth, what it is to be born again. And there we read that we're born again by the Word of God. Um…1st of Peter 1:22 –23, he talks about obeying the truth, through the spirit, (23) being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God. So then the Word of God is what brings forth the new birth according to 1st Peter 1:22-23. In John 3 we're told it's the spirit that brings forth the new birth, so then the two things must be related. And I showed a whole overhead slide where the spirit of God is now working through the Word of God. So what does this mean? It's not enough to be simply baptized. There must also be the spiritual rebirth before one can enter the Kingdom. And I think that there's a sort of an analogy being used here. That we are born again in the sense that we are conceived (that's the language of 1st of Peter 1). We are conceived in this life by the spirit of God, through the Word of God. When the Lord Jesus comes, and then we enter the Kingdom, we are then born out of spirit into that Kingdom. So now we're as it were in the womb. We're developing, we're growing. And when the Lord comes, we will then be born in the sense that we'll come out as real people into the Kingdom. Because as James 2:5 says, "We are now heirs of the Kingdom which God hath promised to them that love Him." The Kingdom of God in it's full political sense is not now established. We're going to receive it. We are promised it. When Jesus comes, then the Kingdom of God is going to be established. So then, we don't fully enter the Kingdom of God now, in this life. It's quite clear the Kingdom of God is not now fully here. The Lord Jesus is not reigning in Jerusalem. So then,

we're born of water by baptism, born again, in that sense, by baptism. We're conceived of the spirit, begotten of the spirit, in that sense, according to the 1st of Peter 1:23 in that the Word of God takes root in us and starts to develop us and gives us new life internally. And yet we're still growing, as it were, in this kind of figure that's being used, within the womb. And when our Lord Jesus returns, then we are fully born of the spirit and thereby enter into the Kingdom of God.

Now it seems to me that the word "spirit" whenever it occurs in the New Testament is being read by some as meaning Holy Spirit gifts. But it really can't be like that. There are all these passages which clearly parallel the Spirit of God with the Word of God. And it's not so that every time the word spirit occurs that it's automatically talking about something miraculous. For example, as we've said, "If any many hath not the spirit of Christ, he's none of his". He's talking about the mind of the Lord Jesus, the disposition that is in him. Thank you.

3-1-13 A Living Sacrifice

CHAIRMAN

Marie, you said the people don't see the Holy Spirit gifts because they haven't presented their bodies a living sacrifice. The man to which Duncan referred to in John 9:36 who was healed without ever knowing who Christ was certainly hadn't presented his body a living sacrifice. He didn't know Christ, so why way he healed?

PASTOR BATTLE

Well, I meant that, in order for these gifts to work through the one that was talking with them (who was it – Peter?) Praise God, that was praying for him. There the ones that were, that was walking, walking upright with the Lord. There was a time they wondered why they couldn't do it, Praise God. And Jesus told them, "These things come only but by fasting and prayer." Ok, today, somehow people never go on a fast. They think that's not important. Ok, that's gone. I don't know why you're wanting to think that you've got to live in the past, or either in the future. But right now is the day, is the day of salvation. Right now is when we need Him, Praise God. So I'm not saying that the man wasn't …he had not given himself to the Lord. But the moment, Praise God, his faith went out there, he was healed. Praise God. That's got to be our faith. (What else, you've got something else?)

CHAIRMAN

The next one is for Duncan? Duncan, have you been baptized in the name of Jesus?

DUNCAN HEASTER

In one word answer, yes I have. [Audience claps]

CHAIRMAN

[To audience. Let's hold those down please, we're really not here to cheerlead, so let's not have those please.] Marie, this one is for you. The healing that was done, as claimed by you, did not say it was done by you but by God. This is my understanding. Support the brother's claim, please comment.

PASTOR BATTLE

Which brother?

3-1-14 Will There Be A Rapture

CHAIRMAN

I'm not sure. That question's not very clear. Why don't we do another one. I'm not sure quite….Marie, you mentioned the last days a few times. Why do you feel we are in the last days? What is the Bible proof? And if there is a rapture, why did Jesus teach us to pray, "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth, as it is in heaven?"

PASTOR BATTLE

Thy Kingdom come, Praise God. We are already, when we are born again, we are already translated into the Kingdom of God's dear son. Right here on this earth we can be in the Kingdom of God's dear son. But John saw….he saw another city, Praise God, coming down from out of heaven, so…I believe it's the place that Jesus said he was going away to prepare for us. Praise God. And when he comes back, thank you Lord, we can be with him. We can go with him. So uh….I might didn't get all that question there. Praise God.

3-1-15 Healed Of Cancer

CHAIRMAN

One last one for Duncan, then one last one for Marie. Since there are no more healing by the laying of hands, I am really wondering how I was healed of cancer, after my pastor did lay hands?

DUNCAN HEASTER

We're not denying that God can answer prayer and we're not denying that things can happen which are outside of any medical explanation, e.g. people are healed of cancer. We're not denying that. However, it's got to be faced up to that there's a lot of cures and healings being done by sources other than "Holy Spirit". There are all sorts of people claiming to do mind over matter things and they *do* them, as far as I'm concerned. We're not denying that. For example, there were people who claimed to "speak in tongues" in the sense of ecstatic utterances who were totally not Christian. One does not deny these things happen. What we're saying is that the miracles that were performed by the Holy Spirit were not related to internal things, for example red blood cells versus white blood cells within the human body. They were clear, visible healings. For example, limbs suddenly appearing, the dead being raised. And "*greater* works than these *shall* ye do", if you really have the miraculous gifts. Don't forget that. So we're not denying the power or prayer, but I am drawing attention to the fact that what I'm calling "internal healings" related to diseases, for example like healing from cancer, epilepsy, depression…These things may be cured by various means. It may involve belief in a charismatic individual, for example a pastor who may lay hands on, may not lay hands on…he may pray for example. Say he prays. We're not denying that those things happen. What we are simply saying is that the gifts of the Holy Spirit which we read of in the New Testament were not curing cancer, were not curing epilepsy, or depression let's

say. They were not curing those things. They were external miracles which involved visible, clear, obvious granting of limbs, wasted limbs suddenly appearing healthy; things like that. And as I said, the raising of the dead. They are the miracles that were performed in the first century and if we now (in this dispensation) have those gifts, they are the things we should be performing.

3-1-16 Fruit And Gifts Of The Spirit

CHAIRMAN

Thank you Duncan. Marie, one last question for you. Galatians 5: The fruit of the Spirit does not list speaking in tongues or healing, but love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, faith, goodness, tolerance, and self-control. These things show who has the real spirit of Christ. And I presume the question is: Can you comment on why it is that Galatians 5 does not list speaking in tongues or healing as one of the fruits of the spirit.

PASTOR BATTLE

One is fruit, and one is the gifts. The fruit comes with this and with the Holy Ghost. That's where the power comes, where you can love one another. Where you can love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. You can love one another. Praise God. This is not just…just "philia" love (or one of the other). This is "agape" love. I love you in spite of. And this comes by the Holy Ghost. I don't believe anybody can do it, except by that. This is the, one of the fruits of the Spirit…name of joy – whatever it named in that. Praise God. These are the fruits of the Spirit. When you can receive the Spirit of God, those fruits come in your life. We ought to be glad to receive his power working in us It ought to live like that, right here in this present world. Have someone that can keep you and guide you and lead you into all truths. And the gifts, Praise God, was just for those that would do those works. That were around Christ. To do those works for them or through them. Praise God. So we want to – let's continue, let's believe. All things are possible to him that believeth, Praise God. God in the 104 Psalms, I believe it was, where it said "Bless the Lord who forgiveth all our iniquity and who healeth all of our diseases. Praise God. God is still working, He is working. He's not resting anymore. Praise God , He is working. He is working through us. He has no hands to use but your hands. Has no feet, no mouth or nothing without you. Why not present your bodies to Him a living sacrifice and let Christ work through us. Praise God. Let the fruit of the Spirit be in our lives. The fruit, we cannot get it any other way. Praise God. We can try, but you know anything…it's not working. But with the Spirit of Christ in your life. You wonder why some are so, so nice, so good. Praise God, which none is good, save the Lord. But what makes the difference? It takes the Holy Ghost, the power, praise God, to work through us. I want to say this little bit. In your kitchen you may have different gadgets. Can openers, and knife, Praise God…different things that run by electricity. Your microwave, whatever. Lots of things run in your kitchen that are working by electricity. The same way with us – Praise God – Christ is that light bulb. He is the electricity. And unless you're plugged up with him, you've just got a microwave sitting there.

CHAIRMAN

Thank you very much Marie. We will now, to sum up the debate, we will have five-minute summaries. Duncan will go first with his five-minute summary then we'll let Marie have the final five minutes.

3-1-17 False Claims Of Spirit Possession

Summation By Duncan Heaster

Well, I'd like to summarize what I've had to say. I started off by saying that for me this is not really a debate in that sense. This is, for me, an opportunity to meet, hopefully, with a minority of people who might be here, listening to this in the transcript or here tonight, who are searching and seeking for something. For those of you who, as I say, are like me and lay awake at night and look up at the ceiling, fixing your eyes on the light socket or whatever it is up there…the shadow of the street light or whatever on your ceiling. And you're there, in touch with yourself. I'm talking to those of you who, in those moments, beneath the surface, have your doubts about all this stuff. Who are maybe involved in these things, but actually underneath have those doubts. And yet within the paradigm that you're in, you can't admit them, scarcely to yourselves. It is to those, that minority, that I want to talk.

I said that we are here looking at the tip of an iceberg. As far as I'm concerned, what I submitted to you tonight, is that all these false claims of Holy Spirit possession just simply do not match with the nature of the gifts as they were possessed in the first century. And not only so, but the whole tone of the New Testament is that those gifts were to be taken away and that they'd be poured out again when the Lord comes. And yet, there's a whole load of other issues there, within what is to me (and I'm sorry to call) an Apostate Christianity. Whereby one wrong idea leads you to another wrong idea. Marie did actually mention in passing the idea of a Trinity, or the three that bear witness. And it seems to me that the whole idea of possessing the Holy Spirit is related to the idea of the Holy Spirit being a person, which is related to the idea that God is not one, but there's a Holy Spirit there, there's Jesus there as God, and God the Father, etc. Now, within the scriptures, those ideas simply aren't there. The word "Trinity" never even occurs. So when people say "that by the Holy Spirit", they're telling me why God is a Trinity. Well, the Spirit word of God does not use the word Trinity at all. There is one God, who is the Father. And the Lord Jesus was His son, of our nature…one of us. Who had all our humanity and all our struggle, all our pain and our hunger as men and women, who went this way before. Who is exactly like you and me. Who knows your loneliness tonight. Who knows right in the heart of how you feel because he was a man. He was not God Himself. He was tempted as we are, and God Himself can't be tempted. And above all he died, whereas God cannot die. And he rose again, therefore, as our representative. And in the final end, we need to be baptized into him by immersion, not by sprinkling, but as an adult. Now you may say, "yeah, sure, I was baptized." That's not the point. Acts 19, people were re-baptized once they understood the true message, because (as surely everyone here would agree) belief must come before baptism. And yet, what is belief? Belief is not just a feeling, it is belief of *something*. It requires a certain amount of knowledge. I don't mean academic knowledge, but some level of knowledge.

CHAIRMAN

Two minutes.

DUNCAN HEASTER

Now if we have the wrong knowledge, and if we have the knowledge that does not lead to eternal life, if we are believing as it were a false gospel…we've got to be re-baptized once we've found the true gospel. And the true gospel is that which was preached to Abraham so

many years ago. That he and his children would live forever on this earth, in the Kingdom of God. On this earth, not in heaven, not going on some rapture, but here on this earth. And this is a real and a concrete hope that you and I can look forward to in the future, if we are properly baptized into the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, I want to have contact with you. We don't want to leave this debate as passing ships in the night that meet each other than we go different places. That's my email, dheaster@bbie.org, that's the local brother in the state you can contact. We want to hear from you. I couldn't answer all your questions, but email me those questions, your comments, your disagreements. And there's a lot of literature out the back there that's completely free. And please make it your goal to systematically analyze the message of the Bible for yourself. There is a book there that is a correspondence course, and also other literature. Take it and criticize it and pull it apart and email either my brother Ray there or myself with your comments and your disagreements or whatever. Let's realize that these things are important. That there is a true gospel and there is a false gospel that mimics the true gospel, with false claims of Spirit possession. Just as there were true gifts of the Holy Spirit and there will be many people who thought they had the Holy Spirit, Jesus says….

NOTE: TAPE CUTS OFF HERE – PART OF CLOSING MISSED WHEN FLIPPING TO OTHER SIDE

3-1-18 Jesus Is The Answer

Summation By Pastor Battle

…like sheep have gone astray. Jesus is the answer. For the Lord laid upon him the iniquities of us all. He said, "behold I stand at the door and knock. If any man will open up, I come in, I take my bread and I sit with you", Praise God. The main thing, Praise God, is being changed from the common mind. That which is flesh is flesh, and that which is spirit is spirit. Praise God. So as you go forth and continue service, study your Bible and read the Word of God. Any time you'd like to (Praise God) ask other questions, I think they gave out some of the little flyers with my address, my telephone number…we're not a great crowd, but as long as Jesus was walking here, he was feeding them the natural bread. They was just following him, there was thousands. But when he told the people that he was that bread that came down from above, then they all start walking away. They left him, Praise God. He looked around at Peter and those 12 boys he had with him and he asked, "Will you also leave me?" They said, "Where can we go? You have the words of eternal life." Praise God. It's not by power, it's not by might, but it's by my spirit, said the Lord. Praise God. Don't try to change, don't try to go some other way. Praise God, If you're gonna get it in the last days, Praise God. Well, why not use it now too? Praise God. Don't wait till the last days. Jesus is the answer now. God has not taken away His Spirit. He has not taken away His gifts. He has not taken away His plan of salvation. And he's saying who's Eloiah – let him come. Come unto me all of you that labour and are heavy laden. And you know a lot of us, Praise God, have been very heavy laden these days.

CHAIRMAN

Two minutes.

PASTOR BATTLE

You want help? Turn to Jesus. Jesus is the answer for the world today. And it's got to become through by his Spirit. He said my Word is Spirit and it's life. Praise God. Thank the Lord. Nice to be with you. Praise God. Be praying for us and we're doing the same for you. Come visit us sometime. I have two broadcasts on Sunday morning. One is at 8:45 in Fuqua, and one is in Raleigh 2:45. Praise God. WCLY [radio call letters] You're welcome to visit with us. Praise God. And when you see us, we'll talk about Jesus…we'll be lifting him up. We'll talk about his Word, Praise God, and we'll be praising him. We know what we're doing. Thank you Lord. It's not no…you can see that I'm not that educated, don't you? Praise God. This is my…[holds up Bible] right here…the Word of God. Everything else is going to fail but the Word of God. Everything. Grass withers, flowers fade away, but the Word of our God – it shall stand forever. Praise God, thank you Lord. I don't see where there's no break…first century, second century, or whoever. Praise God. Those people, some of them, they're gone. We're here now. We need help now, from the same…same saviour. God bless you. Thank you Jesus.

CHAIRMAN

Thank you Marie. Well I'm sure that everyone here tonight will join me in thanking Marie and Duncan for being here. And we certainly appreciate you efforts. Thank you very much. And I wish to thank everyone of you for being here and for being such a polite audience, listening with great respect to each of the speakers tonight. So I think you should give yourselves a big hand here. As has been pointed out, there's free literature in the back, so please avail yourself of that. I believe Marie has some flyers here, if you're interested in the information that she has I'm sure that she'd be happy to see that you have a flyer. So we again thank you for being here this evening. Let us know bow our heads in prayer and ask our heavenly father's blessing.

GARY BURNS: CLOSING PRAYER

Almighty God, our loving and merciful heavenly Father. Thou who dwellest in light unapproachable, who no man has seen nor can see. We thank thee, Father, for all of thy many blessings and we thank thee Father for this opportunity to be here together this evening. We pray Father that the things we have said and done here this evening would have been pleasing in thy sight and that thou would have been glorified. We pray now, Father, that thou would go with each and every one of us as we make our way home this evening, that thou would watch over us and keep us. Dismiss us now with thy blessing, ever keep and guide us in thy way for we ask our prayers and give thee all thanksgiving and praise through the name of thy son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Public Debate on "Are the Miraculous Gifts of the Holy Spirit Possessed today?"

Transcript of a debate with John Liliekas

Saturday 4 March 1989

The Great Hall, University Of Leeds,Leeds, U.K.

Speakers:

For Possession today position: Mr. John Liliekas (Charismatic/ Evangelical Christian)

Against possession today position: Mr. Duncan Heaster

Chairman: Mr. Simon Perfitt

Chairman's Remarks

Mr. Liliekas' First Speech

3-2-1 The Need For Miracles
3-2-2 Divine Administration

Mr. Heaster's First Speech

3-2-3 Charismatic Christians
3-2-4 Glossalalia

Mr. Liliekas' Second Speech

3-2-5 Abuse Of Spirit Gifts

Mr. Heaster's Second Speech

3-2-6 Spirit Gifts Withdrawn

Questions from the Floor

3-2-7 Questions About The Holy Spirit
3-2-8 Questions About Spirit Gifts

Summation by Mr. Liliekas

3-2-9 Gifts Of The Spirit Today

Summation by Mr. Heaster

3-2-10 Humble To The Word Of God

Chairman's Concluding Remarks

Foreword

This Debate arose as a result of the discussions between Duncan Heaster and John Liliekas on differing doctrinal issues. Consequently, it was felt a Public Debate concerning the present day possession of the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit was desirable and would be of interest to a wide range of people.

Both Duncan Heaster and John Liliekas agree that the Bible is the Inspired and Infallible Word of God, therefore it formed the basis for the Debate.

Mr. Liliekas has been asked to provide confirmatory evidence for three examples he gave during the Debate, as follows:

Reference is made to Baptists in the Philippines raising the dead. Enquiries have been made of the Baptist Headquarters in London and also in the Philippines, neither of whom appear to have any knowledge or records of such claim;

Reference is made to "Bible John". He was a Glasgow murderer in 1968. The published records do not include any accounts of him endeavouring to convert anyone; in fact, he was a murderer of female dancers and was nicknamed "Bible John" because he once quoted from the Bible;

Reference is made to the miraculous cure of a Paisley girl whose one leg was six inches shorter than the other. Mr. Heaster was invited to investigate the evidence; so far no verifiable evidence has been provided and the identity of the person is unknown.

One of the questioners gave a personal testimony of being the subject of a miraculous cure. This evidence, provided by the lady, was used by Mr. Liliekas in a further debate with John Allfree on the same subject, published as a separate transcript, where the matter is investigated further.

The Debate

Chairman's Remarks

Good evening, Ladies and Gentlemen. Welcome to the Debate. First of all, I would like to introduce our two speakers this evening. On my right side, your left, Mr. Liliekas, who is going to speak for the subject this evening "Are the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit possessed today?" and on my left, Mr. Duncan Heaster, who is going to speak against that proposal.

Before they begin, I will just run through the order for this evening. The two speakers will be given 25 minutes each for their opening speeches, then there will be a 10 minute interval for you to go to the toilet, or whatever, stretch your legs…and after that 10 minutes for each speaker to reply. Then there will be opportunity for you to ask questions from the floor to the speakers in turn, 10 minutes for each speaker. Now, because we are quite tight on time this evening, we have to be out by 10

o'clock, I would like your agreement to keep those questions to questions please and to keep them as brief as possible.

As the evening is being recorded for the purposes of the transcript. I will relay your questions back to you in order that they will be recorded via the mikes at the front, otherwise they might not appear on the tape recording.

I accept that there is a time and place for most things, everything probably, including personal testimony, but in view of the time, both parties have agreed that we stick to questions this evening to the speakers and not statements about your experiences please.

After the questions, each speaker will be given 10 minutes summing up time.

We will proceed then with asking Mr. Liliekas to talk about, on behalf of the subject, "the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit, are they possessed today?" to speak for that motion: Mr. Liliekas.

3-2-1 The Need For Miracles

Mr. Liliekas' First Speech

Well, good evening. Actually the name is Liliekas (pronounced with an "I" in the middle not an "E"). O.K. Let me start by asking a question: This debate goes around other miracles relevant for today? Are gifts relevant for today? And I think to start off we have to ask one question: why are there miracles in the Bible? Anybody know? Why are there miracles in the Bible? Why are there supernatural gifts? Wouldn't it be so much easier to impress the scientific world, if there were no stumbling blocks like miracles and gifts then the intellectuals could easily accept so much that is in the Bible. But it seems as if for some reason or other the Bible seems to be filled with things that we cannot quite explain by using our intelligence.

O.K. So to answer this question let me ask some others. I guess everybody here goes to Church or they are Christians. Yes? Good. How many of us find when we preach or when we teach the Word of God, or when we try to tell people about doctrine who have not heard the Scripture before, that straightway they say, "I believe you, Sir, that is true, I'll accept that". How many of us find this? Nobody right? How many of us, when we go to invite people to Church, find that there is a mob of people pushing and struggling to find out where our Church is, what time it starts at and they ask us "Sir, can I please bring my friends, and my family and my colleagues?" How many of us find that? Nobody right? Or when we open the Church on the Sunday morning you find mobs breaking in through the doors, rushing in to find the best seat, filling up all the seats in the aisles and then they sit raptly and attentively and when you have finished giving your message, they all fall down in repentance, accept your message, and they are in such an eagerness to go on with the gospel that you have to take them the next day to the public swimming bath and baptize them? I've never found that, and I'm sure that none of you guys have. One of the reasons for that is that man is, by nature, a sceptic. Right? Man is sceptical. There is an ancient Latin proverb which says: "Believe nothing and be on your guard against everything". Now we know that man hasn't changed.

That is exactly the way the man in the street is. He has been like that since the beginning of time, he's like that now.

There's a French proverb which says: "Sceptics are never deceived". Now that's true. If you are sceptical, you'll never be deceived. On the other hand, you'll never believe anything either.

Unfortunately from the gospel perspective, man is a sceptic by heart. On one side, we have men who are sceptics, who won't believe, who won't accept, who doubt everything you say. The sceptic will say "show me your God, you say you are a man of God, you say this message is from God – prove it. I see temples, churches of all sorts of denominations round me, all sorts of priests and whatever, how do I know that you are from God, how do I know?" So on the one hand we have the sceptic who won't believe until he sees. On the other hand we have a God of infinite love – what does it say? It says "God so loved the world that he sent his only begotten son" (Jn. 3:16). He so loved what? It wasn't a tiny minority. It wasn't just the few people, or an elect little group or sect. He loved the world. God's over-riding concern is the salvation of the world. He will do everything to achieve that end.

On one hand we have sceptical man, on the other hand we have a God, filled with love with a strong objective – the salvation of the world.

Enter – miracles.

What's needed to overwhelm the heart of the sceptical man is some confirmation from God. There are two aspects of this. One is Divine confirmation, the other is Divine administration. Let's look at confirmation first.

Moses standing in the mountain by the burning bush, God says to him, "Moses, go down to Egypt and bring my people out of Egypt" (Ex. 3:10). And Moses asked the classical question "what if they will not believe me Lord?" (Ex. 4:1). "What happens if I go there and they say 'get lost!'". In Exodus 4 God says to Moses that if they don't believe you, do one miracle. If they don't believe that I'll give you another miracle. If they don't believe that I'll give you another sign. Why? God is confirming that his messenger is sent from God and that the message is from God as well.

Elijah and the prophets of Baal. What happened? Elijah standing there on the mountain, he's got a sacrifice made and so have the priests of Baal. They do the equivalent of a heavy metal rock –and-roll dance round their offering. Nothing happens. Elijah says douse the offering with water, and we'll see who is God. And what happened when the fire fell and God answered by a miracle? Those people who were holding between two different opinions were moved and they said, "The Lord he is God" (1 Kgs. 18:39).

Let's look at the New Testament. When Peter was speaking on the day of Pentecost and the people were saying "what happened here?" Peter goes through a sermon and at the end he says (Acts 2:22), "This Jesus was a man attested to you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God performed through him". In other words God was validating the message. God was saying that both the messenger and the message were true by a Divine confirmation.

Was this ever meant as a substitute for the Word? By no means. This wasn't something that was going to just last for a hundred years and then when God had finally got the canon of

Scripture, He would do away with it. This was God actively taking part in the ongoing work of redeeming man and bringing him back to Himself.

Philip was at Samaria. He went down there and, it says, he preached and performed mighty miracles. What happened? Everyone repented. Multitudes turned to God. Do you think we need to see multitudes turn to God today? You're dead right, we do! Do you think if we went and performed some miracle somewhere, that it would turn the hearts of the people to God. Obviously it would. This is what is happening with Charismatics and Spirit-filled all over the Third World. This happens all the time. Especially in the Third World, why? Because men are less sceptical.

3-2-2 Divine Administration

Let's go on now to Divine administration. Moses was given wisdom to lead Israel. He said "Lord, this is going to be a bit of a problem". The Lord says "Pick seventy elders and I'll put some of your Spirit on them" (Num. 11:27). What happened? These men were to administer and run the 'nuts and bolts' of the day-to-day business within Israel. When they received the Holy Spirit, they all prophesied. Oh my! Often, this administration was seen in that prophets would come to kings and say "Go into battle now' or "Don't go into battle" "Watch out for an ambush" or "Prepare the nation for certain dangers or disasters which may come".

Do you think that the same thing is needed today? Obviously, if God is interested in administering and progressing His church, He has not changed.

In the New Testament, Jesus only did what he saw the Father do. He was constantly led by the Spirit.

Peter "there's sin in the church". God wants to cleanse sin from the church, how would Peter know. God tells him "Ananias and Sapphira have lied and stolen". Do you think we have problems in the church today, that God wants to purify the church today? You're dead right, He does! How does He do it? I have heard myself and seen it time and time again where people in leadership have been shown sins which exist within the congregation – we can then go and speak to those people – there's a place for repentance and the church is stopped from a rot setting in.

God is still administering and working with His church today. He hasn't changed.

O.K. how would Peter know to go to the centurion and his household? God told him. Do you think God wants to send us strategically to people today? Of course He does! God has a massive plan for forwarding His purpose in the earth and He will use us if we are open. Acts 11:28 – Agabus the prophet. Would the church in Israel know to be prepared for a great famine that was coming in the earth? Would they read it in Scripture? Oh no! They would never see it there. The prophet stood up and warned the church to be ready. Do you think that today the church needs to be warned of civil wars, of persecutions. Is it any wonder that countries that Christians are in, places like Chad and different countries like that, at times have had prophetic warning of coming persecution? Why? Because God is actively interested in His church. The only way He can do these things is through prophetic gifts. These don't replace the Word. These support the Word of God.

O.K. Acts 13:2, the apostles are praying and God says, “Set aside Paul and Barnabas for the work to which I have called them”. Do you think that God wants to send particular people to particular areas of the world to carry on the work of God? Do you? Yes, right! How is He going to do it? Are we going to read it in the Bible? Oh no! He will do it through a prophetic inspiration or word of knowledge or a prophecy working through the leadership of the church. God is still actively working in the church today. Acts didn’t pass away then, it is still going on and on and on in my experience and hundreds of millions of other Christians are experiencing the same thing.

Acts 16:6 – they were forbidden to go to Asia. Do you think God wants to warn us not to go to special places today? Obviously. They see in a vision a man from Macedonia beckoning them to come over. Do you think God has strategic places where He wants us to go and work, to be effective? Obviously He does. How is He going to do it if gifts and visions and all those things, the ways that God would communicate these things, have passed away?

What it says is, if you believe that visions and gifts are no longer for today, in essence what you say is, God is not interested in administering His church. That is what it boils down to.

O.k. Let’s look at the sayings of Jesus. Jesus standing on the mountain with his disciples after the resurrection just before he goes into heaven. This is Mark 16: 15-18. He gives his disciples a commission. He says: “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; he who has disbelieved shall be condemned. *And these signs shall follow those who believe*; In my name they will pick up serpents; they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will drink deadly poison, it shall not hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick and they will recover”. Did he say these signs will only accompany them for maybe fifty or a hundred years? Oh no! He says these signs shall accompany those who believe, no matter when it is. This is the commission that was given to us by Christ. It is always valid.

Were the gifts a stop-gag until the canon of Scripture was fulfilled? Was God just humouring the church until we had the Word. No! It says in Mark 16:20 “And they went out and preached everywhere”. What did they preach? They preached the Word. “*While the Lord worked with them*”. Doing what? “And confirmed the Word, the Lord worked with them”. Do you think that God wants to work with the church today? Of course He does! Do you think God is sitting back in an armchair saying “O.K. get on with it guys?” Oh no! He’s actively working with us today. He is more interested in getting souls saved, people converted, than what you are! And if He is, if you step out and do something, do you think He might meet you halfway? Of course He will. God hasn’t changed. It says “while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the word by the signs that followed” You can see this exact same formula happening all over the world. All over the world the exact same Scriptural formula happens time and time again. The result? Multitudes are turning away from paganism and heathenism to God. Exactly the same Scriptural pattern that happened in Acts.

If you do away with signs, if you do away with miracles which are here, why don’t you do away with baptism and belief? It’s all part of the one parcel. Why not throw the whole thing out? There is no Scriptural type for it to have faith and belief without signs that follow. Now that might sound a bit hard but, if you think of it, how do you really know that you’ve rung the bell with God if He doesn’t give you any confirmation? How do you know that you’re in the Kingdom, if you don’t see Kingdom things happening in your life? How do you know?

Does everyone accept the gospel and it messengers? No! Do we need to have God confirm the word that we are speaking with signs? Yes! Obviously we do. Men are still as sceptical today as they were back then.

Are there no sick to be healed? Would anybody say there are no sick any more to be healed? Obviously there are. If they were healed, would it be an asset and a promotion of the gospel? Yes, it would. I've seen it before. I've seen miracles happen that you would not believe and the results have been incredible, where whole families and whole neighbourhoods have turned to God. Why? It is just a Scriptural pattern. We didn't do anything, God confirmed what we were saying. He just meets you halfway.

Now, the opposition says that there are no miracles, right? Is there Scripture to support that stance. Oh actually there is! That surprises you doesn't it. In Mark 6:5-6 it says when Jesus came to his home town he found that he could perform no miracles there. Why? Because miracles and gifts had passed away? Oh no! Because that was part of a dispensation that was going to disappear? No! It says he could do nothing except he laid his hands on a few sick and they were healed, *because of their unbelief*. This is the same situation that Duncan is experiencing n his church. He who says he can and he who says can't are both right. Why? Because "according to your faith, it shall be done to you" (Matt. 9:29). If you say you can't and that it is not for today, you are right it is not for today. And that is exactly what you will experience. But according to your faith, it will be done to you. Baptists, Methodists, Anglican, you name it, brethren who didn't believe in gifts of the Holy Spirit, didn't believe in miracles for whatever reason, some of the people and maybe the pastors read something, all of a sudden started to believe and those things which they previously disbelieved in started to manifest and change their lives and their church.

He who says he can and he who says he can't are both right. This is a faith issue. If you come to this with your intellect, and try and argue it away you'll win but you'll lose out with God really in a sense.

John Wesley's diary August 15th 1750. He says "By reflecting on an odd book which I read on this journey, The General Delusions Of Christians With Regards To Prophecy (this is the name of the book) I was fully convinced of what I had long-suspected.

1. That the Montanists in the second and third centuries were real scriptural Christians and

1. That the grand reason why the miraculous gifts were so soon withdrawn was not only faith and holiness were well-nigh lost but (listen to this) that dry formula orthodox men began even to ridicule whatever gifts they had not themselves. (Isn't that powerful) and to decry them all as madness or imposture.

Baptist missionaries went to the Philippines (now this was the Baptists who don't believe in gifts for today and miracles). They preached and won over a small tribe. The Japanese invaded the Philippines during the Second World War. The Baptists got out and beat it back to the States. They came back at the end of the War to see what had happened. To their astonishment, all over the islands and the hills and the mountains, all the tribes have been converted to Christianity because this small converted group had carried on. Not only had they been converted to Christianity, but lo and behold, they all had gifts, signs, miracles, healings, raising of the dead, you name it, they had it. The Board back in the States wrote

back to them, what is going on there? And one of the missionaries wrote back and he said, you see the reason these things are here, is they did not have us to tell them they were no longer for today. Isn't that damning? Those simple people, because they didn't have the missionaries to rob them of their faith, had a full manifestation of everything the missionaries didn't have. It is according to your faith, it shall be done unto you. If you don't have faith, you won't get it and it will be true and it will be no longer for today.

O.K. One last point I would say here is on eschatology. I notice that the Christadelphians take what would be a pre-millenialist stand which is what most Christians believe. That is that Christ is about to imminently return and that we are soon approaching the great and terrible day of the Lord when the Battle of Armageddon will come and everything like that. Anyway, when Peter was speaking on the day of Pentecost describing why the gifts were there, he says (he is quoting Joel chapter 2) he says "there will come about after this that I will pour out my spirit upon all mankind, your sons and your daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions, even on my male and female servants, I will pour out my spirits in those days and I will display signs and wonders in the sky and on the earth, blood, fire, columns of smoke. The Sun will be turned into blood before the great and terrible day of the Lord" (Acts 2:17).

I ask you, do you believe that the great and terrible day of the Lord is near? Who believes that? Anybody else? Who believes that the return of Christ is fairly imminent? Yes, O.K. That that day is fairly imminent. When have we seen the greatest outpouring of gifts in this century? It's been now, right in the last 25 years. There has been no greater outpouring of the gifts of the spirit all over the world. What does it say in this prophecy, that these things would precede the great and terrible day of the Lord. If you believe that Christ is going to come back imminently, these signs are a confirmation that he is coming soon. They are very clearly stated here that prior to the coming of Christ these things would be part of the package of signs that would confirm that day.

CHAIRMAN:

Two minutes.

MR. LILIEKAS:

Two minutes. So I would say in summation that man is still the same as he has always been. He has always been a sceptic, he always will be. God has still got the exact same purpose to accomplish on this earth that is to win men into his Kingdom. God is determined in spite of man's scepticism to achieve that objective. How is He going to do it? By Divinely confirming the messenger and the message. Anybody here who preaches the gospel and who speaks on God's behalf, if you will just say the same prayer that the apostles made and say "Lord, when I go to speak Your Word, You stretch out Your hand and do signs and wonders and miracles in the name of Jesus" and if you have never had them in your life before, you will find them even when you are giving our tracts in the street. God will meet you in that prayer. God has not changed, He still wants to see people saved. He has not changed. If you throw those things out, you may as well throw everything else out. It is an integral part of the gospel.

Thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN:

Thank you Mr. Liliekas. I apologize for getting your name wrong when I began.

MR. LILIEKAS:

That's O.K. My mother gets it wrong sometimes!

CHAIRMAN:

Perhaps there's hope for me yet!

I now call upon Mr. Duncan Heaster to reply to those words of Mr. Liliekas.

3-2-3 Charismatic Christians

Mr. Heaster's First Speech

Ladies and Gentlemen, good evening. The subject we are talking about tonight is indeed vital because I believe it affects the eternal salvation of every one of us sitting in this hall tonight. I'm going to suggest to you that the many so-called "miraculous" claims of the Charismatic movement are a result of mind over matter, of psychological factors, and that this is proved by three lines of evidence.

First and foremost of course, there is what I believe to be the Bible's testimony that the gifts of the spirit were to be withdrawn and replaced by the written Word of God.

Secondly, there is the fact that the claims of present Charismatic Christians contradict the types of Spirit gift defined in the Bible.

Thirdly, there is the considerable historical evidence that the gifts have passed away.

Now if what I am saying is correct, and it is up to you to judge that, then if follows that Charismatic Christians are replacing the attraction and power of the gospel by more subjective things such as experience (John has been talking a lot about his own "experience") and emotion, and therefore making the Word of God, which God says He has "magnified even above His own name" (Ps. 138:2) of secondary importance.

So then, we have to face up to the almost incidental fact that nearly all the early church fathers and church historians record that the miraculous gifts ended in the Second Century. If tongue speaking, for example, was as wide-spread in the First Century as it apparently is today, it would have been mentioned more, would it not, in early Christian writings?

More importantly, I believe that there is evidence in the Bible that when the Bible was completed the gifts were withdrawn.

Now the spirit is the power or the breath of God, and the word "Holy" means "set aside for a special purpose". The gifts of the Holy Spirit, God's power set aside for a special purpose, were not needed once the special purposes for which they were given were completed. 1 Corinthians 13 (and I suggest if you have got a Bible, you open it there) says that at some time, the gifts of the Holy Spirit were to be withdrawn. You see in the last verse of chapter 12 Paul says he is going to explain to them a "more excellent way" than the use of the Holy

Spirit gifts. It goes on in verse 8 of chapter 13 “whether there be prophecies (the gift of prophecy), they shall fail; whether there be tongues (the gift of tongues) they shall cease; whether there be knowledge (the gift of knowledge), it shall vanish away. For we know in part (that is, partially) and we prophesy partially, (or from parts). But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away”.

Now notice how he says “love never fails” but where there are these gifts, they will fail. Now the word “fail” in the Greek is very interesting because it means to “slowly fade away”. So he says true love does not fade away; the love of God, the love of Christ, it doesn’t fade way, but where there are gifts, they will fade away, and as I have said, historical testimony backs up that prophecy.

The gifts of prophecy and knowledge taught the Christians in part measure, but when “that which is perfect” came, they were to be withdrawn. Now the word “perfect” here does not mean “sinless”, it means “completed”, “ended” or “mature”.

Now I want to make a fundamentally important point. These verses teach that at some time after the First Century when those words were written, the gifts were to be withdrawn when “that which is perfect, (or complete) came”. Now “that which is perfect” cannot be the return of Jesus Christ at his second coming because if it does then it means that the gifts will be withdrawn when he returns. But the Bible teaches the opposite fact, that when he returns to set up his Kingdom on this earth, the gifts will be poured out again.

John has just said that in Joel 2 that shows that at the return of Christ, the gifts will be poured out again. Well, I agree with him. So then, he believes that the gifts are going to be poured out when Jesus returns and yet he also has said that he believes that the gifts of the Holy Spirit continue all the way from Acts of the Apostles up to the last days. But here in 1 Corinthians 13 it says that at some point, they will be taken away. Now I submit that is a point which it’s very very difficult to argue against. Apart from that there is other clear evidence in other passages that these gifts are going to be poured out at the return of Christ. For example, Hebrews 6:4 & 5 says that the gifts they had in the First Century were the “powers of the world (or age) to come”. That is, the Kingdom age when Christ has returned.

So, I suggest that “that which is perfect” is the completed Bible. 2 Timothy 3:16 “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction…That the man of God may be perfect, (completely equipped) for every good work”. So it is the Word of God which perfects. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 13 that under the ministry of the gifts of knowledge and wisdom they built up their knowledge of the ways of God by parts, partially. He said when that which is complete is come, and that which is complete is in the Bible, the Word of God, the sum total of all God’s revelation, then we have that which is complete. There is no more need for the gifts.

The same teaching is found in Ephesians 4:8 “when (Christ) ascended…he gave the (spirit) gifts to men (then they are listed)…for the perfecting of the saints”. So this says that the purpose of the gifts was to make the saints, or the church, perfect or mature. 2 Timothy 3:16 says that that is done when we have all scripture. So once the Word of God was completed, we have the power, the means, to make the saints perfect, complete. Now Ephesians 4 continues, says that these gifts were given “until we all come in the unity of the faith…unto a perfect man”. So these gifts are given he says, *until*. Again, we have another clear evidence that the gifts were to be withdrawn, and we have just been told that they weren’t, they

weren't meant to be withdrawn, they were meant to carry on. So that point when they were withdrawn was when this "perfect man" state was reached, and that was reached through having the full Word of God.

The very nature of the reasons given for the gifts being given also means that they only needed to be used in the First and Second Centuries. So let's think about the reasons why those gifts were given.

John 16 talking of the comforter says it was given to guide the apostles into all truth. But then Christ said John 17:17 "thy Word is truth". So once we have the Word of God in full we have "the truth" so there is no need for any Holy Spirit gift to guide you into all truth. Ephesians 4:14 said that under the ministry of the gifts the believers were blown about with every wind of doctrine, but once of course the complete written Word of God was available, they grew up into maturity through having that one faith clearly defined.

I'm going to make another important point. The fact that many different churches *claim* to possess the comforter, from the Catholic Charismatics to John Liliekas to the Pentecostal movement and yet they all believe widely different doctrines, shows that they cannot all have received the gifts, because the gifts were to guide you into all truth. And yet, all these different churches believe different things. So they cannot all have the gifts.

Now secondly, these gifts were given to enable the gospels to be compiled through bringing, says John 14:26 "all things to your (the apostles') remembrance" – whatever Jesus had said in his ministry. Now that can obviously only apply to the disciples who needed their memories jogging of what Christ had said.

Thirdly, as we have been reminded, those gifts were to confirm the spoken word of the apostles. Now remember, those apostles were mainly "unlearned and ignorant men" (Acts 4:13). They were being witnesses of Christ's resurrection and they needed some credentials. Therefore, the Lord "confirmed the (spoken) word with signs following" (Mk. 16:20).

Fourthly, they were given to organize the early church, Ephesians 4:12 "for the work of the ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ (the church)" in the same way as Israel in the wilderness were given the gifts of the Spirit, again as John has rightly reminded us, *for a limited period* at the beginning of their history, in order that they could establish themselves.

We also have to bear in mind how those gifts were used by the apostles, the kind of things they did with them. A good example is Acts chapter 3 – they healed a lame man in the Temple, and as soon as Peter did that in consequence we are told, Acts 3:11, that a large number of people gathered in Solomon's Porch to hear the gospel preached. Time and again we see the public nature of the use of these gifts – Acts 4:33 "with great power (through the gifts) gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus". "By the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders done". Notice how he keeps emphasizing that the apostles used these gifts. "Wonders and signs were done by the apostles" (Acts 2:43).

So let's think then about the nature of the gifts in the First Century and I suggest that there is a big difference between them and the claims of today.

Now firstly the gifts were all of a practical nature: governments, miracles, teachers (Eph. 4:11; 1 Cor. 12:8-10), and therefore they were under the control of those possessing them, as

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 14:32 – "the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets", and they were also manifested publicly.

Now despite what John has said, I still feel that there is a marked lack of *public* use of the gifts among Christians today, especially of miracles which as we have seen from the apostles' example were to be used to testify publicly. Now there is no record in the New Testament of emotions being whipped up before a cure took place. The miracles were often done on the street or in public places rather than in some back-street church with and audience of hyped-up Christians. It is also significant that never did the apostles after receiving the comforter gifts fail to cure anybody or only produce a partial cure. But for every so-called success of Charismatic healers (and I am not denying that they have some so-called successes), there are many partial cures and downright failures. Now when the ambulances bring the sick people to healing crusades of Charismatic Christians like T.O. Osborne, those ambulances wait outside and pick up the invalids again afterwards, do they not? But remember how by contrast in Acts 4:16 when Peter healed the lame man, the Jews, who were looking for every reason to discredit the miracle, they had to admit and I quote "that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them" they said "it is manifest" – it is obvious – "to all them that dwell in Jerusalem and we cannot deny it" the Pharisees said. What a contrast with the rumours of miracles we hear going on today and the many cases that have failed to be healed. The Jews had shut their hearts to the idea of anyone doing miracles, more so than I have, but the sheer power of the miracle left them to accept that a miracle had been done. Now if Charismatic Christians have the same power as the apostles had, their miracles should achieve the same effect and stir in the press.

3-2-4 Glossalalia

Now tongue-speaking or glossalalia is one of the most popular of the gifts claimed today. I would like to show that it is totally over-rated among Christians today compared to the weight that the Bible puts on it. In fact, there are only four mentions of believers using the gift of tongues in the New Testament, so it wasn't as important then as it is being made to appear today. And, of course, there are many examples of people believing in Acts but not having the gift of tongues. In his list of the gifts in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, Paul puts tongues at the end of the list and in fact in Ephesians 4:11 where he lists the gifts, he doesn't even include tongues. He says in 1 Corinthians 14:1& 2 that we should covet instead to prophesy rather than use tongues. He explains in 1 Corinthians 12:12-30 that in a church the gifts are divided proportionately in the same way as our body has different parts, so in the church different people had different gifts. But in the churches of today, the majority of people are claiming that tongues / glossalalia is their gift. If there really is a spirit-filled church today, then its members will display all the gifts including apostleship, miracles, healings etc. But the fact is that these gifts are not commonplace in all churches today who are claiming to have the gifts. There is a total imbalance between those claiming the gift of tongues and those, if any, claiming the other gifts. But Paul says that God has "tempered the body together" (1 Cor. 12:24), the body of the church, in the perfect balance of the gifts. So therefore, that shows that it is not vital to possess the gift of tongues to be saved, but there are some Pentecostal groups who claim that baptism of the spirit is only testified by possessing tongues. Here we are being told that not everyone in the church can possess tongues and that they are not something to be particularly sought.

Further to this, present tongue-speaking is composed of gibberish – a mumbo-jumbo of sounds that can't be understood by those who hear it. Now this phenomena of glossalalia is

also experienced in many non-Christian religions who experience the emotional release of speaking in gibberish. Now the same thing has happened to so-called Christians today, but due to their superficial reading of the Bible, I would suggest they have wrongly applied the passages about speaking in tongues to themselves. The Bible teaches that speaking in tongues was speaking in foreign languages that were understood by the people to whom it was directed. Speaking in unknown sounds could easily be done by non-Christians –even I could do it – and it would not be much of a sign. In Acts 2 the apostles spoke in tongues and the people who heard who were out of every nation under heaven heard them speak every man in his own language. These people were amazed, they marvelled saying one to another "art not all these which speak Galileans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? We do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God" (Acts 2:7). Now that shows that the tongues with which they spoke were foreign languages which were understood by those whose native tongue they were.

The Greek word for "tongues" which the disciples spoke is "glossa" [whence 'glossalalia'] and that is the same word used later in the New Testament to describe the languages possessed then and it is used in Revelation where we are told that people of every tongue and nation, of "every tongue under heaven" would be redeemed: of every language, that is what it means.

Now speaking in gibberish with no interpreter would not have made the people so amazed. It's not Biblical glossalalia. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 14:19 that he would rather speak five words that could be understood than 10,000 words in an unknown language. He says in verse 10, there are many kinds of languages, that is tongues, in the world and there is only any point in speaking in a tongue or language which the audience understood. Verse 27 in the Diaglott, literal Greek version of 1 Corinthians 14 says "if anyone speaks in a foreign language". Similarly in 1 Corinthians 13:1 he says he speaks with the tongues of men, literally translated as the "languages of mankind".

So I think the point is quite clear that speaking in tongues was speaking in foreign languages, so therefore it is not surprising to read in 1 Corinthians 14:22 "tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not". They were to be used as a means of preaching to unbelievers which took place in public. That is why Paul spoke in tongues "more than ye all" (1 Cor. 14:18) he said, because he had been to so many different countries needing to use those gifts.

We also read of the gift of interpretation of tongues / glossalalia. That is, to interpret, to translate from one language to another. For example, we read in Acts 9: 36 of Tabitha, which by interpretation, by translation from one language to another, "which by interpretation is called Dorcas".

In 1 Corinthians 14, and I would encourage you all to try and look at that at the moment, is a list of commands regarding how the gift of tongues / glossalalia should be used – verse 37 says "if any man think himself a prophet, or spiritually gifted person, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you (says Paul) are the commandments of the Lord". So he is saying that the test of whether someone really has the gifts is whether they obey the Lord's commands he is giving about using them. Now I suggest that most of these commands we are going to read are disobeyed by the churches today. If unbelievers see a church full of people jabbering away, they will think you are mad, Paul says in verse 23, and that is exactly the type of mockery that Christianity is getting today. So he says, verse 27, you should speak "by

course" that is, one after another. Or verse 30 "If anything be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace". So there should never be more than one person speaking in a tongue at any one time during a service. But because of the emotional and psychological nature of the gibberish speaking that happens in churches today, more than one person at a time does speak because there is a lack of control of the people speaking. But Paul clearly says, verse 32, "the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets". So it is not a question of being irresistibly carried away. Verse 28 says that they should only speak if there is an interpreter present, perhaps to translate the response of the audience so the speaker could understand it, if he wasn't from that part of the world.

Paul says, verse 27, that only two or three people at the most should use the gift of tongues / glossalalia during a service, because it was unlikely that there would be more than say three different nationalities present at any one meeting. The fact that many Charismatics do speak in tongues without an interpreter indicates a lack of attention to that command.

Verse 34 is, to me, most decisive. In the context of the use of the gifts of the spirit in church services, we are told, "let you women keep silence in the churches, for it is not permitted unto them to speak". So if a woman speaks in tongues / glossalalia in church, she is proving that in fact she is not spiritually gifted because she is contradicting what verse 37 says which tells us that these things are the commands of the Lord himself.

And it seems that women, in my experience of Pentecostal churches, do predominate in speaking in tongues / glossalalia.

So in nearly all these clear commands which will be obeyed by every truly spiritually gifted person, we can see that the Evangelical movement today disobeys those commands of the Lord himself.

Unfortunately the fact that paranormal things are done by Christians is accepted by some as proof that these people are of God. But remember the words of Jesus in Matthew 7:22& 23, and I don't say these words to condemn anybody but just to warn you, he says "Many will say to me in that day, Lord. Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? (Lord, I thought that I had the gift of prophecy?) and in thy name have cast out demons? (Lord, I thought I had the gift of healing?) and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you". Now it doesn't say that a few misguided well-meaning people are going to have that sort of disappointment. No, it says that many people, *many* will be saying things like that in the day of judgment. So therefore it follows that many of the people who profess to have the gifts, do not really know Christ. As 1 John 4:1 says, "try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world".

Even in the First Century there was the gift of "discerning of spirits" we are told (1 Cor. 12:10), to enable the church to recognize the many false claims being made even in their time to spirit possession. That gift of discerning of spirits along with all of them, has been replaced by the Word of God and if we use scripture to test the claims that are being made, with an open mind, I fear the verdict is clear.

Now as I have said that paranormal events do occur for which there is no human explanation, I do not doubt. But I don't believe that they depend on the Holy Spirit coming directly upon people in order for them to occur. I mean, the fact that faith healers can do paranormal cures, as can witch doctors, shows that having the ability to heal is no proof at all that you are of

God. It seems that with various stimuli and mental excitation the mind can produce physical effects in our body. There was an article recently in the *Scientific American* which was analysing the work of a psychologist in London who is an atheist. You go on a course with this man and after six weeks or whatever you can walk on fire and not get your feet burnt. Now the reviewer was contrasting this man who is an atheist with the Hindus and other religious groups who walk on fire and don't get their feet burnt and says "there you are, that's of God", but the psychologist knows how to psyche people up in the right way, he's cracked the psychology and so he can achieve the same result.

CHAIRMAN:

Two minutes.

MR. HEASTER:

There have been a lot of sudden changes that have come upon people, for example, at a time of earthquake or crisis like that because of the excitation of the event. And so, at many healing meetings people are told that if their eyelids feel heavy, if they feel like falling and if they scream, that is the Holy Spirit coming upon them. But they are all the classic symptoms and characteristics of hypnosis. Such methods were not used by the apostles. Obviously, if somebody believes something strongly then paranormal things will happen, and that is why the Pentecostal movement today places all this emphasis on "you must have faith, you must believe it very strongly". And of course if you believe very strongly that you are going to get better of cancer, or whatever, well you may do. I do not deny that, but it is *not necessarily of God*.

So then, I believe that the spirit is now found in the Word of God. The Bible is written by inspiration of God, we are told, in-spirit-ation, God putting his spirit into the Word of God. That is why Christ could say "my words are spirit" (Jn. 6:63) and we are told that Christ spoke the words of God because "God giveth…the spirit…unto him" (Jn. 3:34).

Zechariah 7:12 talks of the words which the Lord of Hosts hath sent "in his spirit by the…prophets".

Acts 1:16 describes David's writings as the "Holy Spirit spake by the mouth of David". So the Word of God is the Holy Spirit speaking to us.

CHAIRMAN:

Thank you very much gentlemen. For those of you who do not know either of our two speakers this evening, I will just fill you in on a little bit of their background.

Mr. Liliekas, a born-again Christian for 30 years, obtained a graduate degree in Theology from Portland Bible College in Oregon and did two years post-graduate work in pastoral care. He has subsequently worked on the staff of the Portland Bible Temple and Restoration Charismatic Centre. He has also been involved in extensive evangelism in Europe with open-air campaigns.

Mr. Heaster is a school teacher from South London and he has been involved in active missionary work particularly in Africa and the Caribbean and is the Editor of a magazine which is sent out to Africa.

Having heard both of our speakers opening addresses there is now an opportunity for people to stretch their legs.

It's two minutes to eight. Can we please meet back here to begin again at 10 past please. Thank you.

Now is the opportunity for each speaker to reply to the other one's opening remarks. Ten minutes is allotted for each speaker and I will ask Mr. Liliekas to reply for 10 minutes to Mr. Heaster's opening address.

3-2-5 Abuse Of Spirit Gifts

Mr. Liliekas' Second Speech

O.K. Well, as we have seen the main argument used by Mr. Heaster was basically that gifts were temporary until the canon of Scripture was written. Now, unfortunately that denies the consistent evidence of what has gone through Scripture.

After Moses received the Law on the mountain, and the Old Testament church had the written word, the miracles still were an on –going issue. As far as the New Testament church was concerned, it was the same thing. They already had lots of things that were already written, but gifts were an on-going issue. Why? Nothing to do with Scripture. They were never ever meant or designed to supplement Scripture or let's say to humour the church until the written text was completed. The reason they were there was again, God was actively administering in His church. He never ceased to administer when the Scripture was completed. Obviously, God is not going to sit down. Those same problems existed after Scripture was written, there were problems of discipline, problems of strategic planning as to how the church should go forward – things which the church could never know on their own – dangers to be warned of – they were still there. We know that. Irrespective of whether the canon of Scripture was completed or not. The canon of Scripture was completed to give on-going, moral and ethical guidance as to how I should walk and relate to God.

Now, as far as the abuse of Spirit gifts is concerned. It's true that there are abuses in Charismatic circles. I have spoken out against that. However, we've heard the adage "you can't throw the baby out with the bath water" – and I would say, in this instance, you cannot throw the baby out with the bath water. How many of you have seen somebody who has been a Christian who has made a decision and then went out and chopped her granny up with an axe or something. I mean, maybe not that extreme, but done something terrible. Or after they made a decision for Christ and got baptized, went and committed adultery. Would you therefore say that baptism is no longer for today? Abuse does not equal the thing itself being wrong. It only says that something right can be misused. Abuse of Spirit gifts likewise.

Now, it says the main Scripture use was when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away. "I know in part, I prophesy in part, when I was a child I spoke like one, thought like a child, reasoned like a child; when I became a man, childish things passed away". He says "for now we see in a mirror dimly, then we shall see face to face" (1 Cor.13:12). Obviously, the

"then" is when Christ comes back. Because we will then have a full revelation of Jesus Christ and who he is. Let me further qualify that.

It seems to be quite logical that when Christ comes back, we are not going to need to evangelise, are we? We are not going to need prophecies, or Words of God for direction because the Kingdom will be established. We are not going to need God intervening to expose the sins which lie within the church. Why? All that will be brought to an end. We are not going to need God to guide us to strategic places to evangelise. Why? Well Christ has come back. It is obvious that the gifts and the miracles have nothing to do with the canon of Scripture – absolutely nothing. But they are an integral part of God's overall objective – He will achieve the evangelisation of the world. That there are abuses – I have seen it myself – tons of times – I could write books on it – it doesn't change the fact that they are here today. I'll give you an example. In Glasgow, Scotland, we had a guy called "Bible John" this is a few years back. Bible John would hitch-hike on the road, try and tell people about the gospel and if they didn't, the people in the car didn't believe, he would take them out and shoot them and bury them. Does that mean that the Bible and the gospel are wrong because somebody abused it? By no means! Abuse doesn't mean that the thing in itself is wrong. No way!

We also partake of communion, right? When do we partake of communion? That's something that we will stop when we see Christ face to face. That's another one of those things which has a temporary usage within the church.

Does the complete canon of Scripture mean that we no longer see darkly? By no means! The church is equally confused and Duncan himself said that there are so many conflicting views and there are so many problems in arriving at the truth, it is obvious that we do not see clearly. It is obvious that we do not agree. It is obvious that we are not at that point yet where we now understand. Would you say that the church on the earth is mature or even better, that the early Christian church became perfect? Paul wrote the epistles and said that there were enormous grievances and abuses in the on-going church in those days. All his letters were written to address those grievances. He also says "know that very soon, perilous times will come and deceivers will come and a great falling away" (Acts 20:29-30) – that was not a perfect church. No way was it perfected by the canon of Scripture. Now – Duncan makes a good point – he says early church history, contrary to what he says it's very clearly recorded in early history that gifts were very, very, much manifest right up to the Third Century. Lots of documentation on that, and, what's more, they did seem to cease and wane round about the Third Century, it's true, they didn't disappear. But do you know why? Because the church began to become dead and orthodox, the very church fathers that Duncan is speaking about are the men who introduced Platonic philosophy into Christianity. These church fathers were the beginning of death. They introduced Greek intellectualism into Christianity. They couldn't tolerate those kind of things like gifts. So, when we see a demise of the gifts at that time, that is true, but not for the reason Duncan said; it's because faith, by and large, was beginning to fall away in the church.

Another thing. I never said that there was going to be two outpourings of the spirit. What I did say is at the end time that on-going manifestation would be greatly enhanced before the coming day of the Lord.

Now all the other stuff, the parallels between well, you name it, I mean something has got to be a bit absurd. If you believe…Here's a question? How many of us believe that God answers prayer. Christadelphians, do we believe that God answers prayer? That's good, put up your

hands, don't try and hide. They think I'm going to hook them here, right? O.K. God answers prayers. Jesus says "if you pray believing, you shall say to this mountain be taken up and cast into the sea" (Lk. 11:23) didn't he. He says whatever you believe "it shall be done for you". I'll ask you a question. If you pray believing that someone will be healed, will it be done for you? Or is Jesus lying? What's the alternative? Obviously, obviously healing is still for today because God answers His word. If you pray for the sick, and you believe, and you claim the promise, it will be done. Why? Otherwise you need to stand up here and say that God is a liar.

CHAIRMAN:

Two Minutes.

MR. LILIEKAS:

Thank you.

I would say that the perfect has not come. The perfect no way infers the canon of Scripture, the perfect means that when Christ comes back to this earth obviously there is no longer a need for gifts. We shall see him face to face. There will be no evangelistic need, there will be no more a need to confirm the word with signs and wonders. God will have accomplished His purpose; the church will have matured and we will see him face to face; it will all be over. Until then, God is still actively promoting His church, actively confirming His messengers and the message with signs and wonders that follow.

Thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN:

Thank you. Now there is the opportunity for Mr. Heaster to reply to Mr. Lilekas' first address. Thank you.

3-2-6 Spirit Gifts Withdrawn

Mr. Heaster's Second Speech

Ladies and Gentlemen and John. If we are saying that the perfect is the return of Jesus, O.K., we are saying that when Jesus returns the gifts of the spirit will be withdrawn. O.K. This has been quite clearly beyond any question what Mr. Liliekas has been saying. However, the fact is that in Hebrews 6:4& 5 we are specifically told that the gifts which were possessed then in the First Century "are the powers of the age to come", and that age to come is the age after this age has finished, and that is the Kingdom of God. You read the prophecies of God's Kingdom on this earth, Psalm 72, Isaiah 2, Isaiah 35 the blind people have their eyes opened, the deaf people will hear, how? By the gifts being used by those who are counted worthy to inherit that age and that world to come (Lk. 20:35). So then the gifts of the spirit must be possessed in the Kingdom. Therefore the Spirit gifts are now withdrawn if they will be given then.

Now he says that he doesn't think that the church is perfect. Well, of course, it's never been perfect, but I did make it quite clear that the word "perfect" in the New Testament does not mean "sinless". It means "complete" and it is talking about this state of revelation which we come to from having the complete Word of God. He said that we do not see clearly at the moment. Well, James 1:23-25 clearly tells us that the Word of God, the perfect law of liberty, is a mirror, a glass into which we can see clearly.

Now, Acts 2 and Joel 2 as he said, he is saying that applies to the last days. Now in Joel chapter 2, you will see that it makes prophecies about the outpouring of the gifts upon three groups of people. It says that the old men were going to dream dreams and have the gifts of the spirit when the gifts were poured out and it says that the young men and the young women, their sons and their daughters were also going to have the gifts and that whoever called upon the name of the Lord would be saved. But I submit to you that it is primarily in a Jewish context. And that is exactly how it was fulfilled in Acts 2. There were Jews from every nation under heaven, old men who'd retired and come to live in Jerusalem whom Peter spoke to. And he said that this promise of the outpouring of the spirit, he said "it is to you (those old men) and to your children (that is the sons and daughters of Joel 2) and to all who are afar off, whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord" primarily referring to the Jews of the Diaspora.

Notice how it says in this last day outpouring, "I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh". Now, I am saying that that applies to the Jewish people and that any moment now, the Jewish people will all possess the gifts of the spirit. But of course, you may say, oh, you're overdoing this Jewish business, it's really the Gentiles, it's us. But whether you take it as all Jews or all Gentiles, the fact is that "afterward I will pour out my spirit upon *all* flesh" so we are not seeing this fulfilment until "all flesh", all Jews, as I believe, or all Gentiles, as you believe, possess the gifts of the spirit.

Now that outpouring was to be afterward, Joel 2 says. After what? Verse 26 talks about the Jews repenting and returning to God. "Ye shall know (God says) that I am in the midst of Israel, and ye shall praise the name of Yahweh your God". It is after verse 20 when the northern army is removed afar off. The Bible clearly says that in the last days before Christ returns Israel will be attacked and that when that attack is overcome then according to Joel 2 these gifts are poured out upon all the Jews, all flesh.

We are told that at this time, verse 32, in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, shall be deliverance. Joel 2:22 – it will be at a time when there are no more deserts in Israel. But these conditions are not now being fulfilled. Jerusalem is the one place on earth where the name of Christ cannot even be preached. Have the Jews turned to God? Can you say that God is in the midst of Israel? Are they acknowledging Yahweh as their God? By no means! And it is not until the Jews do that that we can say that Joel 2 has been fulfilled.

Now John also talked about Mark 16 and he quoted the prophecy there that ye shall take up serpents; ye shall do all these things, "these signs shall follow them that believe; you will cast out demons, speak with tongues; take up serpents, if ye drink any deadly thing it will not hurt you". I say to that "oh really, well where is the evidence? Where are the people taking up serpents and things like that?" It doesn't say well they might do if they are in a tight corner. It says they *shall* take up serpents, they *shall* speak with new tongues, they *shall* do these things, they *shall* lay their hands on the sick. Now where are those things happening today? Well, you probably know as well as I do the recent things in the press in the States where

someone was saying, “yes, these things apply to me”. Holding up the serpent. What happened? I believe it was actually on television itself – he was bitten and he died! Well, I mean, where is it happening? Where are the people taking up the serpents? There they were, they went out into the world, they preached the gospel, people said to them, like they said to Moses, “Well how do we know you’re of God?” So they would have picked up a serpent. They could have healed people. They could then say “Well, there you are, I am of God”. Just like Moses could also handle that serpent and not be bitten. But that, I am afraid to say, is in no way happening today.

Now John also said how do we know (this was in his first speech) we are in the Kingdom of God unless we have the gifts? Now, there I believe is the crux of the problem. We are not now in the Kingdom of God and therefore we do not possess the gifts of the spirit. We are told to pray “Thy kingdom come”. The Kingdom is not here James 2:5 “we are heirs of the kingdom” not in the Kingdom now. We are told to take the bread and wine *until we eat it new with Christ in the kingdom of God* (Matt. 26:29); 2 Timothy 4:1 that at Christ’s appearing *and his kingdom*. That is when he returns then the Kingdom will be set up. So we are not now in the Kingdom of God and therefore we do not have the gifts of the spirit because they are held back for us in the age to come. They are “the powers of the age to come” (Heb. 6:4& 5). Therefore Spirit gifts are now withdrawn.

John also started off by saying that the gifts of the spirit are needed to convince unbelievers. Now in Deuteronomy 13:1-3 we are told of God talking to Israel and He said that if a man came amongst them and did miracles, did signs, wonders, they were not to believe that person if he spoke against the Word of God. And God said if that happens, he said, that is a trial to you, he said, it is a test of your obedience to my word. So God was therefore Himself putting very little emphasis on miracles. He was saying the word of God and obedience to the Word of God is far more important than miracles. We also have the fact that the Bible says that “faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). It is from the Word of God that we derive our faith. Very significantly in John 20 we are told about the miracles that Jesus did, that these were done in order to confirm the word that was spoken and to encourage faith, but then John says, John 20:30, these things were written “Many other miracles Jesus did which I haven’t written, these are written that ye might believe”. So then the written record of the miracles is in order that we may believe. Now if we want proof that there is a God, well the Bible gives us that proof. In Isaiah chapters 43 and 44 you can see God saying, if you want proof that I exist look to Israel. He didn’t say go out and watch all the miracles I do. He said look to Israel.

I would like in conclusion to clarify one point. I do believe that faith is of course real. That, as John said, if you pray that a mountain will be moved, well it will be moved. Faith and prayer are still very real things and after the gifts were taken away from the people of Israel, after they developed as a nation, well the answers to prayer still came, in an apparently “miraculous” way, if you see how I am using that word. But the gifts, the specific power of individuals to do this that and the other at their own discretion; “the spirits of the prophets being subject to the prophets” was not then possessed.

So then I believe quite clearly that these gifts of the spirit are to be possessed in the Kingdom and that therefore we have not reached that perfect man state. Now the Spirit gifts are withdrawn. I therefore believe that Jesus’ return is not the perfect man state because, if it is, it means that when he comes the gifts will be taken away. Now that can in no wise be so because those gifts will certainly be possessed in the Kingdom of God.

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN:

Thank you, gentlemen. Now we come to the time when it's open to you to ask questions to our speakers. We will take it in the order in which they have spoken so far and because of, as I said, the time, we would like to finish by 9:15, we have allowed 10 minutes for each set of questions. So I would ask you to keep those questions brief and, also as I mentioned before, I shall relay those to make sure they get on the tape and that everybody knows what was said. So, first of all, do we have any questions then for Mr. Liliekas?

3-2-7 Questions About The Holy Spirit

Questions from the Floor

QUESTION 1:

Right, the gentlemen would like to know what Mr. Liliekas' view from the Scripture would be about the possession of the Holy Spirit to performing something akin to the incident of Ananias and Sapphira's death for their blasphemy.

MR. LILIEKAS:

Well, one thing's for sure, it would certainly straighten the church out, wouldn't it! We would see an end of a lot of things, if that went on!

I would say, I understand what Duncan was saying where he said about gifts being under the control of the person but they aren't entirely. Here's what happens. God metes out the judgment that's due in those cases. Usually those things normally happen in churches where there is a very high revival state and level of holiness. I have seen it clearly where people, in a big service like this, where someone who has a prophetic gift on the platform would say, "Sir, you up there with the whatever, red or blue suit, stand up. God is speaking to you. If you don't repent of such – and – such a sin judgment will come on you, this is your last chance". We do not understand everything that has been going on in the man's heart. I mean, that's difficult to say, that is not our job. But these things happen, I have seen them myself. I have heard of cases second-hand of people who have died after a discipline problem in the church because they wouldn't repent. Sometimes in the States and in this country, more so in Third World countries. Why more so in Third World countries? Because there is a much higher level of faith for the Holy Spirit to function. Again, this is an area where you have to try and second-guess God. I don't exactly know when and how it would happen. I am sure of one thing, you'd put the fear of death into a lot of people if you could do it! I don't know how and when it would happen, but I would say it is still valid today. I have heard of cases where it has happened and I've seen the same sort of disciplinary revelations given to leaders in church. I have been in many big services in the States. Those revelations that were given

to, let's say, the man in the blue suit sitting in the balcony have caused the man to repent and get right with God and he says, "if I wasn't dragged out at that time and I hadn't been exposed, I don't know what would have happened to me". So my answer is that God still does those things and I would say that the same thing would be true. What I have seen is that normally it's in churches where there is a very high level of holiness and where God is really doing something in that church. In a church where there's lots of compromise, you do not get those kinds of things. Otherwise (and I'm talking about spirit filled churches now) you don't get those things. As it would be the kettle calling the pot black. God isn't going to use lukewarm leaders to discipline people who are just living the same as themselves.

QUESTION 2:

Why is it that Baptists, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, Evangelicals, Roman Catholics all claim to be led by the spirit in the personal sense and yet believe and teach many different doctrines?

MR. LILIEKAS:

Why is it that people who are led by the Holy Spirit arrive at different doctrinal conclusions – sometimes radically different? That is the 1,000 dollar question, if we knew that one…! I don't know.

I would say this, that God is not as…See the common denominator in the Kingdom of God more than anything else is faith. It is obvious that through your Christian life, you come to different levels where you maybe see something has been true, maybe a year later, you shift a little bit on that. There is a normal growing process within Christianity and a normal education process too. The Holy Spirit does not lead everybody to the same point. Why? I don't know. Why these people don't have these things, I don't know. I think sometimes, if I can just go off here a bit, often the big problem with people who don't believe gifts are for today, is that when they look at other groups who believe radically different doctrines they would be in a situation where they would have to say, "God loves them as well and God is doing something in them as well". I don't know. I feel that the different doctrinal stances are maybe meant by God to develop character in us and to test the level of our love. Can you love somebody who says that they are following Christ, who says that they are serving God and keeping His commandments who believes different doctrines from you? Can you really do it? I would say that is one of the tests that God puts the church through. I am not saying that that's necessarily what it is, but when I look at it, I think sometimes that's what it is. It's a very hard question to answer, it really is.

QUESTION 3:

Scripture says there is one faith and one hope!

CHAIRMAN:

Is that a question?

FROM THE FLOOR:

Well, can you answer that!

MR. LILIEKAS:

O.K. He says, Scripture says there is one faith and one hope. Sure there is! Who says they have got it? As soon as you take that stance where you there is one faith and there is one hope, you say, we are the one true church, everybody else is the church of Babylon. What do you do? You stand on a platform of arrogance, where you can quite easily condemn people who are, maybe, more spiritual than yourself. We should be very very careful of ever making those kind of statements. All it does is you stand on a pedestal and condemn other people. I have come across groups like that who say, "Oh, yes, we are the one true church because we have such and such a doctrine, everybody else is Babylon and a false church". Would you say that reflects the love of Christ? You have to be very very careful on those points. I would say that if people believe differently from me – Duncan believes quite radically differently from me in points – I still accept him as being a Christian, he just sees things different. I don't negate his Christian experience, or his walk with God; I know that he would experience the same things I do if he just used the same faith principles. He is not any less a Christian. And you have to be careful when you look at these things that you do not condemn people who are maybe more Godly than I am. If somebody believes a different doctrine, it's before their own God that they stand or fall. The Lord knows their hearts. I am very hesitant about standing on that ground, very hesitant.

QUESTION 4:

The gentleman is asking what is the point of the meeting tonight if it doesn't matter what we believe?

MR. LILIEKAS:

That is a good point! What is the point of this meeting…no I'm only kidding!!! Why are we all here, why don't we go home!!!

I see your point. The point that is being debated is: are gifts valid for today? I think, to be honest with you, I think God is fairly tolerant of people who have differing and conflicting beliefs. He is very patient with them and God is trying to develop character in every Christian. If they don't get some of the doctrines right, O.K. My brief from God is to love my neighbour as myself. If he believes differently from me, I still have this same command from God. It is not: when Duncan sees everything the same as me, then I have to show him love. There is

no such thing in Scripture. So I think you have to be very careful that we don't become militant defenders of the so-called "truth" to the point where we condemn other people whom God has accepted. Do you see what I am saying? In that area I am very cautious. I believe God is very tolerant. I would never be in a place, even if I see people who believe radically different doctrines, I would pray for them and I would pray that God would open their eyes, but my job is still to love them. I may have shortcomings in my life that they can see, so it depends on which ground you are standing on here.

QUESTION 5:

[question is missing]

MR. LILIEKAS:

The questioner here is saying that many people are saying that there are really many different paths to God from different theologies outside Christianity. I would say, I stand corrected if I didn't make that clear, I agree with you entirely. There is only one way to God, that is through faith and the redeeming sacrifice of Christ, let's get that clear. But many people have many different interpretations of the peripherals. The things that are on the outside. They see baptism slightly different ways. They see church eldership and leadership in different ways, etc., etc. So I would agree with you, there is one way, but it is the peripherals where you have to have lots of love. O.K.

CHAIRMAN:

Thank you. Time is up on that.

3-2-8 Questions About Spirit Gifts

CHAIRMAN:

Any questions now to Mr. Heaster?

QUESTION 1:

The lady says that she questions Mr. Heaster's statement that the casting out of demons and other examples of New Testament use of the Holy Spirit are not available today. She says he says this is not available, it doesn't exist. She says that she has seen this and would like to know from Mr. Heaster how he explains her experience.

MR. HEASTER:

Well, I did try and make it clear that I do not doubt that what I call "paranormal things' do occur. That is, things for which there is no human physical explanation. I do not doubt that these things happen. But what I have tried to outline is the nature of the gifts in the First Century, and I see absolutely no evidence that the gifts are now being manifested in any form

like they were in the First Century. Now we take healing. The clear examples of healings in the Acts of the Apostles were very clear: somebody who was dead, suddenly raised from the dead. Now those sort of miracles, I do not believe are happening today. Now, as I have also said, I do not question your personal experience, but we cannot put personal experience above the Word of God. As I said, Deuteronomy 13:1-3, God told the people of Israel that the fact that these things may happen, is no proof that you are of God, I am afraid to say. We cannot base our faith on our own experience. I quoted the example of the people walking on fire and not getting hurt. Now that is something for which there is no human explanation and yet it is the result of mind over matter. Similarly, people quote so-called examples of people speaking in foreign languages now and again, but on the other side of the coin, there are monks in Tibet and rural parts of China who have been heard to speak in English, French, all sorts of languages even, apparently, to quote whole passages out of Shakespeare when they've apparently never had any knowledge of it. Now obviously what has happened is that they have somehow or other picked up these things on their subconscious mind or somehow or another it has got into them and through the trigger of their religious experiences and their religious ritual, those things have been triggered and have therefore come out.

So the test is whether we are performing miracles as performed in the First Century. The fact that these things are going on apparently miraculous, well, we have to accept that Muslims also are doing these things; that people who do not believe in God are doing these things. It is no evidence that we are a true Christian, the fact that these experiences may be happening to us.

QUESTION 2:

CHAIRMAN:

Excuse me, Sir, what is your question.

FROM THE FLOOR:

There is no question, I am just making a statement.

CHAIRMAN:

I don't know whether you came in late but I did actually…I'm sorry I have to stop you there. Because time is very short, I did say…

FROM THE FLOOR:

What is time? God could take you right now, never mind time is short.

QUESTION 3:

You would like to know from Mr. Heaster what his view is on whether the spirit is at work now through individuals or just through the Word.

MR. HEASTER:

In 1 Corinthians 12:4-7 Paul says that there is one spirit but that it has a diversity of manifestations. Now that spirit of God doesn't change basically. God's spirit, God's power is always His and always retains His characteristics. God chooses to manifest Himself with that spirit as He wishes. In the early days of the Christian church, he chose to manifest Himself through the gifts of the Holy Spirit. I am saying that He is now manifesting Himself through the Word of God, that it is from there that we have access to the spirit of God.

Now of course, God does work through individuals, but how does He work through individuals? Well, He has worked through them in the past – through their control of the gifts. He can now work through them by the power of the Word of God. In 1 Thessalonians 2:13, we read that the Word of God "worketh effectually in you that believe". "Effectually" means "energetically", "powerfully". So then the Word of God is at work today. That is what is working in us and that is what is working through us.

QUESTION 4:

The gentleman would like to know from both of our speakers the purpose for which Christ is coming back to the earth, to which both of them have referred. In view of the time, I will ask both of them to be as brief as they possibly can.

MR. HEASTER:

I believe that the Bible teaches that Jesus Christ is coming back to this earth to set up God's Kingdom upon this earth. 2 Timothy 4:1 speaks of the appearing of Christ and his Kingdom as if those two are parallel. In Daniel chapter 2 we read of a prophecy of Christ's return as a little stone that comes on to this earth at the end of human history and we are told that that symbolizes him setting up a kingdom over this earth which shall not be destroyed and which will not give way to man's kingdoms like other kingdoms of men have done, but "it will last for ever' (Dan. 2:44). So then I believe as I've mentioned earlier that the conditions of that kingdom on this earth are described in Psalm 72 and Isaiah 35 and other passages, where the curse that was put on this earth in the Garden of Eden will be taken away and ultimately God will be all in all. That is what I believe Jesus Christ is returning to this earth to do and therefore, as I have said, those who follow him and help him in that work will need the gifts of the Holy Spirit to accomplish that.

MR. LILIEKAS:

Well, I would say ditto to most things that were said there. Obviously, when Christ comes back, it's going to be the fulfilment of the administration of God. I believe that the world is going to get progressively more and more Christianised and that the commission that God gave to the disciples will be fulfilled and that the gospel will be preached in all the earth and that by and large the world will be Christianised prior to Christ returning. I believe that he will then return to hand over the kingdom to God. Now there is a problem here. It is very difficult to be adamant and put this down to a precise formula. I'll tell you why. So many great scholars read the same verses and come to different conclusions. It is very difficult to be firm, but I would say, by and large, Christ is going to come back when the church has triumphed and he is going to set up a visible administration. At that time, there is no longer any need for evangelism, there is no longer any need for healing because people will be healthy, there will be no more curse. At that time we will see Christ face to face and what had, up till then, been dependant on faith will no longer be, because we will see him. Exactly

what format that will take and in what time sequence I don't know. I mean everybody that reads the Bible comes to a different conclusion.

CHAIRMAN:

One more question to Mr. Heaster, please.

Right, the gentleman would like to know how Mr. Heaster can have faith if he hasn't seen miracles or other examples of the spirit gifts.

MR. HEASTER:

Well, I'm afraid I have seen quite a bit of speaking in tongues and I've had countless discussions with people who have claimed to be healed, I've been quite involved in one way or another with people from that kind of background and I think I've probably seen as much evidence as there is going and I've tried always to have an open mind and yet personally I've not found it at all conclusive. As I said in my first address, in Acts 4:16 we read of that miracle that was done on the lame man and that the Jews who had their minds far more closed to accept miracles could be done than I have, said "that a notable miracle hath been done we cannot deny, (because) it is manifest to all those who dwell in Jerusalem". Now if I see miracles like that, then I will believe and I will climb down and accept I'm wrong. But I'm afraid the so-called evidence that I've seen has only confirmed my belief that the apparent gifts which are being claimed today are in fact in contradiction to the commands concerning the use of those gifts; I gave that long list of things that I've experienced in watching Pentecostal services which are not in accordance with the Word of God. So that's my answer to that question I'm afraid.

CHAIRMAN:

We now move on to the concluding summing up remarks of both speakers and I call up Mr. Liliekas to do his summing up for 10 minutes.

3-2-9 Gifts Of The Spirit Today

Summation by Mr. Liliekas

I'd forgotten all about this ten minutes – I was getting ready to go home!

There is something I would say that is very lacking in Duncan, as much as I appreciate that he is being intellectually as honest as he can see to be and he is going at the pace of his understanding of God's Word and he does have quite a lot in many areas. However, it seems that when it comes to this area of the gifts and their manifestation and the miracles, he seems to step back and take a very, almost like a Greek philosophic attitude where there is a despising of anything which cannot be tested by firm scientific principles. Now that is part of our cultural heritage in the west. I would say there is a problem there. I would say there is another problem which many people have in this, that is, I don't know who knows about Christadelphians but they are a group which is very intolerant of anybody who believes different. That puts them in a position where when they look at, let's say, there's someone down there who believes utterly different from them doctrinally and who claims that they hear from God, that they perform miracles etc., etc. They would then be in a dilemma of

saying “well, although that person disagrees with me, God seems to respect him and to do things in his life”. I feel that the historical Christadelphian intolerance of other groups, and most churches are designated as being false and heretical by Christadelphians – you can read it in their literature – is part of this phenomena of not being able to appreciate, that other people have got gifts of the spirit because otherwise when you look at others you have got say “Is God maybe more active in their lives than He is in ours with all of our true doctrine?” So you come up against this kind of problem when you take a firm doctrinal stance. It leads to intolerance. The gifts of the spirit are here today. I know. Let me give you an example of an experience we had up in Glasgow. Anybody ever been up in Glasgow? Terrible place. Isn’t it! Anyhow in Glasgow there is a place outside called Paisley. Paisley is the place where Paisley was made. Our church in its heyday, in a small church I came from before I went to the States, they used to fast and pray before they would have services. On day into one of those services came a girl who had one leg six inches shorter than the other. She had one show with six inch thick soles. You know how it is when you give an altar call and you say, if anybody’s sick would you like to come out and be healed and honestly, most pastors just hope that it is somebody with a sore throat that is going to come out, nothing bad, just something simple!! Anyhow this girl came out and the pastor prayed for her and he told me afterwards, he said, “John, he says, I did not expect really think anything was going to happen”. That girl was 13 years old. The metal braces that were on her leg burst off and her leg grew and she ran screaming right down the aisle into the road jumping up and down the road and she was shouting “I’ve been healed, I’ve been healed”.

Now if anybody knows the dour Scots and how conservative they are, you do not do those kind of things in Scotland. The next day she came back with all of her family, all of her relatives, all of her friends to the next service, they all repented and accepted the gospel message. Now Duncan is more than welcome to go up to the church and get the documentation. It is there. The girl will stand before him and tell him. This just followed again the same scriptural pattern. God wants to win over the hearts of sceptical men. God is a co-worker with us. Duncan’s testimony is to this that God is doing nothing in the church. But the way God works He says hey guys, you go and do it and I will meet you halfway. You step our in faith and pray for the sick, I will come and honour you and meet you halfway. Exactly what the disciples said, they said, Lord, when we preach the word, you stretch forth you hand with signs and miracles and wonders and do what? Confirm the word. God hasn’t changed.

I would say the thing that grieves me most isn’t really that Duncan disagrees with me, that is his prerogative, what really grieves me is the position that he puts God into. He puts God into a non-active member in the promotion of the gospel. I find that very very sad to think that God is going to sit back and do nothing. I have seen it time and time myself. I have seen the miracles evident and functioning in my own life. I have seen things which would curl your hair if I told you abut them. Really incredible things and that hasn’t been in just little emotional backrooms. This is in major churches in the States, in Germany, in churches which in some cases have thousands of membership, very well educated people too. And they have seen the gifts. I would say the big problem still comes back to the same thing – according to your faith it shall be done to you. If any of you here have not experienced the miraculous – well, don’t condemn yourself- God is a God of love, He is not going to chuck you out because of those things. But believe me there is an area in your life where you can enhance your ability to spread the Word of God. There is an area in your life where if you will say “look Lord, I’m going to go and speak to this person tonight, I want you to help me, I want you to confirm what I say; I’ll leave it to you”, you start stepping out on faith like that, and it’s like taking a step out of the boat and you will see that God will meet you at the other side.

I'm not saying which way He's going to do it. I can't predict that. But you will see at that point that God is still actively administering and confirming His gospel.

For me, this is a great blessing; it's a great heritage. It's the most incredible thing to see lives change and to see the power of God intervening after I've done my best at preaching the gospel. It's quite incredible. I don't control it. I don't know how it happens, I just wish that Duncan could step inside me and look and see the things that I've seen and experienced. I wish I could share those experiences so that he could have the faith, or I wish he could have been there.

I would say that is all.

INTERRUPTION FROM THE FLOOR

When you rounded off your first 25 minutes talk you said that God was divinely confirming the messenger and the message. Now if you want to win this debate tonight, are you the messenger of God?

MR. LILIEKAS:

Is this leading up to "show us a miracle"? Well, that is a non-starter. The question really was – if miracles are still here today and God is confirming the message I should pull some miracle out of the hat and show this is true – well, whether you believe it's true or not is neither here nor there with me. That's between you and God. I don't think that kind of showmanship is inherently within the realms of the gospel. I am not putting you in this category but there is a similar case of the Pharisees said to Jesus – let's see a sign – he never did do it to the religious world. Who did he do it to? Those who were lost; because when you demand a sign there is a danger (I'm not saying in your case) but there is a danger of a spirit of contempt coming in. Well, let's see you do it. When I see it, I'll believe it. That's neither here nor there with me if you believe it or not. You have to get that from God. I'll talk to you after quite gladly.

CHAIRMAN:

Right! Mr. Heaster to sum up for 10 minutes.

3-2-10 Humble To The Word Of God

Summation by Mr. Heaster

Well, Ladies and Gentlemen, I think each of us here myself as much as anybody else must ask ourselves the question: Are we humble to the Word of God? Tonight, this minute. Are we humble to the Word of God?

Now, one of the reasons why I personally just cannot accept that the claims of Charismatics today are true is because of one of the points that has been raised in the questions, that if we have the comforter, we are guided into "all truth", and, as the questioner said, the fact that we have so many churches believing all sorts of different things indicates that they have not been guided into all truth, or else there would be no difference.

I would also point out in conclusion that I think the majority of the points that I have made have not been answered and I think that when you get the transcript of the debate, God willing, I would like you to read through and in your own mind answer what has failed to be answered.

Now, regarding the leg-lengthening, well, this is one of the many cases that I have often heard of, people telling me about their legs being lengthened. And it is funny isn't it how leg-lengthening is something that is very very popular amongst Charismatics, saying "oh I got my leg lengthened" "yes, so did I" sort of thing. It's quite popular! There is a leading medic here in this University of Leeds who is a Christian who doesn't actually believe in the gifts of the Holy Spirit being possessed and she has studied many, many cases of leg-lengthening and her conclusion is that most so-called leg-lengthenings are only apparent leg-lengthenings because apparently the pelvis can flip back to normal position enabling the leg to apparently go out straight and grow apparently by a couple of inches even. Now, therefore, that sort of thing can happen through emotional stimuli, I'm afraid to say in the same way as this sort of thing has happened after an earthquake, when in the shock of what has happened people who were deaf have suddenly been able to hear and things like that.

Now, I do not deny that God is at work. The debate tonight is about how God is at work. God is at work "effectually". He is at work mightily through His Word. No question about that. So I am not saying that God is not at work in His church.

So then, I think we have to address ourselves to the question "what is the gospel". There is one Lord, there is one faith, there is one baptism. I am afraid I can't really agree that different doctrines are acceptable. No, there is "one Lord and one faith and one baptism" (Eph. 4:4). Now Christ said "Thy word is truth" (Jn. 17:17). Now truth is an ultimate thing. You either have truth or you do not have truth, and the Word of God is *the truth*. If you correctly understand the basics of the Word of God then you have *the truth* and there is therefore fellowship between those who all believe *the truth*. So then, what is the gospel? Well, it is a question I often ask to people who claim and tell me they have these gifts of the spirit, and they each seem to give me a different answer. Some of them do not even know! So I will sum up how I understand the Gospel.

Galatians 3:8, Paul said that the gospel was preached to Abraham. So it is not something that just began with Jesus. It has been always preached right from the beginning of the world. He said it was preached to Abraham in the form of the promises that God made to Abraham. God promised Abraham two things. He told him that he would have a special descendant through whom the whole earth would be blessed and who would overcome the enemies of mankind and Paul says Galatians 3: 16 "that seed, that descendant, was Christ". And secondly, Abraham was promised that he would have many descendants who would reign forever, he was told, upon this earth. Romans 4:13 "the promise that Abraham and his descendants should be heirs of the world was made to him", we are told. So, he was promised he would have a great descendant, Jesus, and that he would have many descendants, as many as the stars in the sky, who would live for ever upon this earth; and they are the two elements of the gospel.

In Acts 8, something which I think John has already referred to, verse 5 it says that Philip came to Samaria and "preached Christ". Now many of you would say "well, there you are he turned up and said believe on Jesus and you will be saved" but it goes on in verse 12 to say what he did preach. It says that "he preached the things concerning the Kingdom of God and

the name of Jesus Christ". Exactly the same two elements of the gospel that were preached to Abraham. The things about the Kingdom of God were preached to Abraham in the form of the promises about his descendants living for ever on the earth, the things about Jesus Christ were promised to Abraham when he was told he would have this great descendant, Jesus. That is why Jesus says in John 4:22 "salvation is of the Jews". It is only by being "of the Jews" that we can be saved because to Abraham, Galatians 3:16 "to Abraham and his seed (descendant(s)) were the promises made.

Now the natural descendants of Abraham are the Jews, but you and I are not Jews. Galatians 3 at the end of the chapter verse 27 says "as many of us as have been baptized into Christ become the descendants of Abraham", and he said "if you are the descendants of Abraham, then you are heirs according to the Promise". What promise? The promise of eternal life on this earth made possible through the work of Jesus. Abraham's great descendant, Jesus, we are told (Matt. 4:23), preached "the Gospel of the kingdom of God"- the good news of this return and the setting up of this kingdom here upon this earth. That is the gospel and that is the gospel which just does not seem to be preached by the Charismatics. The minute you believe in the Trinity, you believe that Christ could not have been a descendant of Abraham because if he pre-existed as a person, how could he have been the descendant of Abraham according to the flesh? If he was God himself, how could he be a descendant of a man, Abraham? If you believe that when you die you go to heaven and you spend eternity in heaven, well then you also do not fully understand the gospel of the Kingdom of God, because it is the good news of what is going to happen to this earth. "Blessed are the meek they shall inherit the earth" (Matt. 5:5). If you inherit something, if has been promised to you. Who has the earth been promised to? Romans 4:13 – to Abraham's descendants. How are we Abraham's descendants? Galatians 3:27-29 – through water baptism. So then water baptism is vital if we are to be saved. That is why Jesus said, John 3:3-5, unless we are "born of water and of the spirit we cannot enter the kingdom". So then, water baptism is being born of water; what is being "born of the spirit"? 1 Peter 1:23 it says we are born again "not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible by the word of God". The Word of God then is the seed, the sperm of God which gets into a man and creates the new man within him. James 1:18 says we are begotten by God by the word of truth. So then we are born again by the Word of God forming the new man within us and as we go through our lives we should be having the new man, the spiritual man, born within us.

So then, I plead with all of you here tonight, not to rest on your laurels, not to rely on the feelings of your own heart, which the Bible says in Jeremiah 17 is so desperately deceitful that it is impossible for us to fully understand how deceitful and wicked it is. But instead to apply yourselves to the true Word of God, "thy word is truth", Jesus said (Jn. 17:17). It is the only source of truth in this life. And humbly, seriously consider the fact that you may have taken a big wrong turning in your spiritual life due to wrongly matching the emotional responses of men with the Word of God.

Now, I know, as John has said, this makes us sound very pompous, very arrogant, very proud. But I don't believe that those who share my views are any of those things. Yes, we can show love to all men, there is no question about that. It is not a question of being unloving, but it is a question of being humble to the Word of God because, if the Word of God is truth then we have to accept that there are certain fundamental beliefs about the gospel which we must hold to be saved.

So then, let us each be humble to the Word of God tonight. Please give yourselves no rest until you have found that real truth that is revealed in the Bible, not anything that has come out of *you* as Christ said there is nothing good inside a man, (Mk. 7:20-21) nothing good at all, Christ said, can come out of a man. Give yourselves no rest until you have been born of water by true baptism and then apply yourself to the Word of God to be spiritually reborn.

So I will conclude with those words of Jesus to Nicodemus on that night so long ago now, "Marvel not (please, you Charismatics, evangelicals, in fact, all of us here tonight) that I say unto you, ye must be born again".

Good night and God bless you.

Chairman's Concluding Remarks

Thank you, Ladies and Gentlemen for your attention and thank you to the speakers from myself for their careful adherence to their time allocations.

Two things. The cost of the debate this evening and arrangements have been considerable. If anybody would like to make a contribution and I stress from the organizers that it is entirely voluntary, the green boxes which are situated in the hall are labelled for those contributions. You have on your seats slips advertising a lecture tomorrow and also an invitation to have a transcript of the debate. If you want more, fill in more slips and just post those in the red boxes. They of course, are free of charge.

Thank you, and on behalf of the organizers, I wish you a safe journey home and thank you very much for coming.

4.1

Jesus For Moslems

This study is available in English, Albanian, Arabic, Kurdish and Turkish.

Preface

These thoughts and researches have been necessitated by many live discussions amongst Muslim people in Guyana, Bosnia, Kosovo, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, Morocco, Tunisia, Tatarstan, Serbia, Albania, Turkey, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine…as well as correspondence with hundreds of contacts throughout the Islamic world and parts of Africa. In nearly all the above countries I know Christian converts who were once Muslims. Through all this, I can heartily agree with the finding of many others who have sought to take Christ to Islam: these discussions with Muslims have forced me to a radical and patient expression of my faith and understanding in Christ. By the very vigour and cruciality of its objections, Islam compels the Christian to delineate Christ more deeply and more finely. Their misunderstandings have to be made the theme of more patient exposition. Every difficulty has to be made an opportunity for witness to the Truth; and in this there is good discipline for every servant of Christ in whatever context. That said, this book is not intended to convince committed Muslims to leave their faith. It is to help those who in their hearts have already left Islam, and are looking to Jesus. And it seems there are many of them about, underneath the veneer of Islamic society and culture. I am grateful to

brother John Thorpe for allowing me to quote from his own writings at some length, and for his comments on the text. I can thoroughly recommend his book “Islam and the Bible”. I also must record my thanks to brother Ashraf Ali, a former Muslim originally from Guyana, for many hours of perceptive discussion, and for his zealous example of debating and discussing with Muslims; and to brethren Bassam, Mehmet, Mohammad, Ramazan, Said [and many others I cannot safely mention] in Iran, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey for their zealous examples and brave breaking free from Islam.

It becomes apparent the more one studies and reflects, that Islam and true Christianity are incompatible. This raises the stakes. The outcome is either deeper entrenchment, or a deep and heart rending conversion. I have not written this book very sensitively, because I am appealing emotionally, from the heart…to those who already have major doubts about Islam, and are looking to Jesus. I have used ‘Christian’ ideas such as the Fatherhood of God very freely. And I have relegated to an Appendix the apparently crucial question of whether the Old and New Testaments which I quote are corrupted or not, as Islam claims. As I say, I write for those who will give me a hearing without having to be persuaded to. My appeal is, with David: “Taste and see, that the Lord is good”. And this is the unashamed challenge of the final and longest chapter. There I have sought to draw out the practical implications of the fact that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed the Son of God, who was crucified, bearing our sins, and rose again for our justification. These realities can and do transform human life in practice, both now and eternally. It really is a case of “believe or perish”.

4.2

Is The Bible The Unaltered Word Of God?

Transcript Of A Debate With Katherine Kullman And The Submission Organization

2001 / 2002

Written Debate

Speakers:

For The Position Of The Bible Being The Unaltered Word Of God: Mr. Duncan Heaster (Christadelphian)

Against The Position Of The Bible Being The Unaltered Word Of God: Ms. Kathryn Kullman (A representative of the International Communitee Of Submitters)

Duncan Heater's First Speech

4-2-1 The Writers Of The Bible

4-2-2 The Quran Scriptures

Katherine Kullman's First Speech

4-2-3 The Islamic Perspective On The Bible

4-2-4 Gematria And Quran

4-2-5 Jesus And The Quran

Mr. Heaster's Response Speech

4-2-6 Gematria And Numerology

4-2-7 Gematria And Hebrew Words

4-2-8 Problems With Gematria

The Moslem Response: Second Speech

4-2-9 Christian Criticisms Of Islam Answered

Final Statement From Duncan Heaster

4-2-10 The Quran As A Miracle

4-2-11 A Brief Summary Of The Bible Message

Moslem Final Statement

4-2-12 The Quran Code

4-2-13 Additional Comment: The Quran states that the word of God cannot be altered.

4-2-1 The Writers Of The Bible

Duncan Heaster's First Speech

Is the Bible the Unaltered Word of God?

I submit without hesitation that the Bible is the unaltered word of God. I make no apology for quoting the Bible itself as proof of its authority. I want you to listen to the Bible speaking about itself, and then you can make your decision.

In the Bible we have God's written words, so that we might understand God's spirit or mind. David spoke of how God's word and " own heart" are parallel (2 Sam. 7:21); God achieved this miracle of expressing His spirit in written words by the process of *INSPIRATION.* This term is based around the word " spirit" :

In-spirit-ation.

" Spirit" means " breath" or breathing. " Inspiration" means " in-breathing" . This means that the words which men wrote, whilst under " inspiration" from God, were the words of God's spirit. Paul encouraged Timothy not to let his familiarity with the Bible lead him to forget that it is the words of God's spirit:

" From a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 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 (complete), thoroughly furnished ('thoroughly equipped', N.I.V.) unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:15-17).

If the inspired Scriptures can provide such totality of knowledge, then there is no need for another book to show us the truth about God. The Israelites were reasonably interested in what God's Word had to say, as are many " Christians" today. We all need to carefully reflect on Hebrews 4:2:

" Unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them (Israel in the wilderness): but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it" .

This unwillingness to accept the huge spiritual power which is in God's word has led many Christians to question whether all the Scriptures are fully inspired by God and say that much of the Bible was just the personal opinions of the writers. I do not share their position. Peter effectively disposes of such reasoning.

" We have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it...above all, you must understand (this is vital!) that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:19-21 N.I.V.).

We must " above all" believe that the Bible is inspired. The doctrine of inspiration is so often emphasized in the Bible (e.g. Mk. 12:36; Acts 1:16; 28:25; Heb. 3:7; 9:8; 10:15).

The Writers Of The Bible

A solid belief in the total inspiration of the Scriptures is vital. The men who wrote the Bible were carried along by the spirit which inspired them, so that the words they wrote were not their own. The Word of God being the truth (John 17:17), it is not surprising that with many it is unpopular - for truth hurts. The prophet Jeremiah suffered much for speaking the words God inspired him with, and so he determined not to record or speak the words that he was given. But because the writing of God's Word is a result of God's will, he was " carried along by the Holy Spirit" so that he had no choice. " I am in derision daily, every one mocketh me...I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay" (Jer. 20:7,9).

A surprising number of those that God inspired to speak His word went through periods of reluctance to do so:

- Moses (Ex. 4:10)
- Jeremiah (Jer. 1:6)
- Ezekiel (Ez. 3:14)
- Jonah (Jonah 1:2,3)
- Paul (Acts 18:9)
- Timothy (1 Tim. 4:6-14)
- Balaam (Num. 22:24)

This all confirms what we learnt in 2 Peter 1:19-21 - that God's Word is not the personal opinion of men, but the result of men being inspired to write what was revealed to them. At times Moses lost the sense of his own personality, so strong was God’s inspiration: " All these commandments, which the Lord hath spoken unto Moses.." (Num. 15:22,23); these words were actually said by Moses (v. 17). Their mouth was His mouth. There are many writings of the prophets where it is hard to determine whether the personal pronouns refer to God or the prophet (e.g. Jer. 17:13- 16) - so close was the relationship and manifestation of God through them.

Sometimes the writers of the Bible realized that they did not fully understand the things that they wrote. They " searched" for the correct interpretation - " ..unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things" which they wrote (1 Pet. 1:9-12). . The following provide obvious examples: Daniel (Dan. 12:8-10); Zechariah (Zech. 4:4-13); Peter (Acts 10:17). The child Samuel likewise didn't know Yahweh but still spoke His word (1 Sam. 3:7).

If what they wrote really was the Word of God, then they had to be completely taken over by God's spirit during the inspiration - otherwise the product would not have been God's Word in

purity. An acceptance that God's Word is completely His provides us with more motivation to read and obey it. Thus the books of the Bible are the work of God through His spirit, rather than the literature of men. This is demonstrated by considering how the New Testament refers to the Old Testament writings.

- Matthew 2:5 (R.V. mg.) speaks of how it was " written through the prophets"
- Matthew 2:15 quotes from Micah, but says: " [that] which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet…" . Hebrews 2:6: " one [actually David] in a certain place testified…" . . There are other examples where the name of the prophet is omitted to show it is not so relevant (Mt. 1:22; 2:23; 21:4).

The human writers of the Bible were therefore relatively unimportant to the early Christians; it was more important that their words were inspired by the spirit of God:

- Jesus plainly stated, " The words that I speak...are spirit" (Jn. 6:63); He spoke under inspiration from God (Jn. 17:8; 14:10).
- We must be re-born by both water and the spirit (Jn. 3:3-5) and the word of God (1 Pet. 1:23).
- " The words which the Lord of hosts hath sent in his spirit by the...prophets" (Zech. 7:12).
- " I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you" (Prov. 1:23) associates a true understanding of God's word with the action of His spirit upon us.
- There are parallels between God's spirit and His word in many passages: " My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth..." (Is. 59:21). Also 2 Sam. 7:21,Ez. 36:27; Jer. 31:33.

God is His spirit (Jn. 4:24), and God is His Word (" the word was God" John 1:1). Our attitude to God's Word is our attitude to Him. When we break commandments, we are despising God's Word (Am. 2:4). This is where belief in inspiration has a powerful practical effect.

4-2-2 The Quran Scriptures

The Islamic Alternative

There are flat contradictions between the Bible and the Qur'an, especially relating to the records of the crucifixion of Jesus. The Muslim usually assumes that the Qur'an is right and the Bible wrong. To say that the Bible was changed by the Jews hardly seems likely - both Old and New Testaments are full of criticisms of the Jews. The texts of both Testaments have been in the possession of both Jews and Christians, so they would have had to collaborate if the texts were indeed tampered with. For 200 years before Jesus, the Hebrew Old Testament existed in Greek translation as the Septuagint, and this would have had to be changed along with the Hebrew texts, if indeed the Old Testament was changed. Muslims can give no dates, no places, no names, responsible for the changing of the Bible texts which they assume happened. Their presupposition that the Bible *must* be wrong because it disproves the Qur'an drives them to make assumptions and claims without evidence. The Dead Sea Scrolls, the manuscripts of the Old Testament, dating from the 2nd century BC, reveal how the texts have lost virtually nothing throughout the generations of recopying - their correspondence with later manuscripts is exact! The Codex Alexandrinus contains the entire Septuagint and also

New Testament, dating back to at least the 4th century AD; and the Codex Siniaticus contains the New Testament written in at least the 3rd century. The Codex Vaticanus dates from the 4th century. Note this is all before the times of Muhammad. And yet these three different manuscripts are all in agreement! The first two are housed in the British Museum, London; and the third in the Vatican. So it cannot be said that the text of the New Testament has been changed over at least 17 centuries! It is no argument to say that over time, a manuscript must inevitably change. On this basis, we could expect the Qur'an to have changed too. There are at least 24,000 ancient New Testament manuscripts available for analysis - far more than for the Qur'an. The next most well supported book, Homer's *Iliad*, has only 643 manuscripts. There are original sections of John dating back to 120 AD, and of Matthew to 65 AD. The few variant words do not affect in any way the sense of the text; and none of the variant words contradict anything written elsewhere in the New or Old Testaments. There were many many variant readings in the Qur'an text - for Muhammad was illiterate and what he said was written down by various people - these variants were only ended when Caliph Uthman ordered all other copies of the Qur'an to be destroyed apart from that complied by Zaid-ibn-Thabit (see John Gilchrist, *Muhammad And The Religion Of Islam* pp. 176-199). If this had been done to the Bible, one would be left wondering whether we have the original text, and whether it hadn't been tampered with. And this question must afflict every intellectually honest Muslim. Where is the evidence that God inspired Caliph Uthman to choose Zaid-ibn-Thabit's version?

Muhammad was told: " He sent down to you the Scripture [the Qur'an]…and He sent down the Torah and the Gospel" (3.3) And Jesus was " sent the Gospel" (5.46). Islam assumes that the Torah and the Gospel were sent from God, but the Old and New Testaments that we now have are not the same thing. The books which they claim were revealed to Moses [Torah- *Tawraat*] and Jesus [the Gospel- *Injil*] just don't exist anywhere, nor is there any evidence for them ever having existed. The Qur'an deepens the difficulty by stating that these books were those in the hands of Jews and Christians at the time of Muhammad (5.44,50). Jews and Christians are told that the Law and Gospel have come to them as revelation from the Lord (5.71). The Qur'an is said to be a confirmation of what was in the Scriptures, which the Jews of Medina were reading at the time of Muhammad (2.91; 10.94). But the books they possessed at this time were the Old and New Testaments as we now know them. There is *no* evidence that any other books existed! If God, as Muslims claim, preserved the exact text of the Qur'an, why could He not preserve these other books as well? Why does the Qur'an tell Jews and Christians to follow the precepts of their respective Scriptures, speaking of them with great reverence - if they are so utterly corrupted? How can it be that the Qur'an calls down curses on " the people of the book" if they do not obey the Torah and Gospel (5.47)- if these documents are hopelessly corrupted? It is significant that it is later generations of Muslim apologists, not the Qur'an itself, who say that the Jews corrupted the Bible text. The passages in the Qur'an (e.g. 5.14,44) which are quoted by them, speak of the Jews of Medina twisting words and distorting the verbal recitation of the Qur'an - not of scribes corrupting the Hebrew manuscripts.

There are a number of Muslim writers from the 9th and 10th centuries who insist that the commonly accepted Old and New Testaments were in fact what was in the hands of " the people of the book" (as the Qur'an calls Jews and Gentiles) at that time. Al-Ghazzali, one of the greatest Muslim theologians ever, lived in the 10th century and quoted the Bible without ever doubting the trustworthiness of the text. " Al-Ghazali did not accuse the Christians of altering the texts, but rather of misinterpreting them" (Wismer, *The Islamic Jesus* p. 165). Fakhruddin Razi, who died in 1209 " …confirming categorically that the Biblical text has not

been changed…" (Ananikian, *The Alteration of The Bible According To the Moslems*, The Muslim World, Vol. 14 p. 77).

Muslim critics claim that because Matthew writes in the 3rd person, his Gospel couldn't have been written by him. But Allah, whom Muslims say wrote the Qur'an, writes in the same 3rd person: " He is Allah, there is no god except Him" (59.22)- and they don't similarly think that this disproves that Allah is the author. Likewise, Muslim claims about the Bible's errancy are so wildly exaggerated. Ahmed Deedat in *Is The Bible God's Word?* claims there are 50,000 errors in it- 40 / page! No published book would have 40 errors / page. Why such gross exaggeration? Has he ever actually listed them all…?

Summing Up:

The Qur'an says that the Old and New Testaments were given to men as inspired by God

The texts we now use clearly contradict the Qur'an

Muslims therefore say that the texts were corrupted.

Seeing the texts for the Old and New Testaments go back well before the birth of Islam, it follows that this would have to have happened before the 1st century AD

Islam claims the original Old and New Testament Scriptures were lost long ago.

And yet the Qur'an says that they were in existence in the 1st century and at the time of Muhammad.

How can this be, if they were lost or corrupted? Where are the original, inspired texts?

If the true, inspired Old and New Testaments existed at the time of Muhammad and were read by " the people of the book" [i.e. Jews and Christians]…then this would mean that from the 1st up to at least the 7th centuries there were both false and true Old and New Testaments circulating. But there is no evidence of this. And yet there is evidence e.g. the Dead Sea Scrolls, that the early manuscripts were faithfully transcribed over the ages.

Islam considers Jesus to be a great prophet, but says he didn't die or rise from the dead. This raises at least two fundamental questions:

· Jesus' teachings were based around the Old Testament's predictions of His forthcoming death and resurrection. If these didn't happen, then how can He be a " great prophet" ? The whole of His message was falsified if He neither died nor resurrected. He promised life to His followers conditional upon His own resurrection. " Because I live, ye shall live also" (Jn. 14:19).

· If we are to accept Jesus as a prophet, surely His words must be written down somewhere for this claim to be true? If the New Testament is so hopelessly corrupt, as Islam claims, then where is the true record of His words?

If Muslims accept that the words of Jesus as recorded in the New Testament are true, then they really have to accept the rest of the Testament. It would be very difficult to prove that

the four Gospels are inspired but the rest of the New Testament isn't. The words of Jesus state in crystal clarity what happened: " I am he that liveth and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; I have the keys of hell and of death" (Rev. 1:18). These words teach that His resurrection is the basis of the Hope He offers to mankind. And Paul was inspired to write in perfect harmony with this: " Now is Christ risen from the dead…For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward they that are Christ's at his coming" (1 Cor. 15:20-23).

And perhaps most piercingly, Paul's inspired words: " If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins….if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable" (1 Cor. 15:17-19). These words are so relevant to Islam. If Jesus Christ is merely a prophet whose words are helpful just for " this life" , then " we are of all men most miserable" . But the example of the disciples and early Christians shows that they were not in this state at all. They were willing to suffer the loss of all things because they felt impelled by the resurrection's reality to preach this, with no prospect of personal gain but only loss. They rejoiced at their sufferings (Acts 4:18-20; 5:41), and turned the world upside down by their witness (Acts 17:6). Extra-Biblical history confirms that the Roman world was indeed overrun by the Christian preaching of the resurrected Jesus. Why did they do this? Theories of stolen bodies and swooning would not have motivated hundreds of men like Paul to make the dramatic changes they did, or to motivate the world-changing evangelism which the resurrection of Jesus inspired. The Bible must be the unaltered word of God for these things to all be true.

4-2-3 The Islamic Perspective On The Bible

Katherine Kullman's First Speech

Is The Bible The Unaltered Word Of God? An Islamic Perspective

I believe that the Torah and the Gospel of Jesus is from God. I also believe that there are righteous followers of both scriptures. The scripture I follow, the Qur'an, tells me so.

[Qur'an 5:46] …we sent Jesus, the son of Mary, confirming the previous scripture, the Torah. We gave him the Gospel, containing guidance and light….

The original versions of both scriptures however, given to us in Hebrew and Aramaic, are lost to the world. What we have are translations from translations, and no original towards which we can verify the words and passages. Thus, the versions in our hands today cannot be the absolute unaltered word of God. Simple logic tells us so.

Although reading the scripture in the original language is not a criterion to access the essence of God's message, it is important to keep the above fact in mind when facing issues in the scripture which are contradictory, not clear, or simply not logical to us.

In this article, you will find proof that the majority of the Bible is indeed the word of God. You will also find proof that will clear up issues that for so long has been debated and disputed among Christians and non-Christians alike.

General Issues Of Concern Regarding The Bible

It is not the intent of this article to debate the well-known issues of contradictions and extreme violence attributed to God in the Bible. There is enough useful information available filling this function. Instead I wish to focus on new found facts which helps all of us determine what is true or not. For those who wish to study bothersome areas of the Bible in more detail, I do however recommend the following links.

· The contradictions

· The extreme violence attributed to God and His messengers

· The different versions of words and passages in different translations

(Listed at the end of this article)

Why Miracles?

Throughout time God has sent down words to us, to help us redeem ourselves. Abraham, Ismail, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Jesus, and all the prophets from God received words to pass onto the rest of us, and only by heeding the message they brought can we attain salvation. To help us recognize those sent by Him, God supported all His messengers and prophets with miracles.

John 10:25 ….The miracles I do in my Father's name speak for me….

The nine miracles performed by Moses were witnessed by perhaps hundred thousand people, yet only a few people believed with him in the end. The miracles of Jesus were witnessed by perhaps a few thousand people, yet only a few people believed with him before he returned to his Creator. This tells us that even if people witness miracles and hear the message first hand, it will not convince many, only a few.

The reason for the extremely few followers during the lifetimes of God's prophets and messengers is not that people change after they leave, it is because *the message changes after they leave*. When the true teacher leaves, false teachers always appear, invariably accompanied by a message suggesting adjustments to the message "Worship God alone". Other 'components' are added and suggested as necessary for our salvation. This is the time thousands and millions join the wagon.

You might wonder why people who do not like God's unaltered message would prefer an altered version of it, instead of simply rejecting it entirely?

The problem is not that they do not believe in God, they do, just as Satan does. Thus, something inside them knows that the message they are hearing is from God. The problem lies in the fact that they do not know who God is, with all His attributes. Recognizing God with all His attributes leaves no room for anything or anybody else besides God to have power independent from Him.

What the altered, compromised version of God's message achieves, is the illusion of a void in which the ego finds room to 'rule' as he or she wishes. It feeds the false notion that somehow something besides God has, or should have some power and influence. This is why the altered message always, always, suggests that other entities are somehow needed besides God

for us to achieve salvation. Thus, by strongly supporting others in that attributed power, such as Jesus or Muhammad, they are indirectly supporting their own claim for power independent from God. This false and blasphemous idea is what got us to this earth in the first place. To read more, visit http://www.submission.org/suras/app7.html

So How Big Of A Sign Do We Need To Take Heed?

We accept something as a sign or miracle when it far exceeds human capabilities and probability. At the early times of human civilization, at the time of Saleh for example, the messenger sent to Thamoud, it was enough of a sign that God sent a camel that would only drink on a day assigned by God. So what kind of proof would God reveal in our day and age, that we may be convinced?

God sends miracles that match the time and the level of knowledge of people. If Jesus would revive a dead man, heal the leprous, or restore the sight of the blind today, there might be room for doubt, considering the advanced medical science we have today. Almost all aspects of our lives today are associated with numbers and computers. We visit other planets and work with such advanced parts of the human body as its DNA structure. Global communication and information is instant, at the touch of a button. Powerful Computers helps us precisely calculate the probability of almost any given event.

In this world, what kind of proof will be powerful enough to eliminate all excuses? If such a miracle were revealed, would we take heed? At what point would a sign be too powerful for us to ignore? *At what point would you attribute something to God?*

4-2-4 Gematria And Quran

Coincidence Or Divine Sign?

If for example you lived by the ocean, and one morning when you looked out you saw thousands of fish in the sea forming the words “leave your house now, you are in danger”. Would you ignore this and go back inside to have your breakfast?

What if you left your house, and all the people taller than you wore green, and all the people shorter wore yellow, and all the people your height wore red, wouldn’t you definitely concluded that someone is trying to get your attention?

I think you would agree that a person ignoring the fish and the people dressing in a certain way would also have ignored the miracles that accompanied Jesus.

Good News To Our Generation

As it turns out, God has revealed a miracle in our time, which He calls “one of the greatest miracles.” It is a miracle in the form of a mathematically coded message based on the number 19, an altogether consistent mathematical structure embedded in the Final Testament to the world, the Qur’an. It is a physical, verifiable, and utterly irrefutable miracle, which can be verified any time, anywhere, by anyone in the universal language of mathematics.

The first signs of this gematria code were first discovered some 900 years ago by Rabbi Judah the Pious. He discovered a deliberate mathematical pattern in original fragments of the Torah, based on the prime number 19. The following quotation is taken from *Studies In Jewish Mysticism*:

The people [Jews] in France made it a custom to add [in the morning prayer] the words: " `Ashrei temimei derekh [blessed are those who walk the righteous way]," and our Rabbi, the Pious, of blessed memory, wrote that they were completely and utterly wrong. It is all gross falsehood, because there are only nineteen times that the Holy Name is mentioned [in that portion of the morning prayer]... and similarly you find the word `Elohim nineteen times in the pericope of Ve-'elleh shemot.... Similarly, you find that Israel were called " sons" nineteen times, and there are many other examples. All these sets of nineteen are intricately intertwined, and they contain many secrets and esoteric meanings, which are contained in more than eight large volumes...

This divine signature is also found in our bodies and in the universe. As Gallileo said, “Mathematics is the language by which God created the Universe.”

This divine signature is also found in our bodies and in the universe

Beyond this we know that the incubation period of the human embryo is 280 days (7 x 40). In Genesis we are told that man was formed from the dust of the ground. The " dust of the ground" contains 14 (7 x 2) elements, and so does the human body. Every cell in the human body is renewed every 7 years and every 7th day the pulse beats slower. In certain diseases the critical days are the 7th, 14th, 21st, etc. and the female cycle is 28 (7 x 4) days. Light is made up of 7 colours, the moon completes its orbit around the earth in 28 days (7 x 4) and the earth is 49 (7 x 7) times larger than the moon.

Both components, 1 and 9, are the only numerals that look the same in all languages.

Why 19?

The universal coding of God's creations with the number 19 rests in the fact that it is the gematrical*

value of the word " ONE" in all the scriptural languages -Aramaic, Hebrew, and Arabic. The number 19, therefore proclaims the First Commandment in all the scriptures: There is no god except the one God.

*The gematrical value of a letter is the numerical value assigned to that letter. At the time of the revelation of the Qur’an, people were using letters to communicate values and amounts.

Other significant facts about the number 19:

· It encompasses the first numeral (1) and the last numeral (9), as if to proclaim God's attribute in 57:3 as the " Alpha and the Omega," “The Outermost and the Innermost.”

· It looks the same in all languages of the world. Both components, 1 and 9, are the only numerals that look the same in all languages.

Gematria And Quran: The Facts

Although the Quranic miracle preserves the Quranic structure and Arabic text perfectly, the miracle is designed in a way that you do not need to understand Arabic to verify it. Here is a list of some of the facts of this miracle.

· The Qur'an consists of 114 chapters (or suras in Arabic), which is 19 x 6.

· The total number of verses in the Qur'an is 6346, or 19 x 334.

· The word "GOD" is mentioned 2698 times in the Qur'an, or 19x142. The numbers of the verses in which these occurrences are mentioned adds up to 118123, which is 19x6217.

· The Qur'an mentions 30 different numbers. The sum of these numbers is 162146, which equals 19x8534.

· In all suras with Quranic Initials*, the initials occur in their respective sura in exact multiples of 19. Sura 2 for example has the initials A.L.M.

· These initials occur 4502, 3202, and 2195 times respectively in Sura 2. The sum of these numbers are 9899, or 19x521. This system producing multiples of 19 is consistent with all the suras containing Quranic initials. To verify, visit http://www.submission.org/miracle/visual.html

*29 of the Quranic chapters are prefixed with 14 different sets of "Quranic Initials," consisting of 1-5 letters per set. Fourteen letters, half the Arabic alphabet, participate in these initials. These 29 chapters constitute half of the Quranic text. The significance of the Quranic Initials remained a divinely guarded secret for 14 centuries.

· Write down the number of verses in a sura, followed by the number of each verse in that sura. Continue this process until every verse in the Qur'an is written down, thus forming one very long number encompassing the number in every verse in the Qur'an. The number representing the whole Qur'an is a multiple of 19 & consists of 12692 digits, which is also a multiple of 19. Visit the following website to verify http://www.submission.org/math-ap1.html

· Write down the number of each verse, followed by the total number of verses in each sura, at the end of every sura. The total number of numbered verses (6234) in the Qur'an is put at the very end. Visit the following website to verify: http://user.tninet.se/~agx775x/

· The number of every verse in a sura, followed by the number of the sura, followed by the number of verses in the sura. The number representing the whole Qur'an, is a multiple of 19. To verify, visit http://user.tninet.se/~agx775x/

There are hundreds of other similar facts from the Qur'an producing the same results, over and over – exact multiples of 19. To read more, please visit http://www.submission.org/miracle/

Here are some examples showing us the same pattern in our creation and in the universe:

- It takes 266 days or 38 weeks for a baby to fully develop. 266 is 9x14, 38 is 19x2.
- The waves in the ocean break at 19 degrees.
- The maximum number of electrons in an atom is 114, 19x6.

· Haley's comet revisits our solar system once ever 76 years, 19x4.

· All forms of life are made of 19 L-Amino acids.

Does this help us determine whether the Bible is the unaltered word of God or not?

Absolutely! Having a scripture in which every letter is authenticated as the perfectly preserved word of God, everything else must be measured against those words. It serves as a litmus test for the truth if you will. This immediately points us to areas of strong suspicion in the Bible, and helps us identify the true identity of Jesus and his mission.

The conclusion this message and miracle gives us is the same as all the previous messages and miracles: There is no god except the one God – the Creator and Sustainer of all things. He alone is worthy of worship. We shall worship Him alone.

4-2-5 Jesus And The Quran

True Story of Jesus

[Qur'an, Chapter 19 (Mary):16-37]

Mention in the scripture Mary. She isolated herself from her family, into an eastern location. While a barrier separated her from them, we sent to her our Spirit. He went to her in the form of a human being. She said, " I seek refuge in the Most Gracious, that you may be righteous." He said, " I am the messenger of your Lord, to grant you a pure son." She said, " How can I have a son, when no man has touched me; I have never been unchaste." He said, " Thus said your Lord, `It is easy for Me. We will render him a sign for the people, and mercy from us. This is a predestined matter.' " When she bore him, she isolated herself to a faraway place. The birth process came to her by the trunk of a palm tree. She said, " (I am so ashamed;) I wish I were dead before this happened, and completely forgotten." (The infant) called her from beneath her, saying, " Do not grieve. Your Lord has provided you with a stream. " If you shake the trunk of this palm tree, it will drop ripe dates for you. " Eat and drink, and be happy. When you see anyone, say, `I have made a vow of silence; I am not talking today to anyone.' " She came to her family, carrying him. They said, " O Mary, you have committed something that is totally unexpected. " O descendant of Aaron, your father was not a bad man, nor was your mother unchaste." She pointed to him. They said, " How can we talk with an infant in the crib?" (The infant spoke and) said, " I am a servant of GOD. He has given me the scripture, and has appointed me a prophet. " He made me blessed wherever I go, and enjoined me to observe the Contact Prayers (Salat) and the obligatory charity (Zakat) for as long as I live. " I am to honor my mother; He did not make me a disobedient rebel. And peace be upon me the day I was born, the day I die, and the day I get resurrected." That was Jesus, the son of Mary, and this is the truth of this matter, about which they continue to doubt. It does not befit GOD that He begets a son, be He glorified. To have anything done, He simply

says to it, " Be," and it is. He also proclaimed, " GOD is my Lord and your Lord; you shall worship Him alone. This is the right path." The various parties disputed among themselves (regarding the identity of Jesus). Therefore, woe to those who disbelieve from the sight of a terrible day.

[3:45-60] The angels said, " O Mary, GOD gives you good news: a Word from Him whose name is `The Messiah, Jesus the son of Mary. He will be prominent in this life and in the Hereafter, and one of those closest to Me.' " He will speak to the people from the crib, as well as an adult; he will be one of the righteous." She said, " My Lord, how can I have a son, when no man has touched me?" He said, " GOD thus creates whatever He wills. To have anything done, He simply says to it, `Be,' and it is. " He will teach him the scripture, wisdom, the Torah, and the Gospel." As a messenger to the Children of Israel: " I come to you with a sign from your Lord - I create for you from clay the shape of a bird, then I blow into it, and it becomes a live bird by GOD's leave. I restore vision to the blind, heal the leprous, and I revive the dead by GOD's leave. I can tell you what you eat, and what you store in your homes. This should be a proof for you, if you are believers. " I confirm previous scripture - the Torah - and I revoke certain prohibitions imposed upon you. I come to you with sufficient proof from your Lord. Therefore, you shall observe GOD, and obey me. " GOD is my Lord and your Lord; you shall worship Him alone. This is the right path." When Jesus sensed their disbelief, he said, " Who are my supporters towards GOD?" The disciples said, " We are GOD's supporters; we believe in GOD, and bear witness that we are submitters." " Our Lord, we have believed in what You have sent down, and we have followed the messenger; count us among the witnesses." They plotted and schemed, but so did GOD, and GOD is the best schemer. Thus, GOD said, " O Jesus, I am terminating your life, raising you to Me, and ridding you of the disbelievers. I will exalt those who follow you above those who disbelieve, till the Day of Resurrection. Then to Me is the ultimate destiny of all of you, then I will judge among you regarding your disputes. " As for those who disbelieve, I will commit them to painful retribution in this world, and in the Hereafter. They will have no helpers." As for those who believe and lead a righteous life, He will fully recompense them. GOD does not love the unjust. These are the revelations that we recite to you, providing a message full of wisdom. The example of Jesus, as far as GOD is concerned, is the same as that of Adam; He created him from dust, then said to him, " Be," and he was. This is the truth from your Lord; do not harbour any doubts.

Recommended Links

Original Language of the Scriptures

http://www.qtm.net/~trowbridge/NT_Hist.htm
http://religion.rutgers.edu/jseminar/jsem_b.html
http://westarinstitute.org/Polebridge/GosJesus/gosjesus.html

Contradictions

http://www.infidels.org/library/modern/jim_meritt/bible-contradictions.html

http://www.submission.ca/christians/bible-contradictions.html

http://members.aol.com/JAlw/joseph_alward.html

http://www.infidels.org/library/modern/donald_morgan/atrocity.html
http://www.nobeliefs.com/DarkBible/darkbible3.htm
http://www.near-death.com/experiences/bible_analysis5.html

http://www.infidels.org/library/modern/donald_morgan/atrocity.html

http://religion.rutgers.edu/jseminar/jsem_b.html

Violence/Cruelty

http://bible.gospelcom.net/bible?

Leviticus 26:22

Numbers 31:17-18

Ezekiel 9:4-6

Deuteronomy 20:13-14

Deuteronomy 28:53

Judges 21:10-12

Hosea 13:16

Jeremiah 48:10

Leviticus 20:9-11

Numbers 14:17-19

Exodus 20:4-6

Genesis 34

4-2-6 Gematria And Numerology

Mr. Heaster's Response Speech

Introduction

I must admit when I read my colleague's opening statement, I was somewhat taken by surprise. The statement promised at the outset to show "proof that the majority of the Bible is indeed the word of God" and "proof that will clear up issues that for so long have been debated and disputed among Christians and non-Christians alike". I was disappointed to then go on to read a treatise on the number 19 and how significant it appears to be for the Qur'an. NO passages were quoted from the manuscripts of the Bible to try and show the Bible has been altered. Instead, a numerology study on number 19 in the Qur'an! So I ask: where is the

concrete evidence that the text of the Bible has been altered? For this debate requires such concrete evidence.

As mentioned in my opening statement, there were many many variant readings in the Qur'an text - Muhammad was illiterate and what he said was written down by various people until Caliph Uthman ordered all the variant copies of the Qur'an to be destroyed, apart from that compiled by Zaid-ibn-Thabit. If by mentioning all the strings of words/letters/phrases that add to the number 19 in the Qur'an it was to convince readers that this is the only piece of literature that displays such patterns, then the writer is mistaken. Other writings have similar features; the Bible has patterns associated with the number 7, for example, and there are a lot of features of nature that have the number 7 as their pattern. The main question I would ask my colleague is, how does a pattern of the number 19 (or any number in fact!) really transform lives, today, in practice?

Gematria Doesn't Prove Inspiration

The argument that gematria 'proves' the Qur'an to be God's word runs into major problems in that amazing patterns of gematria can be discerned in much other literature which flatly contradicts the Qur'an. This was a common literary device used by many writers and scribes in Babylon and Egypt, but especially was it widespread amongst the Jewish rabbinical writings. In the Qumran literature, as well as many of the Jewish Apocryphal writings, the Talmud and the Mishnah, there are similar features of gematria to those claimed for the Qur'an. See D.S.Russel, *The Method And Message Of Jewish Apocalyptic* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1964) p. 127. Seeing Mohamad was illiterate and lived amongst Jews, it is highly likely that his early scribes were Jews, and it is not surprising that they built in such patterns. The Babylonian version of the Epic of Gilgamesh regularly employs features based around the number 7 [see John J. Davis, *Biblical Numerology* , Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1968 p. 107). Ugaritic literature is replete with these phenomena. See Cyrus Gordon, *Ugaritic Literature* (Rome: P.B.I., 1949) p. 27. It has been shown that Sargon II built the wall at Khorsabad according to the numerical value and implications of his name (Vincent Hopper, *NumberSymbolism*, New York: Columbia, 1938 p. 62).

4-2-7 Gematria And Hebrew Words

Many such claims have been for the Bible text too. " Below are the Hebrew words of the very first verse in the Bible.

In the beginning

Created

God

(An indefinite article which is not translatable)

The heavens

And (with indefinite article)

The earth

There are three important nouns in this first verse God. heaven, and earth. The numeric values of these three nouns are 86, 395, 296, respectively. When these three numeric values are added, the total value [777] is found to be a number which divides perfectly by 7 a number which is a multiple of 7, which is 111 7 s. Is it not strange that the numeric value of these words is a value which divides perfectly by seven a value which is an exact multiple of seven? Notice that the numeric value of the words is not 776 or 778, but exactly 777. If the numeric value / gematria were 776 or 778 it would not divide evenly by 7.

Feature One

The numeric value of the three important Hebrew nouns, God, heaven, earth, is exactly 777 or 111 7 s

Feature Two

It is strange to note that the numeric value / gematria of the verb in the first Bible verse of Genesis is also a number which divides perfectly by 7 a number which is an exact multiple of 7. The numeric value of the Hebrew verb created is exactly 203 or 29 7 s

Feature Three

Strange to say, the numeric value of the first, middle, and last Hebrew letters in this first verse is also a number which divides evenly by 7. The numeric value of these three letters is exactly 133 or 19 7 s

Feature Four

The numeric value of the first and last letters of all of the seven Hebrew words in this verse is also a number which divides perfectly by 7. Their numeric value is exactly 1393 or 199 7 s (Notice the numeric value is not 1392 or 1394 but 1393, always a number which is an exact multiple of 7)

Feature Five

The number 1393, which is the numeric value of the first and last Hebrew letters of all the seven words, divides in the following manner. The numeric value of the first and last letters of the first word and the last word is a number which divides evenly by 7. Their numeric value is exactly 497 or 71 7 s

The numeric value of the first and last letters of the words remaining between the first and last words also divides perfectly by 7. Their numeric value is 896 or 128 7 s

(497 plus 896 equals 1393)

Feature Six

The Hebrew participle ETH which is not translatable into English in the Bible, occurs twice in the sentence of seven words. The article the also occurs twice. The numeric value of these two words which occur twice also divides by 7. Their numeric value is exactly 406 or 58 7 s.

Feature Seven

The last letters of the first and last words have a numeric value of exactly 490 or 70 7 s

Feature Eight

the number of Hebrew words in this verse is exactly 7.

Feature Nine

The total number of Hebrew letters in these seven words also divides perfectly by seven is an exact multiple of 7. The number of letters is exactly 28 or 4 7 s

Feature Ten

The first three of these seven Hebrew words contain the subject and predicate of the sentence. These three words are translated “In the beginning God created”. The number of actual letters in these first three Hebrew words is exactly 14 or 2 7 s. The last four of these seven words contain the object of the sentence. These fours words are translated the heavens and the earth. The number of letters in these last four Hebrew words is 14 or 2 7 s

Feature Eleven

These last four Hebrew words consist of two objects. The first is the heavens, and the second is and the earth. The number of letters in the first object is exactly 7.

The number of letters in the second object in the Hebrew is 7

Feature Twelve

The three leading words in this verse of seven words are God the subject and heavens and earth the objects. The number of letters in these three Hebrew words is exactly 14 or 2 7 s

The number of letters in the other four words of the verse is 14 or 2 7 s

Feature Thirteen

The shortest word is in the middle. The number of letters in this word and the word to its left is exactly 7

Feature Fourteen

The number of letters in the middle word and the word to its right is exactly 7.

These sevens these numeric features or facts are strangely hidden beneath the surface. They are truly beyond the view of ordinary readers of the Hebrew words and are discovered only by special investigation and counting.

The above are only a few examples of the many amazing numeric facts which have been discovered in the structure of this first verse of only seven Hebrew words. Literally dozens of

other phenomenal numeric features strangely underlie the structure of this verse& .." (" Mathematics Prove Holy Scriptures" , Karl Sabiers, reprinted 1969, pp.21-27).

From earliest times, many Christians, myself included, have been cynical of these claims. It doesn't need computer techniques and clever counting to prove whether or not a document is from God. In the 1st and 2nd centuries after Christ, there arose many Gnostic writings. They claimed that their writings were from God because of the amazing patterns of gematria in them. Irenaeus responded, and on this occasion I would agree with him totally:

"No one should seek to prosecute inquiries respecting God by means of numbers, syllables and letters. For this is an uncertain mode of proceeding, on account of their varied and diverse systems, and because every sort of hypothesis may at the present day be, in like manner, devised by any one; so that they can derive arguments against the truth from these very theories, insomuch as they may be turned in many different directions" (*Against Heresies*, Book 2:25:1, published in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* , Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds., Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1951, Vol. 1 p. 396).

The fact that the Jewish writings, the Bible, Babylonian epics, the Gnostic writings, the Qur'an etc. all display features of gematria means that it is a non-argument to say that gematria proves any one of those writings to be the only unaltered word of God. This is the logical fallacy which the Moslem argument seems to have fallen into. Gematria is largely psuedo-science- and the way that appeals have to be made to the supposed fact that all waves break at an angle of 19 degrees is a reflection of this. Islam must be intellectually desperate if it has to recourse to this kind of argument. Even if some amazing co-incidences can be discerned, this does not prove in any sense the claim that therefore the literature which exhibits such co-incidences must therefore be inspired. Many Moslems are in fact embarrassed by the claims made about the Qur'an from gematria. The fact literature can be produced which has such 'amazing' features shows clear enough that there is no reason to think that it must be inspired. If it all is, then God has inspired totally contradictory material.

4-2-8 Problems With Gematria

Summing up, gematria can't prove inspiration. So my explanation of the claims of gematria would be:

- pseudo-scientific methodology

- biased sampling of the literature

- co-incidence. Anyone with a background in statistics can tell you that there is such a thing as pure co-incidence. A photograph was once published in a British newspaper of three cars whose registration plates varied only by one letter each, were parked in the same direction, on the same street, of the same colour and year. And yet they were owned by people in totally different parts of the country.

Although some claim to 'prove' the Bible through its features relating to the number 7, I don't think the Bible needs this crutch to support it. God's word doesn't need such appeals to validate it. Many documents have features of 7 if one looks close enough. John J. Davis gives an example of a 5th century BC Aramaic document which has an opening sentence which contains 49 letters and signs; the first numerical sign in the verse was 21. When all the

numerals of the sentence are added together the total is 28. The sentence contains only 7 sibilants. The date of the letter when written in numerals and each letter is added up, comes to 7. If gematria proves inspiration, then this document is inspired. Quite simply, patterns of gematria don't prove a document is inspired.

It just isn't so that "It [gematria] serves as a litmus test for the truth if you will". By saying this, my friend is raising the stakes. If other books can be shown to have the same features, then they too are truth. Yet many of those books contradict both the Bible and the Qur'an.

A message claiming to be divine and apparently proved to be so because it contains a startling combination of numbers should still not be accepted if the historical and moral content of such a message or book fails to confirm its divine origin. Christians have rightly perceived that if the sources of the information in the Qur'an are found to have been in existence before the time of Mohammed, as indeed they were; and if its historical information is faulty; then the Qur'an cannot be accepted as divine. We thus find the " proof" offered by this type of numeric to be simply irrelevant.

Gematria: Problems In Methodology And Facts

The idea that the Qur'an has many number patterns in it divisible by 19 was promoted chiefly by Ahmed Deedat and a Dr. Khalifa. However their analysis has many problems. The opening blessing (the *Bismallah*) at the beginning of most of the chapters of the Qur'an is usually (but not always) ignored and some of the occurrences of words are not what Dr. Khalifa claims. This is enough to change the numbers and invalidate the theory.

The numerology system used by Khalifa and Deedat has a further problem for Moslems in that it doesn't fit the entire Qur'an. In particular Q 9:128,129 is out of step with the numeric pattern and Khalifa and Deedat argue that these two verses should be removed from the text of the Qur'an. This is a severe problem for Moslems. To use the numerological theory to support the Qur'an's veracity they have to reject part of the text of the Qur'an. Earlier Moslems believed that these two verses were part of God's revelation. How can a Moslem be certain that there are not more surprises of this kind? As a result of this reasoning, Moslem authorities have rejected the numerology methods outlined and have threatened Deedat and Khalifa with branding as *Murtad* or as *Kafir* (either of which could be life threatening).

There are many conflicting texts of the Qur'an. There is the well known dispute between Shiite and Sunni Muslims over the composition of the text. Arthur Jeffery " Material for the History of the Text of the Qur'an" (New York, Russell F. Moore, 1952) has something like 90 pages just on variant readings of the text which are documented. So any claim to prove the Qur'an by gematria falls down because the exact original text is such a question of debate- and, it is a debate which cannot be resolved, seeing that Mohammad was illiterate and the book existed only in an oral form for some time.
Moslems themselves accept the problem which there is with the texts. Consider Saleh al-Wahaihu, " A Study of Seven Quranic Variants," International Journal of Islamic and Arabic Studies, Vol. V (1989), #2, pp. 1-57: " It is interesting to note that in scholarly Muslim journals, there is beginning to be a grudging acknowledgement of the fact that there are variant and conflicting readings on the text of the Qur'an".
My friend's argument depends heavily upon the numbers of verses in the Qur'an. But he is implying that the division of the book into verses was directly from God. How, therefore, can

he explain that fact that the division of verses in the Qur'an is based on five different systems:

- the Kufah system, following the tradition of Ali;

- the Basra system, following Mohammed's companion Asim ibn Hajjaj;

- the Shami system of Syria used by Mohammed's companion Abdu'lla-h ibn Umar

- the Makkah system and

- the Madinah system.

This makes it obvious that Mohammed did not undertake the division into verses. As far as the ordering of the Suras is concerned this was done by Khalif Uthman and thus the argument falls flat. For there is no evidence that Uthman was inspired by God in the way he divided up the verses.

The sheer intellectual desperation of my friend's argument is reflected by some real heavy pressurizing of evidence to make it fit in with the '19' pattern. Thus: "It takes 266 days or 38 weeks for a baby to fully develop. 266 is 9x14, 38 is 19x2". Well I could just as well argue that the incubation period of the human embryo is 280 days (7 x 40). Or again: "The waves in the ocean break at 19 degrees". Really? Every wave…every place…in the Arctic ocean too? How can this debatable suggestion transform human life in practice? How does it prove anything about the Qur'an?

"The Qur'an mentions 30 different numbers. The sum of these numbers is 162146, which equals 19x8534"

30 different numbers…? But 30 isn't divisible by 19. If there were, say, 19 different numbers, then this would be seized upon as evidence, it seems.

"In all suras with Quranic Initials*, the initials occur in their respective sura in exact multiples of 19. Sura 2 for example has the initials A.L.M.".

These are the initials of the scribes who copied them. A.L.M., for example, stands for Amar Li Muh. I do not believe there was, therefore, any intentional structuring of the initials of the scribes according to the number 19. Closer analysis of my colleague's claims reveals that there are major problems in both methodology and the plain facts of the analysis suggested.

Thus in Sura 36, where the initials are Y and S, there are 48 S and 237 Y. Though neither of these sums can be divided by 19, the combined total is 15 x 19. This is not particularly outside the bounds of probability. The analysis suggested tries improve the results by stating for example that in all Suras with the initials ALM at the top, the respective letters in the three Suras combined add up to a figure that is divisible by 19. In this case the sum of all A's and L's and M's in Suras 2,3,7,13,29-32 add up to 26676, which is equal to 19 x 1404. In order to make this total divisible by 19, he had to leave the initials out in the case of Sura 7. The reason is that this Sura has the initials ALMS, which disqualifies it from being included, because it is not a Sura with the initials ALM. So in order to produce a number divisible by 19, he included Sura 7 but excluded the 98 S's. The same applies to the use of Sura 13

(ALMR) in this context. The same type of manipulation was used in the set of Suras 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15 which begin with the initials ALR (except 13 which has the initials ALMR). Adding up all the ALR's of these six Suras, some Moslems have arrived at the sum of 9709 (= 19 x 511) but the sum is actually 10813 which is not divisible by 19. They arrive at this figure by adding all the letters indicated by the initials ALR of these Suras excepting Sura 13 (which begins with ALMR) and adds from this Sura only the figure 137, i.e. the number of times the initial R occurs, conveniently leaving out the A's and L's for otherwise the sum (10813) would not be divisible by 19, as we have shown. Other manipulations can be seen in Sura 42. Here the sum of all the letters as represented in the initials HMASQ is 570 or 19 x 30, but it is divided into 361 + 209 to fit the first sum into the total of all HM's. In order to increase the successes, Dr Khalifa [the Moslem who first popularised the idea of gematria 'proving' the Qur'an] gives the final figure for Sura 68 as 152, which is already reflected in the vertical column of the letter N and is therefore a duplication.

The various initials used at the heading of the suras are analysed below. Only the numbers italicised and highlighted in red on the internet edition are divisible by 19.

Sura #	Initials	Alif	Lam	Mim	Ra	Sou	Ha	Ta	Sin	Ha	Ya	Ain	Qaf	Nun	Kaf	*TOT AL*
2	ALM	4592	3204	2195	9991											
3	ALM	2578	1885	1251	5714											
7	ALMS	2572	1523	1165	98	5260+98=*5358*										
10	ALR	1353	912	257	2522											
11	ALR	1402	788	324	2514											
12	ALR	1335	812	258	2405											
13	ALMR	625	479	260	137	1364+137=*1501*										
14	ALR	594	452	160	1206											
15	ALR	503	*323*	99	925											
19	KHYAS	26	168	345	122	137	*798*									
20	TH	28	314	*342*												
26	TSM	489	33	93	615											
27	TS	27	93	120												

28	TSM	461		*19*	100	580									
29	ALM	784	554	347	1685										
30	ALM	545	396	318	1259										
31	ALM	348	298	177	823										
32	ALM	268	154	158	580										
36	YS	48	237		*285*										
38	28	28													
40	HM	389	64	453											
41	HM	276	58	334											
42	HM-ASQ	308	53	53	99	*57*			*570 (361+209)*						
43	HM	317	45	362											
44	HM	145	16	161											
45	HM	200	31	231											
46	HM	227	37	264											
50	Q		*57*			*57*									
68		133	133												
TOTALS	*17499*	*11780*	*8683*	*1235*	*152*	*304*	*107*	*387*	*482*	*582*	*221*	*114*	*133*	*137*	41816

Frankly, if divisibility of all these figures by 19 is proof that the Qur'an is inspired by God…well, it isn't. There are just too many problems with gematria.

Duncan Heaster

4-2-9 Christian Criticisms Of Islam Answered

The Moslem Response: Second Speech

Is The Bible The Unaltered Word Of God? II

One advantage of discussions like this, is the opportunity to identify and hopefully free ourselves of misconceptions we may have about the faith of others. Therefore I would like to start by clearing up a some misconceptions about Islam that my debate companion shares.

1: “There are flat contradictions between the Bible and the Qur'an, especially relating to the records of the crucifixion of Jesus.”

The Qur’an agrees with and proves most events surrounding Jesus, including the virgin birth, the miracles, and the fact that his body was crucified. It does not agree however with the interpretation of those events, in raising Jesus to the same level as God, or even suggesting he is God.

2: “Muhammad was illiterate.”

While many Muslims believe that he was illiterate, Muhammad was a merchant, and as such he had to master the alphabet. The suggestion that Muhammad was illiterate opposes all the Quranic accounts of Muhammad. This misconception is based on an attempt to attribute a ‘miraculous aspect’ of the revelation of the Qur’an, by those who failed to understand that the revelation of Qur’an was a miracle in its own right.

3: “There were many many variant readings in the Qur'an text….and what he said was written down by various people .. If this had been done to the Bible, one would be left wondering whether we have the original text, and whether it hadn't been tampered with. “

It is very interesting that you choose to phrase yourself exactly this way, as what you are describing is actually exactly what happened to the New Testament. There were so many variant readings of the Gospel of Jesus by the 3rd century, that Constantine arranged the first ecumenical council in 325 A.D, during which 318 of the 1800 Bishops met to settle the Arian dispute regarding the identity of Christ. The trinity was accepted as the official stand, and all other beliefs and versions of the Gospels were banned.

The New Testament was definitely written down by various people. It certainly wasn’t written down by Jesus, or his disciples, unlike the original Qur’an, which was written by Muhammad. From the Qur’an we learn that people said about the revelations that Muhammad preached, “Tales from the past that he wrote down; they were dictated to him day and night." (25:5)

The deviation between the original Qur’an and the one put together by the committee of scribes appointed to make copies of the Qur’an, was the adding of two verses at the end of Sura 9 to honor the prophet. The adding of these two verses caused a division among the early Muslims, which resulted in a war. Even though the version with these two verses included were conveyed to the generations that followed, they have always been regarded as very suspect. One reason for this suspicion is the fact that they are reported to be Mekkan verses (i.e. revealed in Mekka), although the chapter (Sura) is a Medinan Sura (i.e. revealed after the prophet migrated to Medina). Another reason is the fact that every single verse in the Qur’an was verified by a multiplicity of witnesses except the last two verses of Sura 9; they were found only with Khuzeimah Ibn Thaabet Al-Ansaary. This exception was justified with

inventing a Hadith (story attributed to the prophet) stating that Khuzeimah's testimony equals that of two men! The miracle of the Qur'an clearly exposes these two verses as false.

4: "Muslim claims about the Bible's errancy are so wildly exaggerated. Ahmed Deedat in *Is The Bible God's Word?* claims there are 50,000 errors in it- 40 / page! No published book would have 40 errors / page. Why such gross exaggeration? Has he ever actually listed them all…? "

I share you belief that the claim of 50.000 errors is wildly exaggerated. I find your reaction to this claim very interesting however. If the Bible is indeed the absolute unaltered word of God in your mind, then the words you want to use here is not "wildly exaggerated" and "a gross exaggeration" but rather "completely false." You also wrote that " The Dead Sea Scrolls…reveal how the texts have lost virtually nothing" Virtually nothing is one thing. Absolutely nothing is another.

5: "Islam claims the original Old and New Testament Scriptures were lost long ago. And yet the Qur'an says that they were in existence in the first century and at the time of Muhammad."

The Old Testament and the New Testament have been in existence ever since they were revealed. The truth can be found in the representations of them today, as can the blatant attempts to inject in them words to promote the worship of other than God.

6: If the New Testament is so hopelessly corrupt, as Islam claims, then where is the true record of His words? " "Why does the Qur'an tell Jews and Christians to follow the precepts of their respective Scriptures, speaking of them with great reverence - if they are so utterly corrupted? "

There is a big difference between something being "utterly or hopelessly corrupted" and "containing some discrepancies." The absolute majority of the Biblical message is intact.

The true record of Jesus words are imbedded in the Bible, and completely unaltered in the Qur'an. The hearts of those guided by God will recognize those words, as well as recognize the words never spoken by Jesus, as they are not said in the true 'spirit', as you put it.

The few manipulations are easily detectable once we realize their root cause, i.e. promotion of idol worship. For the Christians that have sensed these things relief has arrived. Through the miracle (http://www.submission.org/miracle/) of the Qur'an they will find solid confirmation of their justified suspicions, and experience a renewed sense of discovering the actual words spoken by Jesus.

7: "Their presupposition that the Bible *must* be wrong because it disproves the Qur'an drives them to make assumptions and claims without evidence. "

As I've clearly demonstrated in my opening statement, this is as far from the truth as it can be. God has given ALL of us a proof, not only of the Qur'an, but also of the authenticity of the original Old and New Testament. And as I have already stated, most of the Bible is not wrong. Again, the incorrect areas are easily detected once we understand their root cause.

“If the true, inspired Old and New Testaments existed at the time of Muhammad and were read by " the people of the book" [i.e. Jews and Christians]…then this would mean that from the first up to at least the seventh centuries there were both false and true Old and New Testaments circulating.”

The first writings to circulate among early Christians were Paul’s letters. In fact, much of what we recognize today as the basic teachings of Christianity came to us through Paul, although he never met Jesus. He was the major missionary to the gentiles in the years immediately following the crucifixion.

He spread his version of the message by writing letters to different congregations, often trying to solve localized problems, or to consolidate the faithful into one cohesive congregation, rather than to document and spread the teachings of Jesus. There are many indications in Paul's letters that there were powerful and authoritative opponents to his teachings. Paul wrote that these opponents were teaching a " gospel other than the gospel you accepted" and preaching about " another Jesus:

“…when someone comes preaching another Jesus than the one we preached, or when you receive a different spirit than the one you have received, or a gospel other than the gospel you accepted, you seem to endure it quite well. I consider myself inferior to the " super-apostles" in nothing. [2 Corinthians 11:3-5]

Although he does not question the authority of those he refers to as the `super-apostles', he does try to match their qualifications with his own: " Since many are bragging about their human distinctions, I too will boast" (2 Cor. 11:18).

One thing we do know is that the differences among the early members of the church were deep and divisive. Paul's letter to the Galatians makes that clear. Scathingly, Paul exhorts his readers to stick to the gospel he had delivered to them: ”I directly withstood him, because he was clearly in the wrong. He had been taking his meals with the Gentiles before others came who were from James. But when they arrived he drew back to avoid trouble with those who were circumcised. The rest of the Jews joined in his dissembling, till even Barnabas was swept away by their pretense. As soon as I observed that they were not being straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I had this to say to Cephas in the presence of all: " If you who are a Jew are living according to Gentile ways rather than Jewish, by what logic do you force the Gentiles to adopt Jewish ways?" [Galatians 2:6-14]

We see here that initially it was James, Cephas and John who recognized Paul's authority. What about the other Jerusalem apostles? Were they the important and prominent ones who wanted Paul to add to his teachings? If not, why were they not mentioned? And what was he supposed to add? It is logical that these opponents were original apostles, and that they wanted him to preach the following of Mosaic law.

Later, in Antioch, even Cephas had a run-in with Paul over the practice of Mosaic law. Paul accuses him and the other Jews of dissembling, and not being straightforward about the truth of the gospel and of wanting to force the Gentiles to accept Mosaic law. If Paul attacked even his supporters among the Jerusalem apostles, it is inevitable that he was at odds with them as a group.

Given the extremely strong prohibition of idol worship in any form, which is at the base of Mosaic law, it is almost certain that any tendency to deify Jesus would have been strongly resisted by the Jerusalem apostles. This could well have been the basic cause of the rift between Paul and the original apostles.

“Extra-Biblical history confirms that the Roman world was indeed overrun by the Christian preaching of the resurrected Jesus. Why did they do this?…. The Bible must be the unaltered word of God for these things to all be true.”

The Roman world, that accepted the concept of Trinity during the Nicaea conference in 325, had gone through several rulers in a period of 3 years. Constantine was looking for something to unite his kingdom. Accepting the concept of a Christian God that had a son did not differ too much from the way the Romans already perceived god-hood, already worshipping several gods with sons and daughters. Those that opposed the deification of Jesus this way at that time were banished or killed.

History has shown us that people can move in amazing unison, guided by mad leaders. If we consider this a proof for truth, then how are we to consider Hitler? Regardless of how forceful a majority is, or how persuasive and charismatic their leader is, they can never be considered righteous as long as their message is not rooted in the very first commandment in all scriptures: “There is no god except the One God”.

It is interesting to note that almost all uncommon men at the time Jesus were considered to be celestially begotten somehow. We can see direct connections between heathen mythology and the beliefs adopted by the Christian Church. The mythologists had gods for everything. In Christianity today there are saints for everything. The pantheon had been filled with the statues of god, and the Church became filled with statues of saints.

“If the inspired Scriptures can provide such totality of knowledge, then there is no need for another book to show us the truth about God. “

What we need is guidance to achieve salvation. That guidance and that salvation has been available ever since the first human being walked the earth, long before the Old, the New and the Final Testament. Totality of knowledge will never be given to or achieved by anyone except God.

God has promised us that He will increase our knowledge and that He will continue to show us His signs in the horizon and within ourselves until we realize that God is speaking to us, yet He tells us that “the knowledge given to you is minute.”

“Muslims can give no dates, no places, no names, responsible for the changing of the Bible texts which they assume happened. “

If providing dates, places, actual names for those responsible for writing the passages is a criteria for accepting something as false, then it should be an equally important criteria for accepting something as true. This however is not the case, since I agree that there are other factors which make us believe in the message, including the ‘spirit of the message’ as you mentioned, and not when and how the ink hit the paper.

Just because something is old doesn't mean that it has to change. Changes happen for a reason. Beyond unintentional and uncontrollable changes, they are meant to fill a purpose, to achieve a certain result. Once this result is achieved, it is in the interest of those protecting that result, to maintain their work. Thus, it is to be expected that there are very old samples of the Bible that agree with the Biblical versions presented today.

A scripture being old is not an absolute argument that it was changed. A scripture no longer represented in its original languages, containing contradictions in its most fundamental message, is however a reasonable reason to suspect manipulation. If raising quantity is an issue of proving authenticity, then where is the trust in the "spirit" of the message, and where is the "quoting the Bible itself as proof of its authority," as you mentioned.

If something being old or available in large numbers, are used in determining the authenticity of a message, then people immediately after the departure of Jesus would have been justified in rejecting his message.

For those that feel that admitting to one single discrepancy in the Bible equals having to throw it all out the window, a serious and open-minded discussion becomes very difficult. Regardless of the discrepancies in the Bible, it is still full of beautiful words of wisdom and guidance from God. Throwing out the entire Bible due to the few discrepancies would be to throw the baby out with the bath water.

Inspiration

There is no doubt that God's revelations are products of His inspiration to those chosen to reveal His words to us. This has nothing to do with the integrity and belief, or lack thereof, of those who took it upon themselves to reproduce and translate God's message after the fact. As you yourself so well express:

"And this question must afflict every intellectually honest Muslim. Where is the evidence that God inspired Caliph Uthman to choose Zaid-ibn-Thabit's version? "

I must conclude that you are willing to apply the same question for all the versions of the Gospels available to us today. Where is the evidence that God inspired Paul? Where is the evidence that God inspired the writers of the different versions of the Gospel? Where is the evidence that Constantine choose the correct versions to support?

There is a group of Christian scholars called the "Jesus Seminar" which have embarked on the bold journey of seriously investigating these issues. From their site I quote:

"We are about to embark on a momentous enterprise. We are going to inquire simply, rigorously after the voice of Jesus, after what he really said. In this process, we will be asking a question that borders the sacred, that even abuts blasphemy, for many in our society…..Our basic plan is simple. We intend to examine every fragment of the traditions attached to the name of Jesus …"

4-2-10 The Quran As A Miracle

Final Statement From Duncan Heaster

My friend has drawn a parallel between the miracles of Jesus and what he considers to be the 'miracle' of the mathematical code that supposedly underlies the Qur'an. But I submit that this parallel is invalid for the following reasons:

- The miracles of Jesus and His apostles were for all to see. Nobody could doubt that a great prophet had arisen (Lk. 7:16; Acts 4:16). Even His enemies had to admit that He "did many miracles" (Jn. 11:47). The worst they could do was to criticize Him for healing a lame man on the sabbath, arguing that the 'work' of doing such a miracle should have been performed on another day (Lk. 13:14). He gave His disciples power to perform the same kind of miracles as He did (Jn. 14:12). Their miracles likewise were accepted as such even by their opponents (Acts 4:16).

- The 'miracle' of Qur'an numerology is hotly denied by many who have studied it, and even many Moslems deny it, as I evidenced in my previous statement. So it is hardly in the same order of 'miracle' as the miracles of Jesus.

- The arguments for numerology 'proving' the Qur'an have only recently appeared. They supposedly depend upon an unspecified computer program to discover. The implication is that there was no 'miracle' to support the Qur'an until recent times. Are we supposed to conclude that for centuries Moslems without access to computers and the numerological arguments 'believed' the Qur'an on the basis of an unreasoned faith, merely due to tradition? And are we to conclude that those many Moslems today without such access, or who simply reject it (as I do) as scientifically invalid, are likewise following a book in which there is no concrete reason to believe ? This may in fact be the case, but I pose this as a rhetorical question.

- For numerology to prove the Qur'an as a miracle would require that the evidence was "easy to understand", to use my friend's words. But it isn't. It requires a computer to discern them, so my friend has claimed. Many intelligent Moslems do not understand it nor agree with it. And I know no case of where someone has converted to Islam because of the numerological arguments presented. Yet if numerology is *the* definitive proof that the Qur'an is miraculous, then I would have expected that many would convert to it because of this.

- From where does my friend know that Jesus did miracles that proved that He spoke the truth? From where does he know that Jesus did actually speak truth? The only source of evidence is the New Testament. And yet he claims this document is hopelessly corrupted. He seems to me to have argued himself into intellectual and logical self-defeat. But it is not my intention to capitalize on this fact. Let the seeker after truth simply reflect upon it.

- A similar tautology is found in the claim that: "It is ignorance of …the miracle of the Qur'an which makes people compare it with other reported similar patterns in the Ancient literature". Isn't this circular reasoning? You don't accept it's a miracle, so, you find fault with the gematria that 'proves' it is a miracle? I am not unwilling to accept a miracle. But I want to see the evidence. It's the same with claims to perform miracles by the power of the Holy Spirit. I am open to persuasion, but I compare them against Bible teaching and also analyze what is claimed to have happened. And I, along with many others, reject those claims. To say 'You don't accept the miracle because you don't accept the evidence' is not really saying anything- indeed, it implies that we are somehow to be bullied into accepting a miracle. Therefore the miracle itself, clearly enough, isn't a miracle. It falls down under investigation.

- Following on from this, I am in agreement with Qur'an 17:36 which says: "You shall not accept any information, unless you verify it for yourself. I have given you the hearing, the eyesight and the brain, and you are responsible for using them". The generations of largely illiterate, computer-less people who have lived since the production of the Qur'an could never have verified the Qur'an using the [pseudo] mathematical techniques my friend has suggested. Therefore, on his logic, are we to conclude that those Moslems never verified their faith in the Qur'an, but merely accepted Islam as the unverified faith of their fathers? According to the presentation made by my friend, this would seem an inescapable conclusion.

To claim that Qur'an 74:31 teaches that the number 19 is "to convince the Christians and Jews [that this is a Divine scripture"] actually falsifies the Qur'an. For the arguments based on gematria are rejected by many Moslems too. Does this mean that Moslems are unconvinced even by their own Qur'an? Therefore their faith in Islam must rest purely on tradition and upbringing. And why were the numerological arguments not used more often down the centuries? And why is it that the argument about the number 19 has *not* convinced hardly any Christians nor Jews…?

You ask: "You must believe that [the numerical patterns in the Bible] have some meaning". I tried to make it clear that I do not believe that those patterns have any real meaning, at least in terms of persuading anyone that the Bible is the word of God. I am then totally confused by the statement that "Gematria is by no means the basis for the miracle of the Qur'an". Well if so, what other evidence is there? And why has this debate focused, from the Moslem side, almost exclusively on explaining and justifying this line of 'evidence'? I find it incredible that in a debate about the Qur'an being the word of God, and whether or not the Bible is the unaltered word of God, the Islamic position has almost solely focused on proving the Qur'an to be Divine by gematria. And then, at the conclusion of the debate [after the arguments have been answered or at least exposed as needing far more proof], we are told that gematria is in fact no basis at all for believing the 'miracle' of the Qur'an. I submit that no real evidence has been placed before you that the Qur'an is the word of God, and the arguments which I have given as to why the Bible is the unaltered word of God have not been answered.

Summary

The proof of the pudding is in the eating. "Taste and see, that the Lord is good" (Ps. 34:8). The ultimate proof that the Bible is God's word comes through reading it. I want to suggest that you read it for yourself. I can recommend a little plan which I have used almost every day of my life since early childhood. It's called *The Bible Companion*. It contains no teaching, no dogma. It's just a list of Bible chapters to be read each day, and in this way you can systematically read the whole Bible through in the course of a year- something very few people on this earth [professing Christians amongst them] have actually achieved. Send me an e-mail and I'll get a free copy sent to you. And it is the Bible's message which is what clinches the argument.

4-2-11 A Brief Summary Of The Bible Message:

1- There is only one God, not a 'trinity'

2- Jesus is the Son of God, not God Himself; He didn't exist before He was born. He had all our temptations and human experiences, but He never sinned. He gave His life for us in a painful death, but then, because He never sinned, God resurrected Him from the dead.

3- Through baptism into Christ by the dipping in water of an adult, we share His death and resurrection

4- so when Jesus Christ returns we will be resurrected, judged and given eternal life in His Kingdom- which will be based here on this earth. This Kingdom will be like the world was in the garden of Eden, when God first created mankind- and even better. All the problems which are now on earth- war, famine, sadness, even death itself, will be finally ended- for ever.

5- After death we are unconscious- 'hell' means just 'the grave'.

6- The soul is not immortal; we are made of dust and return to the dust. The spirit is the power of life within us, which God takes back when we die. We don't go on existing in any conscious form after death.

7- 'Satan' is a symbol for the evil human desires inside us, against which we must struggle; it is not the name of a dragon or monster that exists. God is 100% powerful; He doesn't share His power with 'satan'. All our problems come from God, not satan, and therefore there is a positive spiritual purpose to them.

8- By reading the Bible for ourselves we can find the true way to God.

I do appeal to you, to study these things, and give yourself no rest until you have come to surely know the true Gospel. I do so hope you will study our free Bible study course; and set yourself the aim, to be baptized one day, by dipping in water. Then you will surely have the hope of eternal life. OK we can't imagine eternal life. I can only suggest we imagine a long, long line, with no end, stretching on into the distance; and we in this life are just a few millimetres at the start of it. This really is our hope, if we are baptized into Jesus and live in Him. I plead with you, to take all this seriously, and not treat it as mere religion, as just something ordinary.

The purpose of Jesus Christ and the doctrines about Him which are found in the Bible was to radically transform human life in practice. There is a real basis for authority in Christianity- the Bible. Islam lacks this. All you can do is to read the Bible for yourself. Pray to the one true God for guidance, that He will bring you closer to Himself. Consider the real possibility that you could be baptized into the death and resurrection of the Son of God, Jesus Christ. I urge you to give yourself no rest about these matters. Contact us for free literature and a free Bible study manual, available in over 35 languages, which will enable you to systematically study the Bible in your own home at your own pace. May God bless you.

4-2-12 The Quran Code

Moslem Final statement

Miracles are blessings from God to those who believe and seek the truth, not to arrogant human beings that decided not to accept God’s message to them. Miracles by themselves do not convey a message, but proves the authenticity of the message delivered through God’s

messengers.

When Jesus walked the earth he was supported by powerful miracles from God that the people may know that he spoke the truth. By presenting proof for the Gospel he preached he also confirmed the previous revelations in the Old Testament. The mathematical miracle of the Qur'an fills exactly the same function, and confirms previous revelations.

We humans have been given the gift of free will by God, which allows the doubters to question and reject God's miracles, and the sincere to reap the benefits for accepting them.

Although Jesus showed great miracles, most people did not believe him and even pursued to ridicule, persecute, and eventually crucify him. Similar things happened to Moses and all the other prophets. It should not surprise us to see history repeats itself when it comes to God's miracle in the Qur'an.

Mr. Heaster wrote: "where is the concrete evidence that the text of the Bible has been altered? For this debate requires such concrete evidence."

In my opening statement I provided several links to information about this. In my second article, I provided evidence from the Bible of the fact that there were disputes between the original disciples of Jesus and Paul, whose version is the one most prevalent today.

The Quran Code: The Proof

There is no other scripture or piece of literature displaying the same deliberate and overwhelming structure as the Qur'an, which is far beyond human capability yet easy to understand. The studies based on number 7 and 11 in the Bible are nowhere near the complexity and clarity of the code of the Qur'an.

The Quranic code leaves no stone unturned. It covers every single letter, every single word, every single verse and every single chapter of the whole Qur'an. There is no change of method in how to count or what to include, as is the case with all other attempts to imitate the code of the Qur'an. It is ignorance of the complexity and overwhelming clarity of the miracle of the Qur'an which makes people compare it with other reported simple patterns seen in the Ancient literature or scriptures.

Imitators

Just as in the days of Moses, when the magicians threw their sticks and they appeared as serpents to the people through their magic, there will always be poor imitators of God's awesome signs and structures to us. This fact serves the important function to expose those who seek excuses to disregard God's signs to hold on to their old beliefs and ways. The old beliefs being protected always involves a message suggesting that something or someone else beside God have or should have some power.

Do Numbers Change Lives?

You asked, "How does a pattern of the number 19 (or any number in fact!) really transform lives, today?"

How does anything divine transform our lives? When studying how the previous messengers and prophets were received we see that God's signs have always had various effects on different people. The effect number 19 will have is clearly spelled out in the Qur'an.

[74:30] Over it is nineteen.

[74:31] We appointed angels to be guardians of Hell, and we assigned their number (19) (1) to disturb the disbelievers, (2) to convince the Christians and Jews (that this is a divine scripture), (3) to strengthen the faith of the faithful, (4) to remove all traces of doubt from the hearts of Christians, Jews, as well as the believers, and (5) to expose those who harbour doubt in their hearts, and the disbelievers; they will say, " What did GOD mean by this allegory?" GOD thus sends astray whomever He wills, and guides whomever He wills.

None knows the soldiers of your Lord except He. This is a reminder for the people.

I guess you have to ask what the numerical observations in the Bible are designed to achieve for the people studying them. Certainly, you must believe that their existence have some meaning and deserves attention, since it was designed by God and discovered by His will?

Although you credit some of these observations as being "amazing" and "startling", you do not accept them as being significant since you say, "Although some claim to 'prove' the Bible through its features relating to the number 7, I don't think the Bible needs this crutch to support it. God's word doesn't need such appeals to validate it. Many documents have features of 7 if one looks close enough. " I guess we both agree then that "amazing" and "startling" is one thing, and "miraculous another.

About mathematical coding in general you continue, "It doesn't need computer techniques and clever counting to prove whether or not a document is from God."

What it needs or not, or what we need or not, is not for us to decide. You may not realize it, but what you are in fact saying is that it would be wrong of God to reveal a sign using the computer, based on a deliberate mathematical pattern?

God is in no need, period. We are the ones that need Him. God doesn't need to reveal a scripture or to send messengers and prophets supported by powerful signs and miracles to guide us. But God chose to set up this system for our benefit. He also chose to grant us the freedom to question any aspect of this system until the Day of Judgement.

Looking back at the signs God revealed to our ancestors, we see that He always revealed signs that suited each generation and time. At the time of Moses magic was a big thing. At the time of Jesus healing the sick was considered a big deal. Today we live in the computer era, in which almost everything is controlled or influenced by numbers.

The Quran Code: Gematria

You say, "Gematria Doesn't Prove Inspiration." I completely agree that gematria itself does not prove inspiration or revelation any more than numbers or words in general. It is when those numbers, words and gematrical value of the same are woven into a perfect pattern beyond human knowledge and capacity that it does.

Gematria is by no means the basis for the miracle of the Qur'an. Most aspects of the code have in fact nothing to do with the gematrical values of the letters.

You also say "If other books can be shown to have the same features, then they too are truth. " *If* doesn't quite cut it when making the most important decision of our lives. It is enough of a struggle to deal with what *is*.

"A message claiming to be divine and apparently proved to be so because it contains a startling combination of numbers should still not be accepted if the historical and moral content of such a message or book fails to confirm its divine origin."

Again you use the word "if". We either accept something as being of divine origin or not. When we accept something as divine nothing in this world should abrogate our respect and complete obedience of such a message. There is no such thing as 'I accept this as divine if it coincides with my previous view of the world.'

We came to this world because our opinions are twisted. Our way of looking at things is incorrect. This is why we need guidance from God. What arrogance would make us believe that we are entitled to reject something clearly divine because it does not coincide with our personal sense of moral?

A message that is not divine will never be proven to be divine. No one can fool God or produce a miracle without His authorization. For the record, the moral contents, laws and facts in the Qur'an have testified to its divine origin long before it was confirmed by the revelation of the mathematical miracle.

"if the sources of the information in the Qur'an are found to have been in existence before the time of Mohammed, as indeed they were; and if its historical information is faulty; then the Qur'an cannot be accepted as divine. We thus find the " proof" offered by this type of numeric to be simply irrelevant."

"If" again…. I'm assuming that you are referring to information known to previous generations repeated in the Qur'an. Information being repeated in later scriptures is nothing new, as we clearly see in the New Testament as well. Jesus clearly said "I have not come to destroy the law, but to fulfil it." The Qur'an confirms many of the previous events and miracles, and provides more details about them.

History is often the version of powerful persuading the world of their view.

God, the Most Merciful, does not however leave our destiny to depend on accounts of strangers that lived thousands of years before us. When such accounts are of any value to our salvation, God reproduces whatever is relevant of them in His revelations to us. Thus historical information can be a useful and valid source, but must be measured against God's scripture, not the other way around.

It would be interesting to know if you can think of even one independent historical piece of information which goes against the Quranic accounts, that is found in the Bible, which has any relevance at all to the way you practice your religion?

The Quran Code: Coincidences

You say, “Anyone with a background in statistics can tell you that there is such a thing as pure co-incidence. “

Anyone who is either ignorant of who God is, or too arrogant to accept who God is, would agree with you. To explain any invent by co-incidence does not exist in the heart of a person who believes in the attributes with which God presents Himself to us: Almighty, Omniscient, Omnipresent, Alpha and Omega, Innermost and Outermost.

In fact, the major difference between a person who believes in God with all His attributes compared to one that do not, is the quality of understanding that God is running absolutely everything. Thus, there is no such thing as a co-incidence.

[10:61] …Not even an atom's weight is out of your Lord's control, be it in the heavens or the earth. Nor is there anything smaller than an atom, or larger, that is not recorded in a profound record.

[6:59] ….Not a leaf falls without His knowledge. Nor is there a grain in the depths of the soil. Nor is there anything wet or dry, that is not recorded in a profound record.

God’s laws are absolute. There are no single exceptions to His laws. This can only be achieved by absolute control of all things. Thus, there are no coincidences. The concept of “coincidences” is invented by those who seek

to put limits on God to allow the introduction of the need of other elements.

“A photograph was once published in a British newspaper of three cars whose registration plates varied only by one letter each, were parked in the same direction, on the same street, of the same colour and year. And yet they were owned by people in totally different parts of the country.”

This is a perfect example of how something out of the ordinary caught your attention, and enough attention of others to make it into the papers. Yet, the pattern in this event is very insignificant compared to the overwhelming, powerful and completely solid and consistent pattern of divisibility of 19 in the Qur’an.

This event proves that God placed in us the instinct to react to patterns beyond the norm. This also proves that even for those that do believe that there is such a thing as a co-incidence, at some point they will be convinced that there is something extraordinary about a situation. Thus, events can only be explained away to a certain point. The point God takes us to when He reveals His miracles, is the point where there are no excuses to be made. Believe that.

What is perceived as divine or not differs from person to person. We are all responsible as individual to investigate what comes our way and make our choice. Whether we verified or researched enough before making that most crucial decision, we are still responsible for it.

Alleged Problems with the Quranic Miracle / The Quran Code

· The opening statement of most of the Quranic chapters (In the name of God, Most Gracious,

Most Merciful) has never ever been numbered. Thus, it would have been more logical to complain if they were counted, and if the miracle depended on numbering what was not numbered before the revelation of the miracle.

· Raising the issue of the different presentations of the Quranic verses as an argument against the Quranic code is kind of strange, as the existence of these different presentations actually confirm that there is one original text from which the others are derived. Would it be logical to consider the existence of all the different and adjusted presentations of the Biblical text as an argument against the Bible as most of the world knows it?

The oldest known copies of the Qur'an clearly shows the division of the verses as the majority of Muslims and the world knows them, and as proven by the Quranic code.

· Variant readings of the Qur'an? The only "variant" reading ever related to the Qur'an, is the one with two extra verses at the end of Sura 9, added to honor the prophet. As it turns out, these verses served a very important function in proving how well the Quranic pattern protects it from ANY alteration. It confirms that all the original 6346 verses has been perfectly preserved. To read more about this, click here.

· About the Quranic Initials you wrote: "These are the initials of the scribes who copied them. A.L.M., for example, stands for Amar Li Muh."

These Initials has been known as "the mysterious Quranic Initials." No explanation of these Initials made sense until the revelation of the miracle. The theory you raise here is not based on any evidence. Nor is it logical or in consistency with the explanation of these letters in the Quranic text.

[10:1] A.L.R. These (letters) are the proofs of this book of wisdom.

[13:1] A. L. M. R. These (letters) are proofs of this scripture.

[15:1] A.L.R. These (letters) are proofs of this scripture; a profound Qur'an.

[26:1-2] T. S. M. These (letters) constitute proofs of this clarifying scripture.

[27:1] T. S. These (letters) constitute proofs of the Qur'an; a profound scripture.

[31:1-2] A. L. M. These (letters) constitute proofs of this book of wisdom.

As I said in the beginning of this article there are no shortcuts regarding this issue. This information will only be of value to you if you take the time to take it through the final most crucial step, the step of verification. If you wish to study the pattern for yourself your are welcome to visit the following page.

To confuse the reader about the integrity of the overwhelming miracle of the Qur'an, Mr. Heaster mentioned some complicated numbers without clarification and included a table with wrong information. For your benefit we are therefore reproducing the same table as in Mr. Heaster's article, but with the correct information, and with some assistance to help you see the pattern. To read more about it, please visit http://www.submission.org/math-ap1.html. To verify the count, visit http://www.submission.org/miracle/visual.html

Sura	Initials	Alif	Lam	Mim	Ra	Saad	Ha	Ta	Sin	Ha	Ya	Ain	Qaf	Nun	Kaf	TOTAL
2	ALM	4502	3202	2195	9899 (19x521)											
3	ALM	2521	1892	1249	5662 (19x298)											
7	ALMS	2529	1530	1164	97	5230 (19x280)										
10	1319	913	257	2489 (19x131)												
11	ALR	1370	794	325	2489 (19x131)											
12	ALR	1306	812	257	2375 (19x125)											
13	ALMR	605	480	260	137	1482 (19x78)										
14	ALR	585	452	160	1197 (19x63)											
15	ALR	493	323	96	912 (19x48)											
19	KHYAS	26	175	343	117	137	798 (19x42)									
20	TH	28	251													
26	TSM	484	33	94												
27	TS	27	94													
28	TSM	460	19	102	1767 (19x93)											
29	ALM	774	554	344	1672 (19x88)											
30	ALM	544	393	317	1254 (19x66)											

31	ALM	347	297	173	817 (19x43)		
32	ALM	257	155	158	570 (19x30)		
36	YS	48	237	285 (19x15)			
38	29	152 (19x8)					
40	HM	380	64				
41	HM	276	48				
42	HM-ASQ	300	53	57	98	54	209 (19x11)
43	HM	324	44				
44	HM	150	16				
45	HM	200	31				
46	HM	225	36	2147 (19x113)			
50	Q	57	57 (19x3)				
68	133	133 (19x7)					

Finally

To you, the reader of this debate, I would like to say that all this information should be worth nothing to you until you take it through the last most important step, the step of verification. God gave you your hearing, your eyesight and your brains, and you are responsible for using them. You are responsible for what you attribute to God.

[Qur'an 17:36] You shall not accept any information, unless you verify it for yourself. I have given you the hearing, the eyesight, and the brain, and you are responsible for using them.

Prominent and charismatic leaders or presenters in the form or priests, imams, or powerful family members, constitute for many the sources from which they derive their religious information and conclusions. This is nothing short of a disaster for the soul of any human being. To love God with all our heart and all our soul it has to be real, it has to be ours. There are no short cuts here.

[Qur'an 6:94] " You have come back to us as individuals, just as we created you the first time, and you have left behind what we provided for you. We do not see with you the intercessors that you idolized and claimed that they will help you. All ties among you have been severed; the idols you set up have abandoned you."

Peace

Additional Comment: The Quran states that the word of God cannot be altered.

The following path of logic is quite devastating to the Islamic position. The path of logic goes like this:

1. The Quran accepts that the Bible as it existed at the time of Mohammed is the Word of God 2. The Quran states that the word of God cannot be altered.

3. The Quran states that the word of God as it was in the Torah, the Prophets and the Gospel records must be treated as a whole, and that it is impossible to make a distinction between the various books.

4. The Quran claims that anything unclear in the teaching of Mohammed can be clarified by the Bible. This again implies that the text of the Bible cannot be changed.

5. Further, Moslems are condemning themselves because the Quran says that only satan can claim to have altered God's word.

6. Therefore Moslems are contradicting themselves in claiming that the text of the Bible has been altered in some places. There is no evidence that the text of the Bible has been altered significantly since the time of Mohammed.

1. The Quran accepts that the Bible as it existed at the time of Mohammed is the Word of God

(Bakara 2:136) Say (O Muslims): We believe in Allah and that which is revealed unto us and that which was revealed unto Abraham, and Ishmael, and Isaac, and Jacob, and the tribes, and that which Moses and Jesus received, add that which the Prophets received from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and unto Him we have surrendered.

(Ankebut 29 :46) Do not argue with the people of the scripture (Jews, Christians, and Muslims) except in the nicest possible manner- unless they transgress-and say, "We believe in what was revealed to us and in what was revealed to you, and our God and your God is one and the same; to Him we are submitters.

Statements that the Torah cannot be changed:

Bakara 2 :4 ,41 , 44 ,51 ,53, 87 ,91

Al-i mran 3: 3-4 ,48 ,50 ,65 , 93

Maide 5:43-46, 66-68 , 110

En’am 6.154

Tevbe 9:111

Hud 11:110

Isra 17:2-4

Secde 32:23

Mu’min 40:53-54

Ahkaf 46:12

Statements that the Psalms cannot be changed:

Nisa 4:163

Isra 17:55

Enbiya 21:105

Fat1r 35:25

Statements that the whole Old Testament cannot be changed:

Al-i Imran 3:3-4, 48 ,49

Nisa 4:163

Maide 5:46 -47, ,66 – 68, 110

Tevbe 9:111

Hadid 57:26-27

Statements that the whole New Testament cannot be changed:

Bakara 2:136

Bakara 2:285

Al-i Imran 3:119

Nisa 4:136 ,163

Maide 5:43-47 ,68

Ankebut 29:46

Shura 42:15

(Maide 5:47) Let the People of the Gospel judge by that which Allah hath revealed therein. Whoso judgeth not by that which Allah hath revealed; such are evil-livers

Bible passages which are quoted in the Quran:

Gen 17:14

Gen 24:4

Gen 34:27-28

Num 33:2

Dt 29:58

Dt 28:61

Dt 29:20-21 ,27

Dt 31:9 , 23-24

Josh 8:31

Josh 23:6

1 Kings 2:3

2 Kings 14:6

2 Kings 23:18

2 Kings 25:4

2 Kings 35:4

Ezra 3:2

Ezra 6:18

Neh 8:14

Neh 13:1

Dn 9:11-13

Jn 1:4-5 ,9-12

Jn 8:31-32 ,36

Rom 3:1-4

Heb 4:12

Heb 12:25-29

1 Jn 2:24

2 Jn 1:9

2 The Quran states that the word of God cannot be altered.

(En' am 6:115) The word of your Lord is complete, in truth and justice. Nothing shall abrogate His words. He is the Hearer, the Omniscient.

(En'am 6: 34) there is none that can alter the Words (and decrees) of Allah.

(Yunus 10:15) Say: It does not beseem me that I should change it of myself; I follow naught but what is revealed to me; surely I fear, if I disobey my Lord, the punishment of a mighty day.

See too

Yunus 10:64

Isra 17:77

Kahf 18:27

Ahzab 33:62

Fatr 35:43

Fetih 48:23

Kaf 50:29

3 The Quran states that the word of God as it was in the Torah, the Prophets and the Gospel records must be treated as a whole, and that it is impossible to make a distinction between the various books.

(Bakara 2:136) Say (O Muslims): We believe in Allah and that which is revealed unto us and that which was revealed unto Abraham, and Ishmael, and Isaac, and Jacob, and the tribes, and that which Moses and Jesus received, add that which the Prophets received from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and unto Him we have surrendered.

Bakara 2:285

(Bakara 2:85) Do you then believe in a part of the Book and disbelieve in the other?

(Al-i Imran 3:3-4) He sent down to you this scripture, truthfully, confirming all previous scriptures, and He sent down the Torah and the Gospel

(Maide 5:43) How come they unto thee for judgement when they have the Torah, wherein Allah hath delivered judgement (for them)? Yet even after that they turn away. Such (folk) are not believers

(maide 5:68) Say: O People of the Scripture! Ye have naught (of guidance) till ye observe the Torah and the Gospel and that which was revealed unto you from your Lord. That which is revealed unto thee (Muhammad) from thy Lord is certain to increase the contumacy and disbelief of many of them. But grieve not for the disbelieving folk

(bakara 2:62) Those who believe (in the Quran), and those who follow the Jewish (scriptures), and the Christians and the Sabians, any who believe in Allah and the Last Day, and work righteousness, shall have their reward with their Lord: on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve

Bakara 2:213; Maide 5:49

Even Muhammed had recourse to the Torah so it shows that the Torah was not thought to have been changed at his time.

(al-i Imran): Say: Produce the Torah and read it (unto us) if ye are truthful. Saffat 37:156-157

See too:

Nisa 4:150-152

Ra'd 13:36

Hicr 15:91

Ankebut 29:46

(Bakara 2:113) The Jews said……..the Christians said……."Yet, both of them read the scripture.

(Bakara 2:44) What! do you enjoin men to be good and neglect your own soulswhile you read the Torah; have you then no sense?

(Yunus 10:64) They shall have good news in this world's life and in thehereafter; there is no changing the words of Allah; that is themighty achievement.

(Maide 5 :43)…….. when they have the Torah, containing GOD's law……

4. The Quran claims that anything unclear in the teaching of Mohammed can be clarified by the Bible. This again implies that the text of the Bible cannot be changed.

(Maide 5:48) Then we revealed to you this scripture, truthfully, confirming previous scriptures, and superseding them.

(al-i Imran 3:3) He hath revealed unto thee (Muhammad) the Scripture with truth, confirming that which was (revealed) before it, even as He revealed the Torah and the Gospel.

(Yunus 10:94) And if thou (Muhammad) art in doubt concerning that which We reveal unto thee, then question those who read the Scripture (that was) before thee

Enbiya 21:7

Bakara 2:41

Nisa 4:47

Yunus 10:37

Fatir 35:31

Ahkaf 46:12

(Maide 5:44) We have sent down the Torah, containing guidance and light. Ruling in accordance with it were the Jewish prophets, as well as the rabbis and the priests, as dictated to them in GOD's scripture, and as witnessed by them. Therefore, do not reverence human beings; you shall reverence Me instead. And do not trade away My revelations for a cheap price. Those who do not rule in accordance with GOD's revelations are the disbelievers.

5 Further, Moslems are condemning themselves because the Quran says that only satan can claim to have altered God’s word

(Hac 22 :52) And We did not send before you any messenger or prophet,but when he desired, the Shaitan made a suggestionrespecting his desire; but Allah annuls that which the Satan casts, then does Allah establish His communications,and Allah is Knowing, Wise.

(Hicr 15:9) Absolutely, we have revealed the reminder, and, absolutely, we will preserve it.

Bakara 2:255

Meryem 19:64

Saffat 37:3,7

Vaka 56:77-82

Hakka 69:44-47 ,51 Cin 72:26-27

This article was produced from research by Huseiyn G, edited by Duncan Heaster

4.3 Prologue:

What Abraham / Ibrahim Believed About Jesus

I want to begin on common ground. If you open the New Testament, Matthew 1:1, you find that Matthew begins his account of the Gospel by saying that Jesus was the son of Abraham / Ibrahim. And later, Paul says the same: the Gospel was preached to Abraham / Ibrahim, in that the promises made to him are the essence of the Christian Gospel (Gal. 3:8). He says that his hope, the Christian hope, was the hope of receiving the promises made to the fathers: Abraham / Ibrahim, Isaac and Jacob (Acts 26:8). The whole of the *true* Christian Gospel can be understood from the life and faith of Abraham / Ibrahim. He is "the father of the [Christian] faithful" (Rom. 4:11,16). As we shall show in section 2, many bearing the name 'Christian' sadly have no appreciation of this at all. Their doctrines and religion is far from Abraham / Ibrahim and the real Jesus. The writer and publishers of this book have no connection at all with these groups. When 4.125 says that "God did take Abraham / Ibrahim for a friend"- did you know, this is exactly what both the Old Testament (2 Chron. 20:7; Is. 41:8) *and* New Testament (James 2:23) say? A footnote in Daryabadi's translation of the Qur'an says: "The English word 'friend' does scant justice to the idea of *khalil* which in Arabic denotes the dearest or most sincere friend who has no rival". Why, then, was God *so* fond of Abraham / Ibrahim?

It was not only because of what he did, his submission to God. It was because of his faith. And faith is something which occurs within the human heart. It can't be that just by being literal sons of Abraham / Ibrahim we have any special standing with God: "Not all are children of Abraham / Ibrahim because they are his descendants" (Rom. 9:7). That wouldn't be fair- that regardless of sin or submission / obedience, some would be blessed because of their ancestry. So: "It is *men of faith* who are the sons of Abraham / Ibrahim…So then, those who are men of faith are blessed with Abraham / Ibrahim who had faith" (Gal. 3:7,9). We must have the characteristics and faith of Abraham / Ibrahim if we are to be his true children: "Those who share the faith of Abraham / Ibrahim, who is the father of us all [who are true Christians]" (Rom. 4:16). And 2.124 says just the same, in saying that Abraham / Ibrahim was to be a model / pattern to all nations. 22.78 says all true believers will follow "the faith of your father Abraham / Ibrahim". With this we are in agreement as Christians of the Abrahamic faith. 3.67,95 stresses that Abraham / Ibrahim believed in one God, not a trinity or plurality of Gods. And this is indeed so- if we are to be true children of Abraham / Ibrahim, we too must reject the trinity and believe in but one God.

But how can we "share the faith of Ibrahim"? What was that faith? For it must have been faith *in* something. Faith isn't just a religious emotion. The Gospel was preached to Ibrahim (Gal. 3:8). If we can understand what God promised to him, then we know the Gospel. And God promised him that:

1. Genesis 17:8 "And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God". So Abraham was told that he and his children would live for ever on this earth. So, eternal life is an idea that comes up in the Old Testament. Note that- because the essential message of the Bible is the same all the way through. How could this be?

2. Turn on to Genesis 22:17,18 "That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice". Abraham was to have a son who

would be the source of blessing for the whole world. Now the way to understand the Bible is to see how the Bible itself quotes itself and gives us the interpretation. Now these words we have just read are quoted in the New Testament- in Acts 3:25,26. Let's go there and find the interpretation: “Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities”. So, who is the seed of Abraham? Jesus. And what are the blessings he would enable for men and women of the whole world? The blessings of forgiveness of sins and salvation. Let's go further. To Galatians 3:16 “ Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ”. So, the seed of Abraham was one man, singular, Jesus. But how could that one man become so many, as many as the stars in the sky? Let's read Galatians 3:27-29 “ For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise”. So, only those who have been baptized into Christ have a part in these promises- the promises of eternal life here on earth. This is why we must be baptized if we are going to be saved! It’s not enough to reason that we are the literal children of Ibrahim.

What is baptism, then? It isn't sprinkling. The New Testament is written in Greek, and the word translated 'baptism' means really to dip. It was used about a ship sinking, being submerged, or a piece of cloth being dyed from one colour to another by immersing it. Have a look at Mathew 3:13-16 “Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him”. Jesus went " down into" the water and came " up out of it" . He was baptized as an adult, not as a baby; by dipping, not sprinkling. That's why it was done in a river. And if He was baptized, so should we be. This dipping and rising up signifies the death and resurrection of Jesus, and that we have decided to make His death and resurrection our own. This is why it has to be by immersion, not by sprinkling. Have a look at Romans 6:3-5 “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection”. This is why we appeal to you to be baptized- make it your aim in life, to accept Jesus Christ!
By being baptized into Jesus, we become part of Him, and therefore the promises to Ibrahim about his special son apply to us. Therefore when He returns, we will be resurrected, judged and then, if we have lived lives which maintained faith in God’s grace, we will be given the eternal life which He now has. Then we will live for ever in God's Kingdom here on earth. If you believe this, then life has a new meaning. Whatever material problems we have, we will realize that they are only temporary, and when Christ returns He will give us a new and eternal life. This is why in the Bible and in Christ there is real HOPE. The hope ahead is so wonderful that our present problems do not seem so great.

Yet Islam sees the righteousness of Abraham / Ibrahim consisting in that he *submitted* to God: that he *did* good works. But this is not the complete picture. The New Testament points

out that although he was "justified by works when he offered Isaac"[1] he was also justified by *faith* in the promises which God had made to him. Genesis 15:6 says that his *faith* "was counted to him as righteousness". His righteousness was thus *counted to him*- it wasn't in that he *did* a long list of things. And God by grace reckoned, counted, this man as righteous. It was in *this* that Ibrahim was our great example. God saw him as righteous because he *believed*. Romans 4:18-22: "Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness". This was not blind resignation to the will of God. It was an active faith in what was not then visible. And *this* is what so pleased God. Abraham / Ibrahim is our father in the sense that we too have righteousness *imputed* / counted to us: "Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification" (Rom. 4:23-25).

Abraham / Ibrahim's offering of Isaac showed his *faith*- but in what? He said: "God will provide himself the lamb for a burnt offering" (Gen. 22:8). His faith was that God would provide a future sacrifice. Thus he built the altar Jehovah-Jireh: Jehovah / Allah will provide. And who was this lamb? It was Jesus, of whom it was said later: "Behold, the lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn. 1:29 cp. Is. 53:10). And so we read in Hebrews 11:17-19: "By faith Abraham / Ibrahim, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: Accounting that God was able to raise *him* up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure". It wasn't just blind obedience, he showed faith. [in the promises, in the future Jesus, in the resurrection]. He believed that because God's promises through Isaac would be fulfilled, therefore there must be a resurrection of Isaac if he killed him. And he associated the possibility of this resurrection with "the lamb of God", whom God would provide. He saw that Isaac's resurrection would somehow be enabled by this Messiah figure, who would die as a sacrifice and through that death enable resurrection, in that death and the power of sin behind it would be broken. He clearly didn't see this "lamb of God" as just another in a long line of prophets. Jesus said: "Your father Abraham / Ibrahim rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it, and was glad" (Jn. 8:56). When was Abraham / Ibrahim glad? The only time when he laughed was when he was told that he would have a son (Gen. 17:17). He believed that promise, and saw in it the promise of Jesus. He knew that the birth of Isaac meant that the promised Messiah would therefore come- because he would be a descendant of Isaac. This totally disproves the idea that Jesus was already personally existing in Heaven at this time. He couldn't have been, for Ibrahim to look ahead to the day of Jesus, who would be a literal descendant of Ibrahim through Isaac. And so we can understand Paul's inspired logic: "Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. For this *is* the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son" (Rom. 9:7-9 cp. Gen. 21:12).

There was something else in which Ibrahim showed faith. "I *have made you* the father of many nations" (Rom. 4:17) required faith. Ibrahim had to look ahead to the day when his special descendant, Jesus, would have become as many as the stars in the sky. This plural

'seed' would not just be one nation; but of many nations. Men and women of all nations would come to see Ibrahim as their spiritual father, because they accept "the faith of Ibrahim". They too would believe that Jesus was the special son of Ibrahim, knowing that He therefore hadn't pre-existed, wasn't God Himself; but was a real son of Ibrahim who was also "the lamb of God", which Ibrahim believed would be provided by Jehovah. And they would be looking for that son, Jesus, to enable them to inherit the land promised to Ibrahim *for ever*. And they would believe that if they died, the promises of God would surely be fulfilled through their resurrection.

Ibrahim didn't just blindly submit to God (see Gen. 18:23-25). He had a reasoned faith. Indeed, other men of faith likewise questioned with God, and didn't just submit (e.g. Moses, Ex. 32:11,12; Jeremiah, Jer. 12:1-4). Abraham / Ibrahim *considered* his infertility, Sarah's barren womb; and yet despite this "without being weakened in faith" he believed still (Rom. 4:19 RV), just as he "*considered* that God was able to raise men even from the dead" (Heb. 11:19). And 2.260 admits too that at this time Abraham / Ibrahim had faith in resurrection: "Abraham / Ibrahim said, My Lord! Show me how thou givest life to the dead".

And yet there is something the matter with Qur'an when we read: "Why dispute ye about Abraham / Ibrahim, when the Law and the Gospel were not revealed till after him?" 3.65. But, they were…The essence of the Gospel, as Paul says, was taught to Abraham.

Footnote

(1) Muslims claim that it was Ishmael, not Isaac who was offered in sacrifice. They claim that the command to sacrifice his "only son" meant that as Ishmael was born before Isaac, therefore it must refer to Ishmael. However, Genesis 22:2 states clearly that this was "thine only son, Isaac" (see too Heb. 11:17,18; James 2:21). Significantly, the Qur'an itself does not say that Ishmael was sacrificed- the name of the son isn't given (37.100-113). The argument is based upon the Hebrew text of the Bible. But if the Bible is to be appealed to, then Genesis 22:2 must be also accepted. The Muslim cannot just quote some verses and not others. Hagar, Ishmael's mother, was not the wife of Abraham / Ibrahim but rather his "maid", as she is repeatedly called (Gen. 16:2,3,6,8,9). Isaac was the only *legitimate* son of Abraham / Ibrahim. Ishmael had parted from Abraham / Ibrahim some years before, along with Hagar (Gen. 21:14). If indeed the Qur'an was inspired by God, why then did He not correct the idea that the sacrificed son was Isaac? Ishmael is mentioned in the Qur'an elsewhere (2.127). It is also significant that the Qur'an never mentions Hagar in any way. And the Qur'an really contradicts Islamic beliefs about Ishmael in that it says that the son to be sacrificed was the one promised to Abraham / Ibrahim (37.101) and yet it also says that Isaac was the son promised to Abraham / Ibrahim (37.112).

4.3

What The Bible Says About Jesus

4.3.1 *Al-Masih* The Birth Of Jesus

God's purpose of salvation for men was centred around Jesus Christ/ *Al-Masih*. The promises which He made to Eve, Abraham and David all spoke of Jesus as their literal descendant. Indeed, the whole of the Old Testament points forward to, and prophesies about, Christ. The Law of Moses, which Israel had to obey before the time of Christ, constantly pointed forward

to Jesus: " The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ" (Gal. 3:24). Thus at the feast of Passover, a lamb in perfect condition had to be killed (Ex. 12:3-6); this represented the sacrifice of Jesus, " the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (Jn. 1:29; 1 Cor. 5:7). The spotless condition which was required for all the animal sacrifices pointed forward to the perfect character of Jesus (Ex. 12:5 cp. 1 Peter 1:19).

Throughout the Psalms and prophets of the Old Testament there are countless prophecies about what Messiah would be like. Note that the Psalms are recognized by the Qur'an to have been inspired by God (4.163). They particularly focus on describing how the Messiah would die. And the Qur'an recognizes that Jesus was *Al-Masih* the Jewish Messiah. Islam's refusal to accept the idea of a Messiah who dies can only be due to their inattention to these prophecies, a few of which are now presented:-

Old Testament prophecy	**Fulfilment in Christ**
" My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Ps. 22:1).	These were the very words of Jesus on the cross (Mt. 27:46).
" I am despised of the people. All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him" (Ps. 22:6-8).	Israel despised Jesus and mocked him (Lk. 23:35; 8:53); they shook their heads (Mt. 27:39), and said this as He hung on the cross (Mt. 27:43).
" My tongue cleaveth to my jaws...they pierced my hands and my feet" (Ps. 22:15,16).	This was fulfilled in Christ's thirst on the cross (Jn. 19:28). The piercing of hands and feet refers to the physical method of crucifixion used.
" They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture" (Ps. 22:18).	The precise fulfilment of this is found in Matthew 27:35.
" I am become a stranger unto my brethren, and am an alien unto my mother's children. For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up" (Ps. 69:8,9).	This well describes Christ's feeling of estrangement from his Jewish brethren and his own family (Jn. 7:3-5,Mt.12:47-49). This is quoted in John 2:17.
" They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink" (Ps. 69:21).	This happened while Christ was on the cross (Mt. 27:34).
Note that Psalm 22:22 is specifically quoted as applying to Jesus in Hebrews 2:12.	
The whole of Isaiah 53 is a remarkable prophecy of Christ's death and resurrection, every verse of which had an unmistakable fulfilment. Just two examples will be given:-	
" As a sheep before her shearers is dumb so he openeth not his mouth" (Is. 53:7)	Christ the Lamb of God remained silent during his trial (Mt. 27:12,14).
" He made his grave with the wicked and with the rich in his death" (Is. 53:9).	Jesus was crucified along with wicked criminals (Mt. 27:38),

	but was buried in the tomb of a rich man (Mt. 27:57-60).

Note particularly the prophecy of the suffering servant in Isaiah 53. This prophecy has several descriptions of a man who has to suffer greatly in order for salvation to be attained. The following points about *Al-Masih /* Messiah emerge from Isaiah 52:13-53:12:- He was to suffer physically more than any other human being will ever do (52:14).

- His suffering would result in 'sprinkling' " many nations" (52:15). The idea of sprinkling recalls the sprinkling of the blood in order to atone for sins under the Law, perhaps specifically referring to the sprinkling of the water of separation for cleansing (Num.19). The blood of his sufferings would therefore enable people from many nations to have forgiveness of sins.

- The news about him would be widespread, but be disbelieved by the Jews (52:15; 53:1-3).

- Messiah's own people would deliberately stop themselves perceiving his Messiah-ship: " We hid as it were our faces from him...we esteemed him not" (53:3). This recalls the language of Leviticus 13: 44,45, suggesting that Israel would perceive Messiah as smitten with the leprosy of sin. The record of the New Testament, along with the commentaries of the Talmud, show that many Jews have branded Jesus as a sinner unfit for their association.

This Messiah figure, who would die and thereby enable forgiveness of sins, is clearly Jesus of Nazareth. Notice that all these prophecies were given before the time of Jesus, and the manuscripts exist in the Dead Sea scrolls- which were copied before Jesus was born.

It is little wonder that the New Testament reminds us that the " law and prophets" of the Old Testament is the basis of our understanding of Christ (Acts 26:22; 28:23; Rom. 1:2,3; 16:25,26). Jesus himself warned that if we do not properly understand " Moses and the prophets" , we cannot understand him (Lk. 16:31; Jn. 5:46,47).

That the Law of Moses pointed forward to Christ, and the prophets prophesied of him, should be proof enough that Jesus did not exist physically before his birth. The false doctrine of the physical 'pre-existence' of Christ before birth makes a nonsense of the repeated promises that he would be the *seed* (descendant) of Eve, Abraham and David. If he were already existing up in heaven at the time of these promises, God would have been incorrect in promising these people a descendant who *would be* Messiah. The genealogies of Jesus, recorded in Matthew 1 and Luke 3, show how Jesus had a pedigree which stretched back to those people to whom God had made the promises.

The promise to David concerning Christ disallows his physical existence at the time the promise was made: " I *will* set up thy seed *after* thee, which *shall* proceed out of thy bowels...I *will be* his father, and he *shall be* my son" (2 Sam. 7:12,14). Notice the future tense used here. Seeing that God *would be* Christ's Father, it is impossible that the Son of God could have already existed at that point in time when the promise was made. That this seed "*shall proceed out of thy bowels"* shows that he was to be a literal, physical descendant of David. " The Lord hath sworn in truth unto David...Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne" (Ps. 132:11).

Solomon was the primary fulfilment of the promise, but as he was already physically in existence at the time of this promise (2 Sam. 5:14), the main fulfilment of this promise about David having a physical descendant who would be God's son, must refer to Christ (Lk. 1:31-33). " I *will* raise unto David a righteous Branch" (Jer. 23:5) - i.e. Messiah.

Similar future tenses are used in other prophecies concerning Christ. " I *will* raise (Israel) up a Prophet like unto (Moses)" (Dt. 18:18) is quoted in Acts 3:22,23, which defines the " Prophet" as Jesus. " A virgin (Mary) *shall* conceive, and bear a son, and *shall* call his name Immanuel" (Is. 7:14). This was clearly fulfilled in Christ's birth (Mt. 1:23).

The Virgin Birth

The record of Christ's conception and birth does not allow for the idea that he physically existed beforehand. Those who hold the false doctrine of the 'Trinity' are driven to the conclusion that at one moment there were three persons in heaven, and then one of them disappeared and somehow turned into a foetus in Mary's womb, leaving just two in heaven. We have seen in Scripture that all existence - including that of God - is existence in a physical, bodily form. We are therefore left to conclude from the 'pre-existence' belief that Christ somehow physically came down from heaven and entered into Mary's womb. All this complex theology is quite outside the teaching of Scripture. The record of Christ's beginning gives no reason whatsoever to think that he physically left heaven and entered into Mary. The lack of evidence for this is a big 'missing link' in Trinitarian teaching.

The angel Gabriel appeared to Mary with the message that " thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest...Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? (i.e. she was a virgin). And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Lk. 1:31-35).

Twice it is emphasized that Jesus *would be* the Son of God on his birth: evidently the Son of God did not exist before his birth. Again, the many future tenses need to be noted - e.g. " he *shall be* great" . If Jesus were already physically in existence as the angel spoke those words to Mary, he would already have been great. Jesus was the " offspring" of David (Rev. 22:16); the Greek 'genos' implying Jesus was 'generated from' David.

Hints at a virgin birth are to be found in the description of David's Messiah-seed as the begotten son of God (Ps. 2:6,7; 89:26,27). For God to beget a son involves His action upon a woman to make her conceive His son, without the intervention of a man. This is exactly how millions of people believe and have believed since the first century that Jesus of Nazareth came into existence.

It is a consistent Divine principle that sin must result in death. In order for Messiah to resurrect from death to eternal life and ascension to Heaven (" pleasures for evermore" , Ps.16:11), he must therefore have been sinless. This is confirmed by a number of other scriptures. Thus Messiah is called by God " the man that is my fellow" (Zech. 13:7) - a man can only be called God's " fellow" due to his supreme righteousness. Messiah " is just (righteous), and (therefore) having salvation" (Zech. 9:9). Thus he was to bring salvation to others through his own righteousness. He wasn’t just another prophet, as Islam claims.

For this reason Jeremiah 23:5,6 calls Messiah " The Lord our righteousness" , showing that through that one man's perfect character, God's righteousness would be imputed to His people. He was to be the promised seed of David: " I will raise unto David a righteous branch, and a king shall reign and prosper...he shall be called, the Lord our righteousness" .

- One of the reasons for this would be because of his sufferings. “There is no beauty that we should desire him...we did esteem him smitten of God” (53:2,4).

The Conception Of Jesus

Through the Holy Spirit (God's breath/power) acting upon her, Mary was able to conceive Jesus without having had intercourse with a man. Thus Joseph was not the true father of Jesus. It must be understood that the Holy Spirit is not a person; Jesus was the Son of God, not the Holy Spirit. Through God's use of His Spirit upon Mary, " *therefore* also that holy thing" which was born of her was " called the Son of God" (Lk. 1:35). The use of the word " therefore" implies that without the Holy Spirit acting upon the womb of Mary, Jesus, the Son of God, could not have come into existence.

That Jesus was 'conceived' in Mary's womb (Lk. 1:31) is also proof that he could not have physically existed before this time. If we 'conceive' an idea, it begins within us. Likewise Jesus was conceived inside Mary's womb - he began there as a foetus, just like any other human being. John 3:16, the Bible's most famous verse, records that Jesus was the " only *begotten* Son" of God. Millions of people who recite this verse fail to meditate upon what it implies. If Jesus was " begotten" , he 'began' (a related word to " begotten") when he was conceived in Mary's womb. If Jesus was begotten by God as his Father, this is clear evidence that his Father is older than he - God has no beginning (Ps. 90:2) and therefore Jesus cannot be God Himself. Mt. 1:18 speaks of “the birth of Jesus Christ” using the word ‘genesis’- the absolute beginning.

It is significant that Jesus was " begotten" by God rather than being created, as Adam was originally. This explains the closeness of God's association with Jesus - " God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself" (2 Cor. 5:19). Christ being *begotten* by God, rather than just created from dust, also helps explain his natural aptitude for the ways of God his Father.

Isaiah 49:5,6 contains a prophecy concerning Christ as the light of the world, which he fulfilled (Jn. 8:12). He is described as meditating on " the Lord that formed me from the womb to be his servant" . Christ was therefore " formed" by God in Mary's womb, through the power of His Holy Spirit. Mary's womb was evidently the place of Christ's physical origin.

We have seen that Psalm 22 prophesies Christ's thoughts on the cross. He reflected that God " took me out of the womb...I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother's belly" (Ps. 22:9,10). In his time of dying, Christ looked back to his origins - in the womb of his mother Mary, formed by the power of God. The very description of Mary in the Gospels as Christ's " *mother*" in itself destroys the idea that he existed before his birth of Mary.

Mary was an ordinary human being, with normal human parents. This is proved by the fact that she had a cousin, who gave birth to John the Baptist, an ordinary man (Lk. 1:36). The Roman Catholic idea that Mary was not of ordinary human nature means that Christ could

not have been both " son of man" and " son of God" . These are his frequent titles throughout the New Testament. He was " son of man" by reason of having a totally human mother, and " son of God" because of God's action on Mary through the Holy Spirit (Lk. 1:35), meaning that God was his Father. This beautiful arrangement is nullified if Mary was not an ordinary woman.

" Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one...What is man, that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?...how can he be clean that is born of a woman?" (Job 14:4; 15:14; 25:4). This puts paid to any idea of an immaculate conception being possible, either of Mary or Jesus.

Mary being " born of a woman" , with ordinary human parents, must have had our unclean, human nature, which she passed on to Jesus, who was " made of a woman" (Gal. 4:4). The language of his being " *made*" through Mary's agency is further evidence that he could not have physically existed without his birth by her. The Diaglott renders Galatians 4:4: " Having *been produced* from a woman" .

The Gospel records frequently indicate Mary's humanity. Christ had to rebuke her at least thrice for a lack of spiritual perception (Lk. 2:49; Jn. 2:4); she failed to understand all his sayings (Lk. 2:50). This is exactly what we would expect of a woman who was of human nature, whose son was the son of God, and therefore more spiritually perceptive than herself, although he, too, shared human nature. Joseph had intercourse with Mary after Christ's birth (Mt. 1:25), and there is no reason to think that they did not have a normal marital relationship from then on.

The mention of Christ's " mother and his brethren" in Matthew 12:46,47 would therefore imply that Mary had other children after Jesus. Jesus was only " her *first* born" (Mt. 1:25; Lk. 2:7). The Catholic teachings that Mary remained a virgin and then ascended to heaven therefore have absolutely no Biblical support. As a human being of mortal nature, Mary would have grown old and died: apart from this we read in John 3:13, " no man hath ascended up to heaven" . The fact that Christ had human nature (see Heb. 2:14-18; Rom. 8:3) means that his mother must have had it too, seeing his Father did not have it.

And yet in contrast to these glorious truths, the Qur'an categorically denies that Jesus is the Son of God:

"The Christians call Christ the Son of God…in this they but imitate what the unbelievers of old used to say. God's curse be on them: how they are deluded away from the Truth!" (9.30)

"They say "God hath begotten a son!"…no warrant have ye for this!" (10.68).

The objection that God would require a consort of wife to produce a son flatly contradicts the great Islamic tenet that God can do all things. If Muslims can believe that Mary became pregnant without a man's involvement, why can they not believe that God had a son without having a woman? To say that God had no son because He has no wife is as absurd as saying that God is not alive because He doesn't draw breath.

In passing, the claim made by some Muslims that Jesus never called Himself the Son of God is simply not so (Jn. 3:16; 5:22,23,30; 10:36; 19:7; Mk. 14:61,62; Mt. 11:27; 17:5). His own parable of the husbandmen showed that He saw Himself as the Son, the heir, rather than just

another servant / prophet, as Islam claims He is (Mt. 21:33-43; Mk. 12:1-12; Lk. 20:9-18 cp. Acts 7:52). Jesus asked His followers who people thought He was. They replied that many considered Him to be one of the prophets. "But who do you say that I am?", He asked them (Mt. 16:15). And He was clearly thrilled when Peter replied that Jesus was far more than a prophet; He was "the Christ, the Son of the living God". We consider Islam's claim that the New Testament is corrupted in an Appendix.

And yet the Qur'an clearly states that Jesus was the son of Mary, without the intervention of a man. She was a virgin into whom God breathed His Spirit (3.47; 19.20; 21.91). There is a basic contradiction within the Qur'an: Jesus was the son of a virgin through the power of the Spirit, but not the Son of God. The question: So whose son was he? Begs itself to be asked. It cannot also be true that "the similitude of Jesus before God is as that of Adam; He created him from dust" (3.59). There is surely a difference: Adam was created, whereas Jesus was the *begotten* Son of God. The Qur'an fails to explain *why* Jesus was born in this way. The Christian understanding makes so much more sense of this wondrous miracle: that truly in Jesus we behold "God with us". Not that He was God Himself, but as the Son of God and yet also Son of man, we see the manifestation of God in flesh: His coming down to us. Islam frequently stresses that all God does is for a purpose: if so, then what was the *purpose* of the virgin birth, according to Islam? Likewise why is Mary the only woman mentioned by name in the whole Qur'an, and why such honour given to her, if there is no particular significance in the virgin birth: "O Mary! God hath chosen thee…above the women of all nations" (3.42). Luke 1:42 says that Mary was "blessed among women" *because* her son would be the greatest amongst men: not just one in a line of prophets. The virgin birth and the Divine Son ship of Jesus go together.

The Old Testament prophets make it clear that Messiah was to be the descendant of David (Jer. 23:5; Ez. 34:24; Is. 11:1-5,10; Mic. 5:2 cp. Jn. 7:42; Mt. 22:42; Rev. 22:16). This is exactly what was demanded by the promises to David: "He shall build me an house, and I will establish his throne for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son: and I will not take my mercy away from him, as I took it from him that was before thee: But I will settle him in mine house and in my kingdom for ever: and his throne shall be established for evermore" (1 Chron. 17:12-14). An inspired commentary upon these promises is to be found in Psalm 89:26-29,35,36: "He shall cry unto me, Thou art my father, my God, and the rock of my salvation. Also I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth. My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him. His seed also will I make to *endure* for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven…Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me". The promised Son was to cry to God as His Father. He would be made the firstborn (He didn't, therefore, exist beforehand).

And so the question must be answered by Muslims: Whose son is *Al-Masih*, the Messiah? Martha and Peter both answered this question by saying that Messiah is the Son of God (Mt. 16:16; Jn. 11:27 cp. Mt. 26:63). Mark's Gospel is a record of "Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God" (Mk. 1:1); and it is a feature of the Christian faith that we accept "that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God" (Jn. 20:31 cp. Lk. 4:41).

4.3.2 "Say not "trinity" : The Nature Of Jesus

"Say not "trinity": desist…for God is one God" (4.171). With this we would totally agree.

There is a fine balance to be drawn between those passages which emphasize the degree to which " God was in Christ" , and those which highlight his humanity. The latter group of passages make it impossible to Biblically justify the idea that Jesus is God Himself, " very God of very God" , as the doctrine of the Trinity wrongly states. (This phrase " very God of very God" was used at the Council of Nicea in 325 A.D., where the idea of God being a 'trinity' was first promulgated; it was unknown to the early Christians.) The word 'trinity' never occurs in the Bible.

One of the clearest summaries of the relationship between God and Jesus is found in 1 Timothy 2:5: " There is ***one*** God, *and* one ***mediator*** between God and men, the ***man*** Christ Jesus" . Reflection upon the highlighted words leads to the following conclusions:-

- There being only *one* God, it is impossible that Jesus could be God; if the Father is God and Jesus is also God, then there are two Gods. " But to us there is but one God, the Father" (1 Cor. 8:6). 'God the Father' is therefore the only God. It is therefore impossible that there can be a separate being called 'God the Son', as the false doctrine of the trinity states. The Old Testament likewise portrays Yahweh, the one God, as the Father (e.g. Is. 63:16; 64:8).

- In addition to this one God, there is the mediator, the man Christ Jesus - " ...*and* one mediator..." . That word " and" indicates a difference between Christ and God.

- Christ being the " mediator" means that he is a go-between. A mediator between sinful man and sinless God cannot be sinless God Himself; it had to be a sinless man, of sinful human nature. " The *man* Christ Jesus" leaves us in no doubt as to the correctness of this explanation. Even though he was writing after the ascension of Jesus, Paul does not speak of " the God Christ Jesus" .

Several times we are reminded that " God is not a man" (Num. 23:19; Hos. 11:9); yet Christ was clearly " the son of man" , as he is often called in the New Testament, " the *man* Christ Jesus" . He was " the Son of the Highest" (Lk. 1:32). God being " *The* Highest" indicates that only He has ultimate highness; Jesus being " the *Son* of the Highest" shows that he cannot have been God Himself in person. The very language of Father and Son which is used about God and Jesus, makes it obvious that they are not the same. Whilst a son may have certain similarities to his father, he cannot be one and the same person, nor be as old as his father.

In line with this, there are a number of obvious differences between God and Jesus, which clearly show that Jesus was not God himself:-

GOD	JESUS
" God cannot be tempted" (James 1:13).	Christ " was in all points tempted like as we are" (Heb. 4:15).
God cannot die - He is immortal by nature (Ps. 90:2; 1 Tim. 6:16).	Christ died for three days (Mt.12: 40; 16:21).
God cannot be seen by men (1 Tim. 6:16; Ex. 33:20).	Men saw Jesus and handled him (1 Jn. 1:1; Lk. 24:39 stress this).

When we are tempted, we are forced with a choice between sin and obedience to God. Often we choose to disobey God; Christ had the same choices, but always chose to be obedient. He therefore had the possibility of sinning, although he never actually did. It is unthinkable that God has any possibility of sinning. We have shown that the seed of David promised in 2 Samuel 7:12-16 was definitely Christ. Verse 14 speaks of Christ's possibility of sinning: " *If* he commit iniquity, I will chasten him.

The Nature Of Jesus

The word 'nature' refers to what we naturally, fundamentally are. The Bible speaks of only two natures - that of God, and that of man. By nature God cannot die, be tempted etc. It is evident that Christ was not of God's nature during his life. He was therefore totally of human nature. From our definition of the word 'nature' it should be evident that Christ could not have had two natures simultaneously. It was vital that Christ was tempted like us (Heb. 4:15), so that through his perfect overcoming of temptation he could gain forgiveness for us. The wrong desires which are the basis of our temptations come from within us (Mk. 7:15-23), from within our human nature (James 1:13-15). It was necessary, therefore, that Christ should be of human nature so that he could experience and overcome these temptations.

Hebrews 2:14-18 puts all this in so many words:-

" As the children (us) are partakers of flesh and blood (human nature), he (Christ) also himself likewise took part (i.e. " partook" , R.S.V.) of the same (nature); that through death he might destroy...the devil...For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the (nature of the) seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest... to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted" .

This passage places extraordinary emphasis upon the fact that Jesus had human nature: " He *also himself likewise*" partook of it (Heb. 2:14). This phrase uses three words all with the same meaning, just to drive the point home. He partook " of the *same*" nature; the record could have said 'he partook of IT too', but it stresses, " he partook of the *same*" . Hebrews 2:16 similarly labours the point that Christ did not have angels' nature, seeing that he was the seed of Abraham, who had come to bring salvation for the multitude of believers who would become Abraham's seed. Because of this, it was necessary for Christ to have human nature. In *every* way he had " to be made like unto his brethren" (Heb. 2:17) so that God could grant us forgiveness through Christ's sacrifice. To say that Jesus was not totally of human nature is therefore to be ignorant of the very basics of the good news of Christ.

Whenever baptized believers sin, they can come to God, confessing their sin in prayer through Christ (1 Jn. 1:9); God is aware that Christ was tempted to sin exactly as they are, but that he was perfect, overcoming that very temptation which they fail. Because of this, " God for Christ's sake" can forgive us (Eph. 4:32). It is therefore vital to appreciate how Christ was tempted just like us, and needed to have our nature for this to be possible. Hebrews 2:14 clearly states that Christ had " flesh and blood" nature to make this possible. " God is Spirit" (Jn. 4:24) by nature and although He has a material body, as " Spirit" He does not have flesh and blood. Christ having " flesh" nature means that in no way did he have God's nature during his lifetime.

Previous attempts by men to keep God's word, i.e. to totally overcome temptation, had all failed. Therefore " God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and by a sacrifice for sin, condemned sin in the flesh" (Rom. 8:3 A.V. mg.).

" Sin" refers to the natural proneness to sin which we have by nature. We have given way to this already, and continue to do so, and " the wages of sin is death" . To get out of this predicament, man needed outside help. He himself seemed incapable of perfection; it was and is not within flesh to redeem the flesh. God therefore intervened and gave us His own Son, who had our nature, with all the promptings to sin which we have. Unlike every other man, Christ overcame every temptation, although he had the possibility of failure and sinning just as much as we do. Romans 8:3 describes Christ's human nature as " sinful flesh" . A few verses earlier, Paul spoke of how in the flesh " dwelleth no good thing" , and how the flesh naturally militates against obedience to God (Rom. 7:18-23). In this context it is all the more marvellous to read that Christ had " sinful flesh" in Romans 8:3. It was because of this, and his overcoming of that flesh, that we have a way of escape from our flesh; Jesus was intensely aware of the sinfulness of his own nature. He was once addressed as " Good master" , with the implication that he was " good" and perfect by nature. He responded: " Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God" (Mk. 10:17,18). On another occasion, men started to testify of Christ's greatness due to a series of outstanding miracles which he had performed. Jesus did not capitalize on this " because he knew all, and needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man" (Jn. 2:23-25, Greek text). Because of his great knowledge of human nature (" he knew *all*" about this), Christ did not want men to praise him personally in his own right, seeing that he knew how evil his own human nature was.

The Humanity Of Jesus

The Gospel records provide many examples of how completely Jesus had human nature. It is recorded that he was weary, and had to sit down to drink from a well (Jn. 4:6). " Jesus wept" at the death of Lazarus (Jn. 11:35). Most supremely, the record of his final sufferings should be proof enough of his humanity: " Now is my soul troubled" , he admitted as he prayed for God to save him from having to go through with his death on the cross (Jn. 12:27). He " prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup (of suffering and death) pass from me; nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Mt. 26:39). This indicates that in some ways Christ's 'will', or desires, was different from that of God.

During his whole life Christ had submitted his will to that of God in preparation for this final trial of the cross: " I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me" (Jn. 5:30). This difference between Christ's will and that of God is proof enough that Jesus was not God.

Throughout our lives we are expected to grow in our knowledge of God, learning from the trials which we experience in life. In this, Jesus was our great example. He did not have complete knowledge of God beamed into him any more than we have. From childhood " Jesus increased in wisdom and stature (i.e. spiritual maturity, cp. Eph. 4:13), and in favour with God and man" (Lk. 2:52). " The child grew, and waxed (became) strong in spirit" (Lk. 2:40). These two verses portray Christ's physical growth as being parallel to his spiritual development; the growth process occurred in him both naturally and spiritually. If " The Son is God" , as the Athanasian Creed states concerning the 'Trinity', this would not have been

possible. Even at the end of his life, Christ admitted that he did not know the exact time of his second coming, although the Father did (Mk. 13:32).

Obedience to God's will is something which we all have to learn over a period of time. Christ also had to go through this process of learning obedience to his Father, as any son has to. " Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience (i.e. obedience to God) by the things which he suffered; and being *made* perfect (i.e. spiritually mature), he became the author of eternal salvation" as a result of his completed and total spiritual growth (Heb. 5:8,9). Philippians 2:7,8 (further commented on in Digression 27) records this same process of spiritual growth in Jesus, culminating in his death on the cross. He " *made* himself of no reputation, and *took upon him* the form (demeanour) of a servant...he *humbled himself* and *became* obedient unto...the death of the cross." The language used here illustrates how Jesus consciously forged ahead in his spiritual development, making himself more and more humble, so that finally he " *became* obedient" to God's desire that he should die on the cross. Thus he was " *made* perfect" by correctly responding to his sufferings.

It is evident from this that Jesus had to make a conscious, personal effort to be righteous; in no way was he forced to be so by God, which would have resulted in him being a mere puppet. Jesus truly loved us, and gave his life on the cross from this motive. The constant emphasis upon the love of Christ for us would be hollow if God forced him to die on the cross (Eph. 5:2,25; Rev. 1:5; Gal. 2:20). If Jesus was God, then he would have had no option but to be perfect and then die on the cross. That Jesus *did* have these options, makes us able to appreciate his love, and to form a personal relationship with him.

It was because of Christ's willingness to voluntarily give his life, that God was so delighted with him: " Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life...No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself" (Jn. 10:17,18). God being so pleased with Christ's willing obedience ishard to understand if Jesus was God, living out a life in human form as some kind of tokenistic association with sinful man (Mt. 3:17; 12:18; 17:5). These records of the Father's delight in the Son's obedience, is proof enough that Christ had the possibility of disobedience, but consciously chose to be obedient.

That *God* resurrected Jesus and glorified him with immortality is a major New Testament theme:-

- " *God*...raised up Jesus...Him hath *God* exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour" (Acts 5:30,31).

- " *God*...hath glorified his Son Jesus...whom *God* hath raised from the dead" (Acts 3:13,15).

- " This Jesus hath *God* raised up" (Acts 2:24,32,33).

- Jesus himself recognized all this when he asked *God* to glorify him (Jn. 17:5 cp. 13:32; 8:54).

If Jesus was God Himself, then all this emphasis would be out of place, seeing that God cannot die. Jesus would not have needed saving if he were God. That it was God who exalted Jesus demonstrates God's superiority over him, and the separateness of God and Jesus. In no way could Christ have been " very and eternal God (with) two...natures...Godhead and manhood" , as the first of the 39 Articles of the [apostate] Church of England states. By the

very meaning of the word, a being can only have one nature. We submit that the evidence is overwhelming that Christ was of our human nature.

And so you can see that there are certain similarities between what Muslims believe and the true message of real Christianity. There *is* one God; and Jesus was *not* God. Nor was his mother Mary the mother of God. Whilst true Christianity and Islam *are* fundamentally different, there is here some common ground. I feel rather like Paul, who also sought common ground with his audiences: "What you worship as unknown, this I declare to you" (Acts 17:23). It isn't another God I put to you: but rather the same God which you have been worshipping in ignorance. The Qur'an acknowledges the virgin birth, sinless-ness, ascension and second coming of Jesus; these are actually the springboard for appreciating the real answer which God has given in Jesus to man's need.

4.3.3 The Qur'an And The Death Of Jesus

Muhammad accepted Jesus as the Messiah and 11 times in the Qur'an calls Him this [*Al-Masih*]. And yet the Old Testament prophecies of Messiah make it clear that He was to die; and that although He would be human, and not God Himself, He would be somehow more than man. Yet in other places the Qur'an claims He was no more than a servant or messenger (43.59; 5.78). Semitic peoples understood clear enough that Messiah was and is a title far different to that of any other prophet (see the difference between the two in Mk. 8:28,29). It is a contradiction in terms to say that "The Messiah, Son of Mary, was no more than an apostle" (5.78). Jesus Himself pointed out that David thought that the Messiah would be greater than him: " He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?" (Mt. 22:43-45). Note that *Masih* is not an Arabic word; it is a word imported into the Qur'an and used solely of Jesus. "The greatest Muslim scholars such as Zamakhshari and Baidawi… admitted that it was a borrowed word" (Jeffrey, *The Foreign Vocabulary Of The Qur'an* p. 265). Yet the idea of *Messiah* in the Old Testament is based on Daniel 9:25,26: "Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined". The Messiah was to die ("be cut off"). Yet He was to come before God Himself, and be given an eternal Kingdom on earth : "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like unto the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is and everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed" (Dan. 7:13,14).

"They [the Jews] said in boast "We killed Christ Jesus the son of Mary". But they killed him not, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them…for a surety they killed him not" (4.157).

To deny that God gave Jesus to die for us is to turn away from the height of love which God showed. In the sacrifice of Jesus we see the very essence of love: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish,

but have everlasting life…In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (Jn. 3:16; 1 Jn. 4:9,10).

Muslims seem to think that the love of God is shown by giving us *things* like health, wealth etc. But this is missing the point. The quintessence of the love of God is that He gave His Son. We may not be wealthy nor healthy; but the gift of God's Son to die for our sins is what imparts a joy and grace to the whole experience of life and living. And there is an assurance that because God *so* gave Jesus, we will be granted "all things" of salvation: "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?…For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:32,38,39). Islamic commentary on Abraham / Ibrahim's willingness to offer his son is that a man could show no greater love than to offer his son. So, what greater love could God show than to offer *His* Son for us, whom He so loved? And yet Islam refuses to make this connection: they deny that God would be prepared to offer His Son to die.

Isaiah 53 is a prophecy of the crucifixion. Jesus applied Isaiah 53 to His own sufferings: "I tell you that this scripture must be fulfilled in me, 'And he was numbered with transgressors'; for what is written about me has its fulfilment" (Lk. 22:37). He clearly predicted His own death: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world…The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men: And they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again…Behold, we go up to Jerusalem: and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes and they shall condemn him to death, And shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again…Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Jn. 6:51; Mt. 17:22,23; 20:18,19.28). And He was willing to die (Mt. 26:39). He knew all that was going to happen, and yet He went along with it; He didn't run away (Jn. 18:4).

There is a system of truth whereby one true thing leads to another. The fact that Jesus was the begotten Son of God shows His love. These ideas are often linked in John's writings. The love of God is expressed to us in that He gave that only begotten Son to die for us. This makes a sharp contrast with Islam, which understands the love of God to be shown to us through His material gifts to us in this life, as a kind master may reward an obedient slave. Yet the love of God in giving His Son is so infinitely more passionate, gripping, tragic, and thereby the more demanding of response. This explains why in the 99 titles of God found in the Qur'an, never do we read of Him as "Father". And yet this is the most common title for God in the New Testament. We can now become the Sons of God, His very own dear children (Rom. 8:14-16). The Divine parentage of Jesus, that God Himself had a son, opened up the wonderful possibility that we might become the Sons of this same God: "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (Jn. 1:12). Because Islam has rejected the Divine parentage of Jesus, they have rejected the concept of God as their Father, and instead leave God as a distant being who mechanically judges sin and rewards the obedient. They see God as a master who owns a human servant: not as a Father who has a precious child. Quite simply, Islam denies the extent of the love of God; it shies away from a God who offers a close, constant, passionate

relationship with those who wish to become His children. 1 John 3:1 says it all: “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not”. Note that the Fatherhood of God was in principle taught in the Old Testament too (Ps. 103:13; Prov. 3:12; Is. 64:8; Mal. 2:10). The difference between a father / child relationship and a master/ servant one is that the basis of relationship is in the first one, love, grace, and care exist simply for reason of the fact that the child exists. The master / servant one is on the basis of duty and payment. We enter salvation only because it is our Father’s good pleasure to grant it to us (Lk. 12:32). This wonderful covenant relationship will result in a far more loving, grace-filled, compassionate life than that found in Islam. Jesus drew out the essential difference between the two systems in Matthew 17:25,26: “…What thinkest thou, Simon? Of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? Of their own children, or of strangers? Peter saith unto him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free”. We as God’s children are free, under no obligation…apart from the endless obligation of gratitude and gracious response. Our debt to the Father and His Son becomes transmuted into a debt to all men (Rom. 1:14).

All this is why the Christian prays simply: “Our Father” (Mt. 6:9); whereas the Muslim must pray: “Praise be to God, the Lord of the worlds, the Compassionate, the Merciful, Master of the Day of Reckoning” (1.2-4). We do not demean God by speaking of Him as Father; He has instead elevated us up nearer to His level, in that for those baptized into Christ, they too are Sons of God, joint heirs with His only begotten Son: “And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together ” (Rom. 8:17). The love of God was revealed and is required of us, simply because Jesus was the Son of God, given to die to enable us to reach up to the level where He was and is: “Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another…And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him”(1 Jn. 4:7-11,16). The Sonship of Jesus opened the way for us to become adopted sons of God: “But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father “ (Gal. 4:4-6). We are “heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ” (Rom. 8:17). As Jesus cried “Abba, Father”, so can we who are in Him (Mk. 14:36 cp. Rom. 8:15,16). The love of God is revealed in that He sent His son to die for us (1 Jn. 4:9,10; Rom. 5:8). The love of Jesus likewise was crystallized in His death: “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends…now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end” (Jn. 15:13; 13:1). To deny that He died is to deny this love, and to preclude ourselves from being touched and transformed by its very existence.

The love of God and Jesus was shown therefore in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died (Rom. 5:8). This is a far cry from the Islamic God who ‘loves’ those obedient to Him by giving them material blessings. In the parable of the prodigal son, the Divine Father runs out to welcome the doubting son (Lk. 15:20). This stands in direct contrast to 6.141; 7.31: “God loves not the prodigal…the wasters”. The story of the prodigal son being welcomed by the

Father running out to meet him is just so powerful. This God is our God. He is not a God far away, but a God who is near (Is. 55:6). He is not a God who is totally different to us, as the Qur'an claims. He created us in His image (Gen. 1:27; James 3:9). We are to be imitators (Greek 'mimicers') of Him, as beloved children (Eph. 5:1). We are to be holy, because He is holy (Lev. 19:2); perfect, because He is perfect (Mt. 5:48). We are "heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:17), hoping to "become partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pet. 1:4). In the cross, God rent the heavens and came down to be involved in the tragedy of humanity (Is. 64:1). This is the extent and passion of His involvement with us; and this is why I unashamedly appeal to you, to not keep God afar off. But let Him come near to you, in accepting that He had a Son, whom He gave to die to you, to make that way of escape for you from your own humanity…and appropriate that death and resurrection to yourself through the act of baptism.

It is on this subject that Islam and Christianity are mutually exclusive. The Qur'an says: "They neither crucified nor killed him" (4.157). Acts 2:23 says the opposite: "This Jesus…you crucified and killed". The Qur'an gives no explanation of what happened to Jesus. To say that "so it was made to appear to them" begs the questions: How and why? To which no answers can be given. The Qur'an itself says that Jesus was on earth at the time, the Jews came to arrest Jesus, they wanted to have Him killed, and that someone was crucified that day looking like Jesus. For the Jews were convinced He was dead. If Muslims believe all this, then why not accept what is surely the more probable and logical- that Jesus Himself was the one crucified?

It is impossible for Him to have been snatched away to God's presence in Heaven- for mortal flesh cannot see God. He was a man, of our nature [not of God's nature]. So He would need to be granted God's nature, which is immortal, if He were to be in Heaven. And yet Muslims believe Jesus will return and then die and be buried next to Muhammad. A mortal man can't exist in Heaven, and yet the Muslim contention requires this.

To deny that Jesus died is to deny the New Testament as any kind of true record. And yet Muslims do refer to it- why, if it is so totally unreliable? Remember that Muhammad was told: "He sent down to you the Scripture [the Qur'an]…and He sent down the Torah and the Gospel" (3.3). John 19:25-27 records how Jesus on the cross speaks to Mary as his mother; why would Mary have been at the foot of the cross if it wasn't Jesus there? And what about all the references by Jesus Himself to His upcoming death and resurrection (Mt. 17:9,22-23; 20:18-19; Mk. 8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34; Lk. 9:22; 22:22; Jn. 8:28; 12:34)? These would all be nonsense if He Himself never died. The Qur'an claims that Jesus said: "Peace is on me the day I was born, the day that I die, and the day that I shall be raised up to life again" (19.33)- and the same words are recorded of John the baptist (19.15). God said of Jesus, according to 3.55: "O Jesus! I will cause you to die and raise you to myself" (translation confirmed by Muhammed Asad, *The Message Of The Qur'an* p. 75). The same Arabic phrase translated "raise you to myself" occurs in 4.158, where it is said that God raised Jesus up to Heaven to escape death; but in 3.55 we are told that this raising up occurs *after* His death. The serious contradictions within the Qur'an have to be faced up to. And also it has to be noted that there is strong historical evidence that a man called Jesus was crucified as the New Testament says He was. To simply deny this is desperate indeed. And there was no *need* for a human substitute to have hung there instead of Jesus: for, as in His babyhood, God could easily have saved His Son from death without deceiving the world and causing an innocent bystander to die a painful death by torture.

Footnote:

The author was privileged to participate in a public debate with Immam Kalam Azad in New Amsterdam, Guyana on Easter Sunday, 2001 on the subject: "Did Jesus die on the cross?". Videos and transcripts of the debate are available.

4.3.4 Evidence For The Resurrection Of Jesus

"If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain" (1 Cor. 15:17), wrote Paul. It would mean that we have "hope in this life only" (1 Cor. 15:19). Our religion would just be a crutch to help us cough and hack our way through our years, and that would be all. Yet in Jesus there is *hope*. And the hope is the "the hope of the resurrection from the dead" (Acts 23:6). Remember how Ibrahim believed his son would be resurrected as a result of God's provision of a sacrificial lamb. And likewise for all of us, our resurrection is a result of the fact that Jesus was our representative [not our substitute], one of us, yet who overcame sin. Through being "in Him", His resurrection opens the way for ours. For all that is true of Him becomes in some way true of us. "Because I live, ye shall live also" (Jn. 14:19). Jesus Himself testified to His own death and resurrection: "I am he that lives, and was dead…I [therefore] have the keys of the grave" (Rev. 1:18). Because of His resurrection, those who are "in Christ" have the hope of sharing in that resurrection when He returns. Consider the force of Romans 6:3-5: "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father; even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also *in the likeness* of *his* resurrection". Because *He* lives, therefore the lives we live now are lived out "in new*ness* of life".

Because he had our nature, Christ had to die. He was a descendant of Adam through Mary, and all of Adam's children have to die (1 Cor. 15:22). All Adam's descendants had to die because of his, Adam's, sin, regardless of their personal situation. "Death reigned...through the offence of one (Adam) many be dead...the judgment was (on account of) one (Adam) to condemnation (to death)...by one man's disobedience many were *made* sinners", and therefore had to die (Rom. 5:14-19 cf. 6:23). As a descendant of Adam, Jesus had to die, he inherited mortal nature from Adam through Mary, his mother.

Apart from Jesus, all of Adam's descendants deserve this punishment, for we have all sinned personally. Jesus had to die because he was of our nature, sharing in the curse which came upon Adam's descendants. Yet, because he personally had done nothing worthy of death "God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him" (Acts 2:24 N.I.V.). Christ was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1:4). Thus it was due to Christ's perfect character, his "spirit of holiness", that he was raised.

Christ did not die on the cross *only* because he was of human nature. He willingly gave his perfect life as a gift for us; he showed his love for us by dying "for our sins" (1 Cor. 15:3), knowing that through his death he would gain salvation from sin and death for us (Eph. 5:2,25; Rev. 1:5; Gal. 2:20). Because Jesus was perfect in character he was able to overcome the result of sin by being the first person to rise from the dead and be given immortal life. All

those who identify themselves with Christ through baptism and a Christ-like way of life therefore have hope of a similar resurrection and reward.

In this lies the glorious significance of Christ's resurrection. It is the "assurance" that we will be resurrected and judged (Acts 17:31), and if we have truly followed him in this life, share his reward of immortal life, "*knowing* (confidently) that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus" (2 Cor. 4:14; 1 Cor. 6:14; Rom. 6:3-5). As sinners, we deserve eternal death (Rom. 6:23). Yet, on account of Christ's perfect life, obedient death and his resurrection, God offers us the *gift* of eternal life, completely in accord with all His principles.

To displace the effects of our sins, God "imputeth righteousness" (Rom. 4:6) to us through our faith in His promises of salvation. We know that sin brings death, therefore if we truly believe that God will save us from it, we must believe that He will count us as if we are righteous, although we are not. Christ was perfect; by being truly *in* Christ, God will count us as if we are perfect, although personally we are not. God made Christ "to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God *in* him" (2 Cor. 5:21), i.e. being *in* Christ through baptism and a Christ-like life. Thus for those "in Christ Jesus", he is "made unto us...righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1 Cor. 1:30,31); the following verse therefore encourages us to praise Christ for the great things he has achieved. "In the Gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith" (Rom. 1:17, N.I.V.). Understanding these things is therefore a necessary part of knowing the true Gospel.

All this was made possible through Christ's resurrection. He was the "firstfruits" of a whole harvest of people who will be made immortal through his achievement (1 Cor. 15:20), "the firstborn" of a new spiritual family who will be given God's nature (Col. 1:18 cf. Eph. 3:15). Christ's resurrection therefore made it possible for God to count believers in Christ as if they are righteous, seeing that they are covered by his righteousness. Christ "was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification (a word meaning 'to be righteous')" (Rom. 4:25).

It's no wonder, then that the Old Testament predicted that Messiah would be resurrected. It was hinted at right back in the promises to David: " I will set up thy seed after thee...I will establish His kingdom" (2 Sam. 7:12). For the phrase " set up" the Septuagint uses a Greek word elsewhere translated 'resurrect'. This great seed of David was to be the Son of God (2 Sam. 7:14) and also a literal descendant of David (v.12). Thus Messiah was to have one Divine and one human parent, as prophesied in Isaiah 7:14 " A virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" - God with us. The meaning of the child's name being related to the means by which he was born, it follows that a 'virgin' here does not just mean a young woman. The Septuagint translation of the Bible, made by Egyptian Jews 200 years B.C., uses the word 'parthenos' for " Virgin" , which definitely means a virgin in the sexual sense. Thus we have here a prophecy of a virgin birth of Messiah, by the direct activity of God upon the virgin rather than that of a man.

Psalm 16:10 describes Messiah's brief death and resurrection: " Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption" - i.e. he would be raised before decomposition of the body set in. And after this, he was to ascend to Heaven: " In thy presence is fullness of joy; at Thy right hand are pleasures for evermore" (Ps.16:11). This cannot apply to David, seeing he died and has been buried many years.

Summary Of Evidence For The Resurrection

by John Thorpe

The evidence for the resurrection is considerable, and belief in the resurrection does not need to rely directly on belief in the inspiration of the Bible. Essentially the evidence available can be broken down into two types, physical evidence of the empty tomb and witness evidence of meetings with the risen Jesus.

a) The Empty Tomb

The empty tomb is mentioned in the gospels in passing. It is also attested, indirectly, by sources outside the Bible. It must have existed for three reasons:-

- The body of the crucifixion victim did not disappear in a cloud of smoke or self destruct after death; it must have been placed somewhere. However, no one managed to produce the body after the claim of the resurrection, even though it was in the interests of both Jews and Romans to do so. Therefore the body was not available and the tomb in which it had been placed was empty.

- The tomb was near Jerusalem. Anyone who wished to visit it from Jerusalem would have been able to do so easily. The fact that so many people in Jerusalem were convinced of the truth of the resurrection with its account of an empty tomb shows that the empty tomb really existed.

- The Jews spent considerable effort in proclaiming that the disciples stole the body from the tomb while the guards were asleep. This would have been a ludicrous story to distribute if the tomb still had the body of Jesus inside it.

b) The Witnesses

The witnesses are people who saw Jesus alive after his resurrection. Several of these are noted in the gospels, but a convenient list of them is given in 1 Corinthians where Paul writes:-

And that he was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve: After that, he was seen by more than five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain to this present, but some have fallen asleep. After that, he was seen by James; then by all the apostles. And last of all he was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time (1 Cor 15:5-8).

This list contains more than 500 people. The readers of the letter are reminded that most of these were still alive in their day (55 AD - 25 years after the events described in the resurrection narratives). This would mean that the witnesses were available for questioning. Had they not existed it would have been easy for the opponents of Paul (of whom there were many) to have stated this and hence to have shown his letter false and destroyed his case.

The existence of so many witnesses means that what they testified to - a solid and living Jesus - must also have existed.

c) Secondary Witnesses

The testimony of the earliest witnesses of the first century was backed up by the lengths that these witnesses would go to rather than deny their faith that Jesus had died and been raised again. The fate of many of these is described by Tacitus in the following words: “Mockery of all sorts accompanied their deaths. They were covered with the skins of wild animals and torn to death by dogs, or they were fastened to crosses and , when daylight failed, were burned to illuminate the night”. (Tacitus, Annals 15:44)

Large numbers of Christians died in this way in the persecution of Nero; similar persecutions continued on and off for more than a century afterwards before they gradually died out. According to letters published by Pliny a Christian could avoid the death penalty by recanting, but no one ever did. It is painfully clear that the early Christians had complete confidence in their belief in the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Summary

Any theory about what happened to Jesus at the crucifixion and subsequent events must account for all this evidence. It must explain both an empty tomb and the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus. It must account for why everyone involved, including all the disciples, was so convinced of the resurrection of Jesus that they were prepared to allow themselves to be killed rather than to declare a lack of belief in it.

4-3-4-1 The Swoon Theory

The ”Swoon” Theory of the resurrection of Jesus is the theory that although Jesus was crucified he did not die on the cross. Instead he seemed to die, was taken down from the cross and placed in the tomb, where he revived. He then went out of the tomb and showed himself to his disciples who jumped to the conclusion that he had been raised from the dead by God. This theory is espoused by only a small number of Moslems, but as it appears in the works of the main Islamic polemicists it is likely to be met with fairly frequently in the future.

This theory hangs on the question of whether Jesus could have survived the crucifixion and then escaped the tomb in which he had been laid. In fact it is impossible that Jesus could have survived the crucifixion. It is possible for a victim to survive a crucifixion for six hours, provided that they remain conscious throughout and are prepared to support themselves on their legs. However, once anyone lapses into unconsciousness they will die in about 20 minutes from the accumulation of fluid in the lungs. Jesus is reported as having died at about the ninth hour (Mt. 27:50). He must at least have slipped into unconsciousness at this point. However, he was not brought down from the cross immediately. Instead there was time for Joseph of Arimathea to go to Pilate and beg the body of Jesus from him (Mk. 15:43; Jn. 19:38). There was then a further delay while Pilate sent someone out to make certain that the body was dead. (Mk. 15:44,45) Even then Jesus was not removed immediately; Joseph first went to buy some fine linen to act as grave clothes (Mk. 15:46). It is highly unlikely that this set of events could been completed in the twenty minutes that would be needed for Jesus to remain alive on the cross.

A further problem for the swoon theory is the spear thrust. This brought forth blood and water. The water can only have been from the lungs or pericardium. Thus the spear thrust was a deep one. As Jesus was lifted up on a cross at the time this thrust must have come from below as well as to the side. Because of this it would need to pass through the diaphragm to reach the lungs, and through either the spleen or the liver. This would have been enough to

ensure the death of Jesus even if he had been in full health. If the spear pierced the pericardium then this would also have killed Jesus. Incidentally both the spleen and the liver bleed after death (look in any butcher‘s shop).

Supposing that by some miracle (and it would need to be a real miracle) Jesus had managed to survive this. He would be dying from his wounds. Being shut up in a cold tomb without food or water for 48 hours or more would certainly kill him. Apart from the loss of blood caused by his scourging, the wounds in his hands and feet and the spear thrust in his side would almost certainly become infected. He would be unable to move until death took him.

The swoon theory now requires Jesus to remain immobile from the Friday evening to early Sunday morning and then to suddenly get up and feel better. He managed to open the stone from the wrong side. The stone would have been large, at least two tonnes, and it was sealed. The women going to the tomb felt unable to move it without help (Mk. 16:3). In spite of Jesus‘ wounds (which would have been severe) he manages to push the stone aside and then tackles a guard of the most efficient soldiers in the ancient world. This isn‘t a real person: this is superman! For an encore he walks seven miles on feet pierced with nails to Emmaus (Lk. 24:13). Here he manages to convince two disciples that he has been supernaturally raised from the dead and now enjoys eternal life.

This is not within the realms of possibility. Even more problematical is what happened to Jesus afterwards. Was an ordinary man raised up to heaven? If he died on earth, where is the tomb? There is a Moslem sect which believes that Jesus is now buried in Kashmir, but the tomb they show is not nearly old enough to be genuine. [There is friend of mine in Guyana whose brother journeyed specially to Kashmir to investigate. He says that there is a large crater which is claimed to be a footprint of Jesus- although all Biblical evidence is that He was a man of normal size. More information about this is available from the author. If Muhammed was indeed “the comforter” who Jesus prophesied would lead into all Truth, it is significant that Muslim groups have such major differences of agreement; and Muslim nations fight each other to this day].

4-3-4-2 The Crucifixion Substitute Theory

The theory that Jesus was never placed on the cross at all, but that some substitute was crucified instead is a more popular theory than the swoon theory. There are a number of candidates for the person substituted but there is particularly convincing evidence for none of them. For example, consider the possibility that the person crucified was Judas. The evidence for this is from the Gospel of Barnabas, but this is a late medieval forgery and cannot be relied on even to get the geography of Israel correct, let alone the details of the crucifixion. All the candidates for a substitute suffer this same problem of lack of evidence.

One thing that is certain about the events of Passover 30 AD is that someone whom the authorities believed to be Jesus was crucified. The evidence for this is very strong. Not only do all four gospels mention the death of someone on the cross (identifying the person as Jesus) but Jewish sources and Roman historians also give witness to the death.

One of the Barioth says:

On the Eve of the Passover they hanged Jesus Œ Baraitha, Sanhedrin 43a)

Tacitus says:

“Christos, the founder of the name [Christian] suffered the death penalty in the reign of Tiberius by sentence of the procurator Pontius Pilate and this pernicious superstition was checked for a while, only to break out again” (Tacitus, Annals 15:44)

Another indisputable fact is that the tomb in which this person was buried was empty on the Sunday following the crucifixion. Again, this is without any doubt. The tomb was near Jerusalem and anyone who wished could examine it. The Jews consistently proclaimed that the disciples had stolen the body, a ludicrous claim if the tomb was not empty. Neither the Jews nor the Romans were ever able to produce a body, something that it would have been very much in their interests to do as it would have put an end to Christianity very early on.

The substitute theory fails to explain the empty tomb. Whoever was crucified must have been buried afterwards. Within three days the tomb where they were buried was empty. Where had they gone? Had God raised the substitute from the dead? Why should God raise the substitute from the dead when he was not prepared to raise his own Son? The substitution theory provides no answer to any of these questions.

4.3.5 The Qur'an And The Ascension Of Jesus

The Qur’an claims that Jesus ascended to Heaven in order to escape death (4.157,158). Yet the New Testament teaches that He ascended to Heaven as part of His exaltation, the reward and result of His sufferings. Because He humbled Himself to the death of the cross, therefore He was highly exalted (Phil. 2: 8-9). This idea of humility is not attractive to any of us, not least Muslims. Their perception of Jesus is of a man who was saved from being humiliated by being glorified. Yet the Bible teaches that Jesus was humbled and as a result of this humiliation, was glorified: and this must be our pattern too in the life of following Him (Jn. 13:31-33; Heb. 5:7-9; Col. 3:1; 1 Pet. 1:19-21; 4:13; Rev. 5:12).

Muslims claim that Jesus only ascended to a lesser heaven; whereas the Old Testament teaches that Messiah is to sit on the right hand of the throne of God Himself (Ps. 16:11; Dan. .7:13). He “ascended far above all heavens” (Eph. 4:9), to the throne of God Himself (Rev. 3:21). The purpose of the ascension of Jesus was not to save Him from temporary death - if so, why has He remained there for 20 centuries? When the Son of God was under threat earlier, God sent Him away into Egypt (Mt. 2:13,20). Again, we ask *why* is it that Jesus alone of all men, according to the Qur’an, was taken to Heaven for so long? If He is just another of many prophets, why this special treatment? And why was He, according to the Qur’an, the only man who never died (4.156,157)? If the wages of sin is death, this would mean that He never sinned, and was the only man never to have sinned. This makes Him far more than just another prophet. There is a serious tension within the Qur’an relating to the nature of Jesus. He is spoken of in very exalted terms [probably because much of the Qur’an text is merely borrowed from the New Testament]; and yet on the other hand, seeks to downplay Him.

4.3.6 Islam And The Return Of Jesus

Islam teaches that Jesus will return from Heaven, destroy the Antichrist, and lead believers into an era of peace, ruling over all the earth- and then, He will die and be buried next to Muhammad. Again, the God who is ignorantly worshipped must be declared… this is all true, in that Jesus Christ *will* return and do these things: but He will not die! The Kingdom He will

establish will be eternal. If He didn't sin - and He can scarcely be in the presence of God for 2000 years if He did sin - then why should He have to die? The Old Testament prophets speak of Messiah reigning eternally; and His priesthood, after the order of Melchizedek, being eternal, in that he ever lives to make intercession for His people (Ps. 110:4).

Jesus will return in glory: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the star shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other " (Mt. 24:29-31). Right now, His face shines as the sun (Acts 26:13; Rev. 1:16). How can this be, if He is just another of many prophets, who will return to earth and die? When Jesus appears, "we shall be made like him; for we shall see him as he is" (1 Jn. 3:2). He comes to give us life, to make us like Him, in that in this life we shared through baptism His death and resurrection. It cannot be that He then dies. "Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man from heaven" (1 Cor. 15:48,49).

The Qur'an in 3.49 and 5.113 says that Jesus has the power to raise the dead given to Him by God. This is what the New Testament teaches too. However, the question arises: Why should Jesus have this power rather than any other prophet? Clearly there was something unique about Him. It is only the true Christian Gospel which can give an answer to the question *why* only Jesus has this power. It was because He was our representative, He died and rose again, and therefore He can share that life and resurrection with those who associate themselves with His death and life through baptism, and through living out in their lives "in Christ" what these things demand. Only because He was the Son of God could Jesus have such power over death: "For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will…For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself" (Jn. 5:21,26)

4.4 Man's Need For The Death And Resurrection Of Jesus

4.4.1 Man's Need

I once heard a very significant comment from a Turkish Christian. He knows some isolated villages which had been staunchly 'Christian' for centuries, but in the last 100 years had become Moslem. But they retained an old Christian meeting room, where a Christian man they called 'the priest' lives. Although they're all Moslems, whenever they sin, or the village judges someone to have sinned, they go to see 'the priest' and enter into the meeting room, where he sprinkles water on them and tells them Jesus forgives them. Now all this is of course far from Biblical Christianity as we know it, but it serves to illustrate the crisis of Islam- there is no provision for mercy, grace and forgiveness, and it is this which our new brethren and sisters are so enthusiastically grasping and preaching in its true terms.

The Qur'an teaches as does the Bible that due to Adam's sin in Eden, the whole of humanity were cursed (2.36). The question is, how to escape from this? Again, the Qur'an seems to identify the problem without giving any hope of salvation or concept of redemption. Sadly we have to say that the Qur'an reads as if someone wrote it having poorly remembered the Biblical text. Thus the tree which Adam ate is called "the tree of eternity" (20.120). If this

were so, then Adam should still be alive. The Biblical record makes so much more sense: Adam was told not to eat of the tree of knowledge; he ate of it; and was punished by not being allowed to eat of the tree of eternal life. The Qur'an suggests that all man has to do as a result of Adam's sin is to repent and ask forgiveness. But God would not change His principles: He had said that eating of the fruit meant they must die. And so they had to. Repentance alone is not enough; for the wages of sin is death. It cannot be that God would simply waive His principles on emotional grounds. But He *is* compassionate, and He is a saviour God, and He went straight on to tell Adam and Eve of the way to salvation. There was to be a descendant of the woman who would destroy the power of the snake [i.e. sin] with a fatal blow to the head. During this conflict, the descendant of the woman would be bruised temporarily in the heel (Gen. 3:15). This we understand to mean that Jesus, the descendant of the woman through Mary, would suffer temporarily [in that He died and then resurrected] in order to permanently destroy the power of sin.

Sin separates a man from God (Is. 59:2). I seriously wonder to what extent Islam has a concept of sin; and because they do not perceive sin as a real and felt offence against God, there is no joy in forgiveness, no appreciation of grace; and their understanding of the nature of God as cold and indifferent fails to inspire them to show these things to others. Forgiveness, grace, forgiving somebody whilst they are still sinning against you [as God did to mankind on the cross]- these are foreign to Muslims; because this is their view of God. And we become like what we worship. The whole of the Bible is about sin and our personal struggle with it. "The prophets"- David, Jeremiah, Abraham / Ibrahim, Isaac, Jacob etc. - all have their sins and struggles recorded, and as David often wrote in his reflections upon his sin with Bathsheba, these things are an inspiration to others to believe in the gracious forgiveness and mercy of a loving Heavenly Father. We need not just a succession of prophets to teach us God's way. We need a Saviour, to save us from the results of our disobedience.

The Law of Moses presented mankind with something similar in outline to the requirements of Islam - in that believers were required to follow specific laws. But man was and is incapable of perfect obedience to such a system. It becomes slavery rather than giving the freedom of salvation. In Christ, the whole concept of legality has been done away. When we read in Romans of "the law" having been done away, the Greek often carries the idea of 'law / legality' (see RV). The true Christian is under grace, not law. Virtually all ritual, ceremony and form has been stripped away from the true worship of God. No code of dress, rites or ceremonies for worship; no daily exercises or routines of piety. Instead, we seek for the reflection of the man Jesus Christ in our lives, thinking and being. The New Testament speaks of "the spirit of Jesus", which we understand to be a spirit / way of life in conformity to His. All the time we are seeking to act and speak as He would have done in our situation. We strive for a holy, loving, patient character like His. And insofar as we achieve this, we are witnessing Him to this world. This is why so many Muslims have been converted to Christianity - not so much by debate, as by the living example of those truly "in Christ". True Christianity [and there is much false Christianity in this world] isn't just a religious message, comprised of propositions. It is above all a *life* to be received, a living out of the doctrines of Jesus. The wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23). We all sin. So, we must all die. Therefore any attempt at justification with God through *doing* things is simply doomed. We are thrown upon our desperate need for His grace.

The whole Islamic concept of sin is what makes the cross unnecessary to them. They believe that God forgives who He wants, as He wants; and that sin isn't really a separation from God,

but rather it is a slip made because God created man with a weak nature. This effectively makes God responsible for sin, which can't be right. Because God predestinates our fate, there is no need for atonement or reconciliation with Him. And this explains the fatalism and lack of spiritual energy found in many Islamic people. There is no real concept of having offended God; there is no real forgiveness from Him, although there is the idea that sin can be cancelled out by keeping certain commandments. Yet the Bible reveals that there *is* forgiveness with God, that He may be feared (Ps. 130:4). David reflected on his sin against Uriah and Bathsheba: "Against you, you only have I sinned" (51:4). God was grieved at His heart that man sinned at the time of Noah (Gen. 6: 6). It's an amazing idea, when we first grasp it: that you and I, down here on earth, can really touch the heart of Almighty God. That our sins so hurt Him, He allows Himself to get personally hurt and offended by us; and our attempts at righteousness can touch the heart of God Almighty. We aren't just predestined: our destiny is in our hands. This is why God through Moses and Joshua told His people: "Choose life, that you may live…" (Dt. 30:19; Josh. 23:8,11; 24:14). This is the passion and urgency behind those appeals. To obey or disobey was in the power of those individual people. They had nobody else to blame for their rejection of God's offers; and for those who accepted, nobody could or will take their joy from them. Thus Job rejoiced that he would see Jehovah [Allah] for himself, and nobody else would see their maker in quite the same way as Job would (Job 19:26-27).

Because sin exists as a reality, something we can blame nobody else for, not a 'devil' up in the sky or beneath us, but we alone are 100% responsible for our sins…therefore we need atonement. God has decreed that sin must result in death. We have already sinned; therefore we must die. But God wants to save us. And He doesn't do that by saying 'Well OK, I wasn't serious about all that stuff about commandments'. He is serious, deadly serious. Because He is a just and moral God, therefore there must be a basis for forgiveness. This basis for forgiveness is totally un-provided by Islam. In the Old Testament, He offered forgiveness on the basis of animal blood being shed, as representative of the death of the sinner. But the animal wasn't a full representative of the sinner. It was an animal, not a man. And yet, God provided forgiveness through their blood. Why, seeing they weren't truly representative of the sinner? Because, they pointed forward to the blood of a future sacrifice, of a representative man, who would never sin (Heb. 9:28; 10:4-6,10-12). Through being counted as "in him", all that was true of Him would become true of the person who became in covenant relationship with Him. That person was Jesus - a man like us, although the Son of God. Our representative, with our nature and temptations, but who never once sinned. And we enter that covenant with Him, we become "in him", so that all that is true of him becomes true of us…by being baptized [immersed] into His death and resurrection. This Saviour couldn't have been Muhammad - for Muhammad sinned and asked for forgiveness (33.37; 47.19; 48.2). No man [who has sinned] can redeem his brother (Ps. 49:7). The wonder of it all is that we are saved by pure grace. The more that sinks into us, the more we are inspired to live lives of grace, of imputing the best to others, of having the love that thinks no evil (1 Cor. 13:5). And the more we realize that we do have genuine freewill, the more we will live lives of spiritual energy and dynamic service. To believe in complete predestination is to believe that God forces human beings to act against His own will.

4.4.2 God's Provision

We have shown earlier that the way of escape is through the death and resurrection of Jesus: a man like us, the descendant of Ibrahim, yet who never sinned, strengthened in this by His being the Son of God. And this saviour from sin was prophesied all through the Old

Testament: “I will bring my servant the Branch [a clear reference to Messiah]…I will remove the guilt of this land in a single day” (Zech. 3:8,9). And remember, the Qur’an recognizes Jesus as the Jewish Messiah.

To reject the cross, as Muslims do, is to act like Peter did when he tried to dissuade Jesus from dying on it. Jesus told him: “Get behind me Satan! You are not on the side of God but of men” (Mt. 16:23). The cross was God’s way. There is something repulsive about the cross - whenever Jesus started talking to His followers about it, they always changed the conversation onto another topic. And so this is what Islam has done. It has tried to make this rejection of the cross which is rooted in our natures, something theologically and intellectually respectable. But it is taking the side of men and not that of God. “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their iniquities unto them” (2 Cor. 5:19). He was manifested in the death of His Son. God made Jesus to be a sin offering, even though Jesus Himself never sinned, “that we might become the righteousness of God in him” (2 Cor. 5:21). These are wonderful, marvellous things! Don’t *you* want to become “in him” by baptism, so that *you* can really share in this wondrous process of atonement and reconciliation with the God you love, but are separated from…?

God knew that just telling us to be submissive [‘Muslim’] and obedient wouldn’t be enough. Our natures are so biased towards disobedience. Yet in the fact Christ died, we not only have forgiveness through His blood (1 Jn. 1:7); we have an inspiration to a life of dedication. “He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, *that* we might die to sin and live to righteousness” (1 Pet. 2:24).

We know we will sin - and “whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it” (James 2:10). The way of escape cannot be through vowing never to sin again. In this sense the system of commandments “which promised life proved to be death to me” (Rom. 7:10). And in any case, the fact we have sinned already, even once, requires we die. Adam’s sin in Eden is a clear enough example.

4.4.3 The Need For Baptism

And all this is the reason why we must make a conscious decision to identify ourselves with the death and resurrection of Jesus through baptism: a dipping in water, into His death and resurrection. I am aware that many false Christian groups seek to glory in the numbers of Muslims they have baptized. We are not like this. No true Christian is merely interested in numbers they baptize. They will love people, and will want the lives of people to be transformed. Jesus Himself said some hard things, and they were nearly all in the context of encouraging people to weigh up carefully their commitment to Him. When a man wanted to follow Him wherever He went, He replied that He had nowhere to lay His head - even though it seems that most nights of His ministry, He probably did have somewhere to sleep (Mt. 8:19,20). This kind of hyperbole [exaggerated statement] is common on the lips of Jesus. He spoke of how a man must sit down and count the cost *first*; and when “many believed in him”, He tested the sincerity of their faith until they finally tried to stone Him (Jn. 8:30,48,59). When “many believed in his name” one Passover, “Jesus did not trust himself to them, because he knew all men….he himself knew what was in man” (Jn. 2:23-25).

Where To From Here?

You need to be baptized. But don't just go to any 'Christian' church and get baptized. Jesus said that first of all, we must understand the Gospel- the *real* Gospel, that which was preached to Abraham / Ibrahim so many years ago - and then, once we properly believe, be baptized. And Jesus Himself warned us that "many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ" (Mt. 24:5); that "many" will say to Him when He returns "Lord, Lord, didn't we do many miracles in your name…?". And He will tell them that He never knew them (Mt. 7:22,23). This means that "many", perhaps even the majority, of those claiming to be Christians aren't the genuine thing. There is a huge apostasy amongst Christians. Now this doesn't mean that there is no such thing as true Christianity in existence. It *is* there, as this book has sought to show.

I suggest you need to get yourself a Bible, both Old and New Testaments, if you don't already have one. And read it daily. I use a plan called 'The Bible Companion', which gives certain chapters to read every day. Tens of thousands of Christians world-wide read every day according to that plan, and it binds us together wonderfully. By using the plan, you'll read the Old Testament once and the New Testament twice in the course of a year. And devote yourself to a systematic study of the basic doctrines of the Bible. We have a Bible study course which you can do on your own, with no need to attend churches or listen to pastors or priests. And when you have finished this and understand it, we'd be so happy to arrange for someone to come and have a chat with you and baptize you if you are ready. We care for you; we are with you. We want to help you. If there is some overwhelming material problem in your life or community that stops you from being able to concentrate on what is most important - studying God's word and committing yourself to His Son, Jesus - then write and tell us about it. We might be able to do something to help. But above all, pray to God, and ask Him to guide you to His Son, to His Kingdom; ask Him to open your eyes to understand His word as you read and study it.

I so hope to hear from you!

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4.5

The Practical Power Of The Doctrine Of Jesus

The Lord Jesus Shared All Our Temptations; He Was A Man Of Our Nature, He Didn't Pre-Exist.

Therefore in the daily round of life, He will be a living reality, like David we will behold the Lord Jesus before our face all the day. We will really believe that forgiveness is possible through the work of such a representative; and the reality of his example will mean the more to us, as a living inspiration to rise above our lower nature. Appreciating the doctrines of the atonement enables us to pray acceptably; " we have boldness and access with confidence by *the* Faith" - not just 'by faith', but as a result of *the* Faith (Eph. 3:12). Hebrews so often uses the word " therefore" ; *because of* the facts of the atonement, we can *therefore* come boldly before God's throne in prayer, with a true heart and clear conscience (Heb. 4:16). This "

boldness" which the atonement has enabled will be reflected in our being 'bold' in our witness (2 Cor. 3:12; 7:4); our experience of imputed righteousness will lead us to have a confidence exuding through our whole being. This is surely why 'boldness' was such a characteristic and watchword of the early church (Acts 4:13,29,31; Eph. 3:12; Phil. 1:20; 1 Tim. 3:13; Heb. 10:19; 1 Jn. 4:17). Stephen truly believed that the Lord Jesus stood as his representative and his advocate before the throne of grace. Although condemned by an earthly court, he confidently makes his appeal before the court of Heaven (Acts 7:56). Doubtless he was further inspired by the basic truth that whoever confesses the Lord Jesus before men, He will confess Him before the angels in the court of Heaven (Lk. 12:8).

The connection between the atonement and faith in prayer is also brought out in 2 Corinthians 1:20 RSV: "For all the promises of God in him are yea. That is why we utter the Amen through him". The promises of God were confirmed through the death of Jesus, and the fact that He died as the seed of Abraham / Ibrahim, having taken upon Him Abraham / Ibrahim's plural seed in representation (Rom. 15:8,9). Because of this, "we utter the Amen through [on account of being in] Him". We can heartily say 'Amen', so be it, to our prayers on account of our faith and understanding of His atoning work.

The fact the Lord Jesus didn't personally pre-exist needs some meditation. It seems evident that there must have been some kind of previous creation(s), e.g. for the creation of the Angels. God existed from infinity, and yet only 4,000 years ago did He have His only and His *begotten* Son. And that Son was a human being in order to save humans - only a few million of us (if that), who lived in a 6,000 year time span. In the spectre of infinite time and space, this is wondrous. That the Only Son of God should die for a very few of us here, we who crawled on the surface of this tiny planet for such a fleeting moment of time. He died so that God could work out our salvation; and the love of God for us is likened to a young man marrying a virgin (Is. 62:5). Almighty God, who existed from eternity, is likened to a first timer, with all the intensity and joyful expectation and lack of disillusion. And more than this. He died for *me*, in the shameful way that He did. Our hearts and minds, with all their powers, are in the boundless prospect lost.

Jesus Christ Is The Son Of God

1 John strongly links belief in Christ as the Son of God with a life of true love. They had heard from "the beginning" of their contact with the Gospel that Christ was the Son of God: and yet also the need to love one another. The "message" which they had heard from the beginning was that Christ was the Son of God (2:24); and yet it was also that we should love one another (3:11). This is why in the context of teaching the need for love, John warns against false teaching regarding the nature of Christ as Son of God (2:22,23; 4:1-4; 2 Jn. 7-11). "The word...from the beginning" was the 'logos' of Christ (Jn. 1:1-3); and yet in John's letters, the word from the beginning was that we should love each other (2:7; 3:11). This is the essence of belief in Christ: love for each other. This is where the doctrine of Christ leads. And for this reason, Paul pronounces an 'anathema' upon both those who teach another doctrinal Gospel, "another Jesus" (Gal. 1:8,9); as well as those who do not love the Lord Jesus personally (1 Cor. 16:22). "This is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another" (3:23). "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him" [i.e. your brother]. "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us...whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him" (4:12,15). But why is there this link between love, and belief in Jesus of Nazareth being the begotten Son of God?

Theologically, it could be said that if we accept Him as God's Son, then we must likewise accept all God's other sons, begotten as they are by His Spirit. But practically, are we not being taught to see the *pure wonder* of the way in which *Almighty God had a Son* and gave that Son, so freely and so painfully, for us...? The *pure wonder* of God having a Son of our nature, a child and then a man who showed us the essence of God displayed in human flesh and temptation; and then giving Him to us... If we see this, we will naturally show love to our brethren. So it isn't just a case of thinking yes, we believe Jesus was Son of God, not God the Son – and period. No. There's infinitely more to it than this. This faith and understanding can tear down every barrier between men, and provide the inspiration for a life of true, self-sacrificial love. The true *wonder* of it all simply must be meditated upon. That God's very own son should begin so small, as an ovum, "a single fertilized egg barely visible to the naked eye, an egg that would divide and re-divide until a foetus took shape, enlarging cell by cell inside a nervous teenager".

Because Jesus was the *only* Son of God, therefore He is *full* of the Father's grace and truth. John 1:14 makes this connection between fullness and only Son-ship. Because of the wonder of this, we should therefore hear Him, respecting and thereby obeying His word simply because of our appreciation of who He is and was- the Son of God (Lk. 9:35). Quite simply, to *truly* believe in Jesus as Son of God means that we will have a sure Hope of passing beyond the gates of the grave into the Kingdom (Mt. 16:16 cp. 18).

Jesus Never Sinned

The extent to which this man from Nazareth, who sneezed and slept and thirsted as we do, was really God manifest in the flesh...this needs sustained personal meditation. That from the larynx of a Palestinian Jew really came forth the words of Almighty God; to the extent that it had to be said that never man spake like this man; and He Himself could assure us that heaven and earth would pass, but not His words (note the links with Ps. 102:25-27; Heb. 1:10-12)...that this man died for us...rose again, ascended...and now works His saving work for us, hour by hour. Mark records how a man once in an offhand way addressed the Lord Jesus as "good master". The Lord Jesus' response was to say that if the man *really* accepted Him as 'good' he ought to share His cross, and sell what he had and give to the poor. The real extent of Jesus' goodness will move us to deep personal response, if we truly perceive it.

Jesus Is The Christ

If we deny Christ, we deny that Jesus is the Christ (1 Jn. 2:22); and yet we deny Christ if we don't preach Him (Mt. 10:33). It follows that if we really believe that Jesus was not just Jesus of Nazareth but the Christ of God, therefore we won't deny Him but will preach Him. This is why there is connection between confessing Jesus as Christ and preaching Him (Jn. 9:22; Acts 18:5; Phil. 2:11). A grasp of who the Lord Jesus really is and the height of His present exaltation will naturally result in a confession of Him to the world, as well as a deep personal obedience to His word and will (Heb. 2:1). "But and if ye should suffer for righteousness sake...fear not their fear, neither be troubled; but sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord: being ready always to give answer to every man" (1 Pet. 3:14,15). *Knowing and having* Christ as Lord of our hearts will practically enable us to overcome tribulation, and will lead to a suitably humble witness in response. The Gospel is "the gospel of the glory of Christ" (2 Cor. 4:4 RSV). 2 Cor. 2:14-17 invites us to see the Lord Jesus after His victory - which can only refer to His victorious death on the cross - leading a victory parade, in which we are the triumphant soldiers, carrying with us burning incense. This represents our preaching of the

Gospel, as part of our participation in the joyful glory of the Lord Jesus' victory on the cross. And yet that incense is used as a double symbol - both of us the preachers, who hold the aroma, and yet we are also the aroma itself. We are the witness. But the motivation for it all is our part in the victory procession of the Lord Jesus, going on as it does down through the ages, as He as it were comes home from the cross.

The Lord Jesus Died And Rose Again, And Was Made Lord And Christ (Acts 2:36)

His resurrection is the basis for ours. Despite the emotion and hardness of death itself, our belief in resurrection is rooted in our faith that our Lord died and rose. When comforting those who had lost loved ones in the Lord Jesus, Paul doesn't simply remind them of the doctrine of the resurrection at the return of Jesus. His focus instead is on the fact that "if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him" (1 Thess. 4:14).

The fact Jesus is Lord has vital practical import for us. In Romans 14:7-9, Paul speaks of the need not to live unto ourselves, but to rather live in a way which is sensitive to the conscience and needs of others. Why? "For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that He might be Lord both of the dead and living". Because He is our Lord we therefore don't live for ourselves, but for Christ our Lord and all those in Him. When Paul exalts that Christ is King of Kings and Lord of Lords, dwelling in light which no man can approach unto, this isn't just some literary flourish. It is embedded within a context of telling the believers to quit materialism, indeed to flee from its snare. 1 Timothy 6:6-14 concern this; and then there is the passage about Christ's exaltation (6:15,16), and then a continued plea to share riches rather than build them up (6:17-19). Because He is Lord of all, we should quit our materialism and sense of self-ownership. For we are His, and all we have is for His service too. And the principle of His being Lord affects every aspect of our spirituality. Dennis Gillet truly observed [in *The Genius Of Discipleship*]: "Mastery is gained by crowning the Master as Lord and King". And Peter likewise says that those who reject the Lordship of Jesus (2 Pet. 2:10) indulge in sexual immorality. The height of His Lordship ought to mean self-control in our lives; because He, rather than our own passions, is Jesus and Master of our soul. Joseph's amazing exaltation in Egypt was clearly typical of that of the Lord Jesus after His resurrection. As a result of Joseph's exaltation, no man could lift up even his hand or foot without exception within the sphere of Joseph's power. And the Lord Jesus' exaltation has the same effect and imperative over us.

Because Jesus is Lord and Master, and because He is our representative in every way, therefore all that He did and was becomes an imperative for us to follow. Thus: "If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet" (Jn. 13:13,14). They called Him "Lord and Master", but *wouldn't* wash each other's feet. Like us so often, they had the right doctrinal knowledge, but it meant nothing to them in practice. To know Him as Lord is to wash each other's feet, naked but for a loincloth, with all the subtle anticipations of the cross which there are in this incident. "Wherefore [because of the exaltation of Jesus] [be obedient and] work out your own salvation with fear and trembling [i.e. in humility]" (Phil. 2:12). And so it is with appreciating God's greatness: the deeper our realization of it, the higher our response. Thus Solomon built a "great" house for Yahweh, "for great is our God above all gods" (2 Chron. 2:5). Israel prayed to God but without meaning, "though they called them to the most High, none at all would exalt him" (Hos. 11:7). They theoretically knew Him as "the most High" but in their hearts they failed to exalt Him. And so their prayers remained as empty words.

James 2:1 (Gk.) gives the Lord Jesus the title of "the glory" (as also in Lk. 2:32; Eph. 1:17). And James makes the point that we cannot believe in the Lord Jesus as the Lord of glory and have respect of persons. This may seem a strange connection at first sight. But perhaps the sense is that if we see the *height* and surpassing extent of *His* glory, all others will pale into insignificance, and therefore we will be biased for or against nobody and nothing because of the way they are all as nothing before the brightness of the glory of the Lord Jesus we follow. The RV mg. Makes the point clearer: "Do ye, in accepting persons, hold the faith of the Lord of glory?". This explains why when Paul sat down to write to churches (we call them 'ecclesias') riddled with worldliness, immorality and false doctrine, he takes as his repeated opening theme the greatness and exaltation of the Lord Jesus.

There's one more especially noteworthy thing which the sheer *height* of the Lord Jesus' exaltation leads us to. "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him...that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow...and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord...wherefore...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:9-12). These words are alluding to Isaiah 45:23,24: "...unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. Surely, shall one say, in the Lord [Jesus] have I righteousness and strength". We all find humility difficult. But before the height of His exaltation, a height which came as a result of the depth of the degradation of the cross, we should bow our knees in an unfeigned humility and realization of our sinfulness, and thankful recognition of the fact that through Him we are counted righteous.

As with many aspects of doctrine, it is often difficult for us to appreciate how radically revolutionary they were in the first century context; and in essence they should lose none of their radical-ness with us. David Bosch observes: "Christians confessed Jesus as Lord of all lords - the most revolutionary political demonstration imaginable in the Roman Empire". Philip Yancey likewise: "As the church spread throughout the Roman empire, its followers took up the slogan "Christ is Lord", a direct affront to Roman authorities who required all citizens to take the oath 'Caesar [the state] is Lord'" (*The Jesus I Never Knew*, p. 246). It hurt, it cost, to recognize Him as Lord. And so it should with us, especially those who live in Islamic societies. Men and women died for this; and we likewise give our lives in response to that very same knowledge. There is a tendency, which the Lord Jesus Himself brought to our attention, of calling Him Lord but not doing what He says. To know Him as Lord in truth is axiomatically to be obedient to Him (Lk. 6:46).

Faith is also inculcated by an appreciation of the height of His exaltation. He now has all power in Heaven and in earth, and this in itself should inspire us with faith in prayer and hope in His coming salvation. On the basis of passages like Exodus 4:7; Numbers 12:10-15; 2 Kings 5:7,8, "leprosy was regarded as a "stroke" only to be removed by the Divine hand which had imposed it" (L.G. Sargent, *The Gospel Of The Son Of God*, p. 28). The leper of Mark 1:40 lived with this understanding, and yet he saw in Jesus nothing less than God manifest. Inspired by the height of the position which he gave Jesus in his heart, he could ask him in faith for a cure: "If thou wilt, *thou canst* [as only God was understood to be able to] make me clean".

Because Christ is Lord of all, we must preach Him to all, even if like Peter we would rather not preach to them. This was the motivational power and reality of Christ's universal Lordship for Peter (Acts 10:36). The same link between Christ's Lordship and witness is found in Philippians 2:10 and 1 Peter 3:15 (which alludes to Is. 8:13 - Yahweh of Hosts, of many ones, becomes manifest now in the Lord Jesus).

The reality of the Lordship of Jesus is used in Revelation (19:12, 16) to encourage the brethren to continue fearless in their witness despite persecution. Jesus is Lord of the kings of the earth; He has control over the world; therefore, no human power can harm us without His express permission and purpose. The exhortation of Psalm 110 is powerful: because Jesus is now seated at the Father's right hand, His people offer themselves as freewill offerings in this, the day of His power. They are arrayed in "holy attire" because *He* has been made the Priest after the order of Melchizedek- they share in the work which His exaltation has enabled (Ps. 110:1,3,4 RV mg.).

The ascended Christ was highly exalted and given the Name above every Name, so that for those who believed this, they would bow in service at the Name of Jesus. Peter preached in and about the name of Jesus - this is emphasized (Acts 2:31,38; 3:6,16; 4:10,12,17,18,30; 5:28,40,41; 10:43). The excellence of knowing Him and His character and the wonder of the exalted Name given on His ascension (Phil. 2:9; Rev. 3:12) lead Peter to witness. Because of His exaltation, we confess Jesus as Lord to men, as we later will to God at judgment (Phil. 2:9). According as we confess Him before men, so our judgment will reflect this. Lifting up Jesus as Lord is to be the basis of giving a witness to every man of the hope that lies within us (1 Pet. 3:15 RSV). The knowledge and experience of His exaltation can only be witnessed to; it can't be kept quiet. 3 John 7 refers to how the great preaching commission was obeyed: "For his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing (material help) from the Gentiles" (Gentile believers). For the excellence of knowing His Name they went forth in witness, and moreover were generous spirited, not taking material help to enable this. The knowledge of the Name of itself should inspire to active service: for the sake of the Lord Jesus' Name the Ephesians laboured (Rev. 2:3).

Because "all power is given unto me...go ye *therefore* and teach all nations" (Mt. 28:18,19). The great preaching commission is therefore not so much a commandment as an inevitable corollary of the Lord Jesus' exaltation. We will not be able to sit passively in the knowledge of the universal extent of His authority / power. We will have to spread the knowledge of it to all (see "Into all the world" for more on this, especially the way 1 Timothy 3:16 alludes to the preaching commission as having already been fulfilled the moment it was uttered, so strong is the imperative). There may be some similarity with the way in which the exaltation of Israel / God's people was so that all men would be witnessed to (Dt. 4:6).

The greatness of Christ clearly influenced Mark's witness; he began his preaching of the Gospel (of which his Gospel is but a transcript) by quoting Isaiah's words about how a highway was to be prepared "for our God" and applying them to the Lord Jesus, whom he saw as God manifest in flesh. Appreciating the height of who Jesus was and is, clearly motivated his preaching. And it should ours too. This is why Paul in the face of every discouragement could preach that "there *is* another king, one Jesus" (Acts 17:7). This was the core of his message; not so much that there *will be* a coming King in Jerusalem, but that there *is* right now a King at God's right hand, who demands our total allegiance.

The Lord Jesus' Blood Was Shed For Our Redemption. Christ Died The Dreadful Death He Did For Us

If we understand something of the 'mechanics' of the atonement, and grasp something of the fact that they were outworked in a real, historical man, we will see that the final realization of the redemption achieved at the cross will be when Christ comes back. Having expounded the Lord Jesus' cross for several chapters, Paul concludes: "So Christ was once offered to bear

the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Heb. 9:28). Here we see two fundamental first principles linked: If we understand something of the atonement, we will earnestly look for the second coming, when the redemption achieved on the cross will be brought unto us (cp. 1 Pet. 1:13). An enthusiasm for the second coming, spurred by a realization that the bringing of salvation then is an outworking of the cross, will lead to a loose hold on the things of this life.

Paul had a debt to preach to all men (Rom. 1:14). But a debt implies he had been given something; and it was not from "all men", but rather from Christ. Because the Lord Jesus gave us the riches of His self-sacrifice, we thereby are indebted *to Him*; and yet this debt has been transmuted into a debt to preach to all humanity. Our obligation to the Lord Jesus for His death for us issues in an obligation to preach that message to others.

Consider the implications of 2 Corinthians 5:20,21: "On behalf of Christ, as though God were entreating by us: we beseech you on behalf of Christ: be ye reconciled to God [because] him who knew no sin he made to be a sin [a sin offering?] on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in him". *Because* of the cross, the atonement which God wrought in Christ's offering, we beseech men to be reconciled to God. Appreciating the cross and the nature of the atonement should be the basis of our appeal to men. And indeed, such an appeal is *God* appealing to men and women, in that there on the cross "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself". The blood and spittle covered body of the Lord Jesus lifted up was and is the appeal, the *beseeching* of God Himself to men. And this is the message that we are honoured to preach on His behalf; we preach the appeal of God through the cross.

The reality of the Lord Jesus' crucifixion was the basis of Peter's appeal for men to repent: "Repent ye therefore [and he spoke not only to those who had crucified the Lord Jesus], and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out" (Acts 3:17-19). And think through the reasoning of 1 Corinthians 1:13: "Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?". The fact Jesus was crucified for us means that we should be baptized into that Name, and also be undivided.

Therefore, "Husbands love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it...so ought men to love their wives" (Eph. 5:25). The Greek for "gave himself" is mainly used of the Lord Jesus giving up the spirit to the Father. His death was as an act of the will, He gave up His life rather than it being taken away from Him. This matchless peak of self-control and self-giving for us must somehow be replicated in the humdrum of daily domestic relationships. He carried our sins "*that* we, being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes (Gk. Weals- Peter saw them) ye were healed" (1 Pet. 2:24).

Because Of The Suffering Entailed In The Putting To Death Of Our Sins By The Lord Jesus' Cross, We Should Respond In Likewise Mortifying Them

To put it mildly, our experience of His death for us should lead us to be generous spirited in all ways. In appealing for financial generosity to poorer brethren, Paul sought to inspire the Corinthians with the picture of Christ crucified: "For ye know the grace [gift / giving] of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor [Gk. a pauper], that ye through his poverty might be rich" (2 Cor. 8:9). In the light of this, we should not just be generous from the abundance of what we have; we should become as paupers in our giving. The Lord Jesus' giving wasn't financial; it was emotional and spiritual. And so,

Paul says, both materially and in these ways, we should likewise respond to our brethren, poorer materially or spiritually than we are. "The very spring of our actions is the love of Christ" (2 Cor. 5:14 Philips; it "urges us on", NRSV).

By God's grace, the Lord Jesus tasted death *for* (Gk. *huper*) *every man*, as our representative: "in tasting death he should stand for all" (NEB). In His death He experienced the essence of the life-struggle and death of every man. The fact the Lord Jesus did this *for us* means that we respond *for Him*. "To you it is given *in the behalf of* (Gk. *huper*) Christ, not only to believe on Him [in theory], but to suffer *for his sake* (Gk. *huper*)" (Phil. 1:29). He suffered *for us* as our representative, and we suffer *for Him* in response. This was and is the two-way imperative of the fact the Lord Jesus was our representative. He died *for all* that we should die to self and live *for Him* (2 Cor. 5:14,15). "His own self bare our sins [as our representative] in his own body [note the link "*our* sins" and "his *own* body"] that we being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness" (1 Pet. 2:24,25). We died with Him, there on His cross; and so His resurrection life is now ours. He is totally active for us now; His life now is *for us*, and as we live His life, we should be 100% *for Him* in our living. He gave His life *for* us, and we must lay down our lives *for* Him (1 Jn. 3:16). There are about 130 reference to being "in Christ" in the New Testament. But if any man is truly in Christ, he is a new creature, and the old things pass away; it must equally be true that "Christ [is] in you". If we are in Him, He must be in us, in that we live lives around the principle of "what would Jesus do?". His spirit becomes ours.

2 Corinthians 5:14-21 urges us to preach the salvation in Christ to all men, because He died for us, as our representative. He died *for* [the sake of] all (5:14,15), He was made sin *for* our sake (5:21); and therefore we are ambassadors *for* [same word] His sake (5:20). Because He was our representative, so we must be His representatives in witnessing Him to the world. This is why the preaching of Acts was consistently motivated by the Lord Jesus' death and resurrection for the preachers. By baptism into the name of Jesus, men confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. There was and is no other name given under Heaven by which men can be saved; "every name" under the whole Heaven must take on the name of Jesus in baptism. This is why Acts associates His exaltation (Acts 2:33; 5:31) and His new name (Acts 2:21,38; 3:6,16; 4:10,12,18,30; 5:40) with an appeal for men and women to be baptized into that Name. Realizing the meaning of the Name of Jesus and the height of His exaltation meant that they realized how "all men" could have their part in a sacrifice which represented "all men". And thus they were motivated to preach to "all men". And thus Paul's whole preaching ministry was a bearing of the Name of Jesus before the Gentiles (Acts 9:15).

Human Nature / The Flesh Cannot Be Atoned For, Or A Sacrifice Offered For It; It Must Be Cut Off

So we can't keep living the fleshly life thinking that somehow we will be atoned for. We must at least seek to put to death the flesh: not just get forgiveness for the same sins and carry on doing them. Even if this is in practice our experience, there must be a dominant desire to cut off the flesh and a counting of ourselves as dead to sin. We should do this because Christ bore our sins and by the cross healed our spiritual weakness in prospect; we respond to the death of sin which He achieved by cutting off our flesh (1 Pet. 2:24).

In the light of ten chapters of detailed exposition of the meaning of the blood of Christ, *therefore let us...* Paul triumphantly drives home (Heb. 10:19-25)*:*

- Let us enter boldly “into the holiest by the blood of Jesus”. This is only possible through a deep knowledge of sin forgiven. Our prayer life should be a positive and up building experience: “Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience”. Reflection on the atonement, believing it all, will result in a positive and unashamed faith.

- “Let us hold fast...without wavering”. If the belief of the cross is imprinted upon our minds, reflected upon not for a few fleeting minutes on Sundays but often throughout each day, we won’t waver. The natural tendency to blow hot and cold in our spiritual endeavours will be vanquished beneath an unceasing wonder at what was achieved. It is only sustained reflection upon the cross which can, in an almost mystical way, impart an unceasing verve of inspiration.

- “Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together...but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching”. Again the doctrine of the atonement and that of the second coming are linked. As we realize more and more clearly that very soon the final outworking of the cross will be achieved in the actual physical granting of redemption to us, so we will be inspired to more and more earnestly seek the welfare of our brethren. If we believe in the atonement, we will naturally seek to break bread. Whether it means summoning the courage to meet with those we naturally would rather not meet with, bringing the wine to the meeting, we will be motivated to rise up and serve in these ways by the eternal and personal truth of the cross.

As the blood of the ram had to be put on the ear, thumb and toe (Lev. 8:23), so the blood of Christ’s atonement should affect every aspect of our lives; our hearing [i.e. our perception], our doing and walking...

The Basis Of Our Salvation Is That We Are Justified, Counted By Righteous, By Our Faith And Baptism Into The Representative Sacrifice Of The Lord Jesus. His Righteousness Is Thereby Counted To Us

Throughout Romans, the point is made that the Lord Jesus counts as righteous those that believe; righteousness is imputed to us the unrighteous (Rom. 2:26; 4:3,4,5,6,8,9,10,11,22,23,24; 8:36; 9:8)

If *God* is our justifier, where is he that condemns us, or lays any guilt to our charge (Rom. 8:33,34)? And yet in family life, in relationships with others...we are so so quick to feel and hurt from the possible insinuations of others against us. We seek to justify ourselves, to correct gossip and misrepresentation, to “take up” an issue to clear our name. We all tend to be far too sensitive about what others may be implying about us. All this reflects a sad lack of appreciation of the wonder of the fact that we are justified *by God*, and in His eyes - which is surely the ultimately important perspective - we are without fault before the throne of grace, covered in the imputed and peerless righteousness of the Lord Jesus. Paul, misrepresented and slandered more than most brethren, came to conclude: “But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me [right now] is the Lord ” (1 Cor. 4:3-4). The judge is the justifier, according to this argument. Paul is not justified by himself or by other men, because they are not his judge. The fact that God alone is judge through Christ [another first principle] means that nobody can ultimately justify us or condemn us. The false claims of others can do nothing to ultimately damage us,

and our own efforts at self-justification are in effect a denial of the fact that the Lord Jesus is the judge, not us, and therefore He alone can and will justify.

These thoughts are meshed with another first principle in John 5:44, where the RV mg. has the Lord Jesus telling the Jews that they sought glory "one of another" because they didn't seek the glory that comes from the one God. Because there is only one God, there is only one glory, one Name of God, one standard of spirituality, one judge, one justifier. Whilst men seek glory and approbation and acceptance and justification from other men, they are denying the principle of one God. If there is only one God, we should seek His honour and justification, to the *total* exclusion of that of men. Hosea had revealed this truth earlier: "I am the Lord thy God...and thou shalt know no god but me: for there is no saviour beside me...neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods: for in thee [i.e. thee alone] the fatherless findeth mercy" (Hos. 13:4; 14:3). Because God alone can give salvation and mercy, therefore there is no space for worshipping or seeking for the approbation of anything or anyone else; for the receipt of mercy and salvation are the only ultimate things worth seeking. There is only one God who can give them, and therefore we should seek for His acceptance alone.

But the very same Greek word is used in Romans of *our* self-perception. We must count / impute ourselves as righteous men and women, and count each other as righteous on the basis of recognizing each others' faith rather than works: "Therefore we conclude [we count / impute / consider] that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law... Likewise reckon [impute] ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord". (Rom. 3:28; 6:11). We should *feel* clean and righteous, and act accordingly, both in our own behaviour and in our feelings towards each other. The mind of love imputes no evil to others, as God doesn't to us (1 Cor. 13:5; AV "thinketh no evil", [same word] to count / impute in Romans). And again the word occurs in 2 Corinthians 3:5: "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to *think* [same word impute] any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God". We *are* able to count / feel to ourselves as righteous: for God has counted us righteous. And if we can believe this, we will overcome that difficulty which there is within every one of us of truly counting our brother to be righteous, of having the love that truly believes and sees only the best in others.

Despite Being Saddled With Our Nature, The Lord Jesus Christ Died And Rose Again For Me, For My Justification And Salvation. His Life And Death Were A Surrender Of All To The Cause Of My Redemption, To God's Glory

And so I too must surrender all, I will willingly strive to do this, for the glorious wonder of knowing this Man who died for me to enable such great salvation. He died and rose so that He might be made Lord of His people (Rom. 14:9); if we believe in His resurrection and subsequent Lordship, He will be the Lord Jesus of our lives, Lord of every motion of our hearts. We are yet in our sins, if Christ be not risen (1 Cor. 15:17). But He has risen, and therefore we are no longer dominated by our moral weakness. Because baptism united us with His resurrection, we are no longer in our sins (Col. 2:13). Therefore the baptized believer will not "continue in sin" if he really understand and believes this (Rom. 6:1 and context). Ours is the life of freedom with Him, for He was and is our representative [note that He represents us now, in His freedom and eternal life, just as much as He did in His death].

We died and rose with Christ, if we truly believe in His representation of us and our connection with Him, then His freedom and sense of conquest will be ours; as the man guilty

of blood was to see in the death of the High Priest a representation of his own necessary death, and thereafter was freed from the limitations of the city of refuge (Num. 35:32,33). Because Christ really did rise again, and we have a part in that, we must *therefore* abstain from sin, quit bad company and labour with the risen, active Lord (1 Cor. 15:34,58). The representative nature of the Lord Jesus' death means that we are pledged to live out His self-crucifixion as far as we can; to re-live the crucifixion process in our imagination, to come to that point where we *know* we wouldn't have gone through with it, and to grasp with real wonder and gratitude the salvation of the cross. " As one has died for all, then all have died, and that He died for all in order to have the living live no longer for themselves but for Him who died and rose for them" (2 Cor. 5:14,15 Moffatt). It has been powerfully commented: " To know oneself to have been involved in the sacrificial death of Christ, on account of its representational character, is to see oneself committed to a sacrificial life, to a re-enactment in oneself of the cross" (W.F. Barling, *The Letters To Corinth*). Such is the power of a true, lived-out baptism. If we have really died and resurrected with the Lord Jesus, we will be dead unto the things of this world (Col. 2:20; 3:1). This is why Paul could say that the greatest proof that Christ had risen from the dead was the change in character which had occurred within him (Acts 26:8 cp. 1 Tim. 1:15-16.). This was “the power of his resurrection”; and it works within us too. The death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth aren’t just facts we know; if they are truly believed, there is within them the power of ultimate transformation.

Appendices

4.6 The Qur’an Or The Bible?

4.6.1 Problems With The Qur’an

Roots In Paganism

Many versions of Christianity are so deeply mixed up with paganism that it is apparent that they are merely another form of paganism. Thus the pagan feast of December 25th, on which an evergreen tree was worshipped, was appropriated to fake Christianity and re-interpreted as the birthday of Jesus. The Bible is clear enough that the Lord Jesus was not born in December but probably some time in October. What happened was that existing pagan religious rites were mixed together with some Christian ideas to form another religion; but that is all that was created, mere religion, and not the truth of God.

Sadly there is evidence that the Qur’an did just the same in order to create the ‘new’ religion of Islam. Consider the following evidence:

- The cult of the Moon-god worshipped a god called ‘Allah’, using the crescent moon as its symbol. Islam has this very same symbol, and appopriated the term ‘Allah’ to describe the god of the new religion of Islam. Significantly, the Old Testament prophets, which Islam claims to accept, condemn worship of the moon god (Dt. 4:19; 17:3; 2 Kings 21:3,5; 23:5; Jer. 8:2; 19:13; Zeph. 1:5). This would explain why the Qu’ran is written on the assumption that its primary readers know exactly who ‘Allah’ is- they did, because there is archaeological evidence to show that ‘Allah’ was the well known Moon god.

- Islam’s assumption of the crescent moon as it’s symbol, being found on the flags and coins of many Islamic states and on top of mosques, as well as being the signal for Ramadan to

begin, is proof enough that Islam's root is in the cult of the Moon god; for archeaeologically there is firm proof that the crescent moon was the pagan symbol of this cult.

- "Allah is the greatest" implies that the Qu'ran was written against a background of polytheism. What Mohammed was saying was that the Moon god 'Allah' was to be accepted as the supreme of all other pagan gods. He therefore appealed to his pagan neighbours; whilst also claiming to Jews and Christians that this 'Allah' was the same as the God of the Old Testament.

- Mecca was a shrine for the moon god. It was the most sacred site of paganism in the Arabian peninsular at the time of Mohammed. The moon god was worshipped by praying towards Mecca a few times each day, by throwing stones at the devil; fasting for Ramadan; giving support to the poor; and by making a pilgrimage to Mecca. All these very things were picked up and inserted into the new religion of Islam.

Contradictions

There are many contradictions within the Qur'an , but these are considered to be "abrogations", i.e. something better being substituted (2.106). Muslims themselves admit there are around 200 such abrogations within the book. And yet this whole concept surely contradicts 4.82: "Had the Qur'an been from other than God, they would surely have found therein much discrepancy". But these "abrogations" *are* discrepancies… And there are major contradictions of fact, too.

Muslims are quick to point out contradictions of numbers within the Bible text. Many of these are perfectly explicable. Some [not all] are caused by variant readings of *one letter* of the Hebrew text. But the Qur'an has many such contradictions too. Thus the time period of "the great day of God" is said to be 1000 years in 32.5; and 50,000 years in 70.4. This isn't a difference of one letter - a whole word is inserted (*Khamsiina*- 50). Likewise 50.38 says that the entire creation took 6 days; whilst 41.9-12 says it took 8 days. 2.136,285 say that all apostles are equal; but 2.253 says that the apostles were endowed with gifts "some above others". 17.103 says that Pharaoh was drowned in the sea; whereas 10.90-92 says that he was converted and saved alive from the Red Sea. 7.124 has Pharaoh telling his magicians that he will crucify them - but crucifixion was not invented until about 1300 years later. And then there is the contradiction between 19.33 and 4.157 over whether or not Jesus died. Everything is supposed to be obedient to God, hence the idea of predestination (30.26); but some are disobedient (7.11). The sin of idolatry is supposedly unforgivable (4.48,116). But some idolaters are forgiven (4.153). Fasting can be avoided by feeding the very poor; and yet, fasting is an inescapable Muslim duty (2.184,185). Adultery is punishable by 100 lashes (24.2), life imprisonment (4.15), or death - according to a verse of the Qur'an which was supposedly later discovered. According to 2.62, Jews and Christians will be saved; yet 3.85 says that any other religion than Islam cannot give salvation. And are we to really believe that shooting stars are missiles being thrown at Satan (37.6-10; 67.5; 72.6-9)?

The claim that the Qur'an is written so perfectly, in ideal Arabic, and is unsurpassed for its literary beauty is all very subjective. The material is very haphazard in its presentation, issues are raised and left without conclusion, only to reappear later in a garbled form. And it has been observed that there are in fact grammatical errors in the Qur'an :

Incorrect plural (2.177)

Feminine plurals where masculine should be used (4.162; 7.160)

Wrong person used (3rd rather than 1st) (63.10)

And it is hard for Muslims to explain why the Qur'an repeats parts of Jewish Midrash [commentaries] almost word for word, even though they were evidently written well before the Qur'an . Thus Sura 21 about Abraham / Ibrahim in Babylon is almost verbatim out of the words of Jonathan Ben-Uziel in the Midrash Rabbah on Genesis 15:7.

4.6.2 Problems In The Ahadith

by John Thorpe

The Ahadith purport to be reliable accounts of the words and actions of Muhammad and his companions. It is therefore reasonable to look at these accounts and to see what light they throw on the prophet-hood of Muhammad. One test is to compare them against each other, the Qur'an and known fact. When this is done, several problems immediately appear. Here are a few examples from Sahih Bukhari.

Inheritance

According to one hadith in volume 4 (SB 4.55.546), Abdullah bin Salam asked Muhammad to answer three questions in order to prove his prophet-hood. Two of these are inconsequential, but the third was: "Why does a child resemble its father, and why does it resemble its maternal uncle?". The answer to this question (and the other questions) was claimed by Muhammad to have come from God via the angel Gabriel: Allah's Apostle said, "Gabriel has just now told me of their answers.". The answer given is, however, somewhat unexpected to modern ears: As for the resemblance of the child to its parents: If a man has sexual intercourse with his wife and gets discharge first, the child will resemble the father, and if the woman gets discharge first, the child will resemble her. This is completely contradicted by modern genetics and our knowledge of inheritance, although 'Abdullah bin Salam seems to have found it convincing.

The Height Of Adam

According to SB 4.55.543 Allah created Adam, making him 60 cubits tall. This would be a height of 90 feet (27½ metres). No animal body can function at this height. The highest that the heart could pump blood from the feet would be less than 32 feet (9.81 metres); any greater height than this would cause a vacuum lock to develop in the circulation system. In fact the height at which the circulation system breaks down would be considerably less than this due to friction between the blood and the walls of the blood vessels.

Satan In The Nose

The Prophet said, "If anyone of you rouses from sleep and performs the ablution, he should wash his nose by putting water in it and then blowing it out thrice, because Satan has stayed in the upper part of his nose all the night." (SB 4.54.516). Does Satan live in people's noses at night? How big is he? How many people's nose does he manage to live in at once?

Rats Are Jewish

The Prophet said, “A group of Israelites were lost. Nobody knows what they did. But I do not see them except that they were cursed and changed into rats, for if you put the milk of a she-camel in front of a rat, it will not drink it, but if the milk of a sheep is put in front of it, it will drink it.” I told this to Ka’b who asked me, “Did you hear it from the Prophet ?” I said, “Yes.” Ka’b asked me the same question several times.; I said to Ka’b. “Do I read the Torah? [i.e. I tell you this from the Prophet.]” (SB 4.54.524). The teaching here is that rats were once Jews and the evidence given is because they will not drink camel's milk. As this is a general argument it must be taken to refer to all rats (possibly Jereboas).

The Wings Of The House Fly

The Prophet said “If a house fly falls in the drink of anyone of you, he should dip it (in the drink), for one of its wings has a disease and the other has the cure for the disease.” (SB 4.54.537). This tells us that disease is spread by house flies because one wing contains poison. The other wing contains the antidote to that poison. This explanation is very poor by modern standards, although it speaks much for the powers of observations of Islamic scholars that they connected disease with house flies.

Fever

The Prophet said, “Fever is from the heat of the [Hell] Fire; so abate fever with water.” (SB 4.54.486). A very similar statement is found in SB 4.54.483. Modern medicine has shown that a fever is a defence mechanism against invasion by foreign micro-organisms.

Dogs

Muhammad had a superstitious fear of dogs: The Prophet said, “Angels do not enter a house which has either a dog or a picture in it.” (SB 4.54.539). Allah’s Apostle ordered that the dogs should be killed. (SB 4.54.540). The next two sections indicate that anyone keeping a dog as a pet will lose some of their reward.

Intestines

This hadith is from Sahih Muslim, but it is a particularly powerful example: Allah's messenger [peace be upon him] said: A believer eats in one intestine, whereas a non-believer eats in seven intestines (SM 3.22.5118). Modern anatomy shows that this is not true!

Fear Of Wind And Eclipses

SB 2.17.144 tells us that: Whenever a strong wind blew, anxiety appeared on the face of the Prophet [fearing that the wind might be a sign of Allah's wrath]. SB 2.18.167 tells us a similar thing about solar eclipses. The problem here is that a prophet should know the truth about such things, that they are natural phenomena which should not cause fear in the righteous.

Muhammad Under The Influence Of Magic

Even worse, there are several hadith which tell us that Muhammad was sometimes under an enchantment which made him imagine things that were not so and tell untruths. SB 4.53.400 says: Once the prophet was bewitched so that he began to imagine that he had done a thing

which in fact he had not done… SB 4.54.490 gives another version of the tradition which starts: Magic was worked on the Prophet so that he began to fancy that he was doing a thing which he was not actually doing. The hadith then goes on to say who bewitched him ('Lubaid bin Al-A'sam) and how Muhammad was cured. A similar account appears in SB 7.71.660. This causes a serious problem for Moslems. If Muhammad sometimes imagined things, then he is of no value as a prophet.

These and other inconsistencies in the Ahadith lead to one of the following conclusions: either even Ahadith with the status Sahih are suspect and never came from Muhammad at all, or Muhammad was no prophet (or both). The idiosyncrasies he showed in terms of dogs, eclipses and wind suggest a man with strange obsessions, and also weaken the case that Muhammad was a prophet; a prophet would know that winds and eclipses are natural phenomena and not signs of God's wrath.

The failure of the Ahadith is a more serious problem than one might, at first, realise. One of the weaknesses of Islam is that there is no direct method of validating the Qur'an. The reason that the Qur'an is taken to contain the words of Muhammad is because there is a witness of tradition that this is the case. This witness should be enshrined in the Ahadith.

If the Ahadith are found to be wanting then the most useful witness to the origin of the Qur'an has failed and there is no reason to treat it as a book written in the early period after the death of Muhammad or to treat it as the unaltered word of God.

If, on the other hand, one can show that the Isnad method of establishing the truth of a hadith is valid, and that the Ahadith in books like Sahih Bukhari really are accurate accounts of the sayings of Muhammad, then we must accept that the sayings above were really made by Muhammad. As some of these sayings are known to be factually incorrect we know that the person who originally made them was not a prophet from God. A belief in the accuracy of the Ahadith must lead one to reject the claim that Muhammad was a prophet.

The tradition that Muhammad was sometimes under a spell during which time he did not speak the truth is a very awkward one for Moslems. If Muhammad sometimes deceived others, how can we trust any of his words? Why should we not believe that part (or all) of the Qur'an was delivered while he was under a delusion?

4.6.3 Moslem Criticisms Of The Bible Answered

There are flat contradictions between the Bible and the Qur’an, especially relating to the records of the crucifixion of Jesus. The Muslim simply assumes that the Qur’an is right and the Bible wrong; but this is to start with a presupposition, and then seek evidence to support it. To say that the Bible has been changed by the Jews hardly seems likely - both Old and New Testaments are full of criticisms of the Jews. The texts of both Testaments have been in the possession of both Jews and Christians, so they would both have had to agree if the texts were indeed to be tampered with. For 200 years before the time of Jesus, the Hebrew Old Testament existed in Greek translation as the Septuagint, and this would have had to be changed along with the Hebrew texts, if indeed the Old Testament was changed by Christians as Islam requires. Muslims can give no dates, no places, no names, responsible for the changing of the Bible texts which they assume happened. Their presupposition that the Bible *must* be wrong because it disproves the Qur’an therefore drives them to make assumptions and claims which totally lack evidence. The Dead Sea Scrolls reveal how the texts have lost

virtually nothing through the generations of recopying - these manuscripts were of the Old Testament, dating from the 2nd century BC. Their correspondence with later manuscripts is exact! The Codex Alexandrinus contains the entire Septuagint and also New Testament, written on vellum dating back to at least the 4th century AD; and the Codex Siniaticus contains the New Testament written in at least the 3rd century. The Codex Vaticanus dates from the 4th century. Note this is all before the times of Muhammad. And yet these three different manuscripts are all in substantial agreement! The first two are housed in the British Museum, London; and the third in the Vatican. So there is no way that it can be said that the text of the New Testament has been changed over at least 17 centuries! It is therefore no argument to say that over time, a manuscript must inevitably change. On this basis, we could expect the Qur'an to have changed too. There are at least 24,000 ancient New Testament manuscripts available for analysis - far more than for the Qur'an. The next most well supported book, Homer's *Iliad*, has only 643. And there are original fragments of John dating back to 120 AD, and of Matthew to 65 AD. The few variant readings do not affect in any way the sense of the text; and none of the variant readings contradicts anything written elsewhere in the New Testament. There are so many allusions to the New Testament in contemporary writings of the first 3 centuries AD that it is possible to reconstruct the entire New Testament apart from 9 verses! Nothing like this is possible with the Koran because the text was not so firmly fixed. There were many many variant readings in the Qur'an text - for Muhammad was illiterate and what he said was written down by various people - and these were only ended when Caliph Uthman ordered all other copies of the Qur'an in existence to be destroyed apart from that complied by Zaid-ibn-Thabit (see John Gilchrist, *Muhammad And The Religion Of Islam* pp. 176-199). If this had been done to the Bible, one would be left wondering whether we did have the original text, and whether it hadn't been tampered with. And this question must afflict every intellectually honest Muslim. For where is there any evidence that God inspired Caliph Uthman to do this?

Muhammad was told: "He sent down to you the Scripture [the Qur'an]…and He sent down the Torah and the Gospel" (3.3) And Jesus was "sent the Gospel" (5.46). Islam assumes that the Torah and the Gospel were sent from God, but the Old and New Testaments which we now have are not the same thing. Yet this claim is just lacking in any evidence at all. The books which they claim were revealed to Moses [Torah- *Tawraat*] and Jesus [the Gospel- *Injil*] just don't exist anywhere, nor is there any evidence for them ever having existed. The Qur'an deepens the problem by stating that these books were those in the hands of Jews and Christians at the time of Muhammad (5.44,50). Jews and Christians are told that the Law and Gospel have come to them as revelation from the Lord (5.71). And the Qur'an is said to be a confirmation of what was in the Scriptures which the Jews of Medina were reading at the time of Muhammad (2.91; 10.94). But the books which they possessed at his time were the Old and New Testaments as we now know them. There is *no* evidence that any other books existed! If God, as Muslims claim, preserved the exact text of the Qur'an, why could He not preserve these other books as well? And why does the Qur'an tell Jews and Christians to follow the precepts of their respective Scriptures, speaking of them with great reverence - if they are so utterly corrupted? How can it be that the Qur'an calls down curses on "the people of the book" if they do not obey the Torah and Gospel (5.47)- if these documents are hopelessly corrupted. How can we obey a Law and Gospel which is unknown? There are a number of Muslim writers from the 9th and 10th centuries who insist that the commonly accepted Old and New Testaments were in fact what was in the hands of "the people of the book" (as the Qur'an calls Jews and Gentiles) at that time. Al-Ghazzali, one of the greatest Muslim theologians ever, lived in the 10th century and quoted the Bible without ever doubting the trustworthiness of the text. "Al-Ghazali did not accuse the Christians of altering the texts,

but rather of misinterpreting them" (Wismer, *The Islamic Jesus* p. 165). Fakhruddin Razi, who died in 1209 "…confirming categorically that the Biblical text has not been changed…" (Ananikian, *The Alteration of The Bible According To the Moslems*, The Muslim World, Vol. 14 p. 77).

It is significant that it is later generations of Muslim apologists, not the Qur'an itself, who say that the Jews corrupted the Bible text. The passages in the Qur'an (e.g. 5.14,44) which are quoted by them speak of the Jews of Medina twisting words and distorting the verbal recitation of the Qur'an - not of scribes corrupting Hebrew manuscripts.

The sheer intellectual desperation of Muslim critics makes one wonder what is driving them. Many of the supposed contradictions in the Bible are so easily answerable that one wonders why they have to resort to them if the Bible is so fundamentally flawed. Thus they claim that because Matthew writes in the 3rd person, his Gospel couldn't have been written by him. But Allah, whom Muslims suppose wrote the Qur'an, writes in the same 3rd person: "He is Allah, there is no god except Him" (59.22)- and they don't think that this disproves that Allah is the author. Likewise, Muslim claims about the Bible's errancy are so wildly exaggerated. Ahmed Deedat in *Is The Bible God's Word?* Claims there are 50,000 errors in it- 40 / page! But no book written would have 40 errors / page. Why such gross exaggeration? Has he ever actually listed them all…?

The most commonly raised criticisms are:

1. The Genealogies Of Jesus

Both Matthew and Luke agree on the genealogy from Abraham/Ibrahim to David. From there, Matthew traces the genealogy of Jesus through Solomon, and Luke through Nathan. Matthew takes us to Joseph, the legal guardian of Jesus: and Luke to Mary. He speaks of Jesus as the "supposed" son of Joseph. He doesn't mention any women in his genealogy - and for the sake of sustaining a masculine genealogy, Joseph is named in her place. The early chapters of Matthew focus on Joseph's role, whereas those of Luke focus on Mary.

2. Many of the supposed contradictions relating to numbers – e.g. one record saying "hundreds" another "thousands"- are understandable once it is recognized that the words translated with these terms refer to military units, not exact numbers. Likewise a Roman 'century' contained not 100 but 80 soldiers. The following are commonly quoted in Moslem handbooks of how to prove contradictions in the Bible:

2 Sam. 10:18 And the Syrians fled before Israel; and David slew the men of seven hundred chariots of the Syrians, and forty thousand horsemen, and smote Shobach the captain of their host, who died there.

1 Chron. 19:18 But the Syrians fled before Israel; and David slew of the Syrians seven thousand men which fought in chariots, and forty thousand footmen, and killed Shophach the captain of the host.

Comment: The difference between 700 chariots and 7000 men is because there would have been around 10 men in each chariot; hence there is no contradiction between 700 chariots recorded by one historian, and 7000 "men which fought in chariots" in another record. 40,000 horsemen and 40,000 footmen can be reconciled by any of the following:

- They may have arrived on horses but fought on foot

- It could be that both 40,000 horsemen and a further 40,000 footmen were killed. 2 Sam. 8:4 describes a similar victory likewise in terms of how many horsemen and how many footmen were killed.

- Adam Clarke comments: "It is very probable that, in former times, the Jews expressed, as they often do now, their numbers, not by words at full length, but by numeral letters; and, as many of the letters bear a great similarity to each other, mistakes might easily creep in when the numeral letters came to be expressed by words at full length. This alone will account for the many mistakes which we find in the numbers in these books, and renders a mistake here very probable. The letter ז zain, with a dot above, stands for seven thousand, נ nun for seven hundred: the great similarity of these letters might easily cause the one to be mistaken for the other, and so produce an error in this place".
1 Kings 7:26 And it was an hand breadth thick, and the brim thereof was wrought like the brim of a cup, with flowers of lilies: it contained two thousand baths.

2 Chron. 4:5 And the thickness of it was an handbreadth, and the brim of it like the work of the brim of a cup, with flowers of lilies; and it received and held three thousand baths.
Comment: It could be that the container had a capacity of 3,000 baths, but it was filled to 2,000 baths normally. It should also be remembered that the Chronicles account was written during or after the captivityof the Jews in Babylon. It is possible that a new container had been built by that time, larger than the one initially built by Solomon. 2 Chron. 3:3 speaks of "cubits after the first measure", referring to how the earlier definition of measures such as cubits, during the time of Moses, were not the same as the Babylonian measures. Adam Clarke cites evidence that "the Babylonish cubit was a palm or one-sixth shorter than the cubit of Moses". The definition of a "bath" was probably also different. This is why Ez. 43:13, as a prophecy given in Babylon, had to define the cubit specifically as the Jewish cubit rather than the Babylonian cubit.
1 Kings 4:26 And Solomon had forty thousand stalls of horses for his chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen.

1 Kings 9:25 And Solomon had four thousand stalls for horses and chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen; whom he bestowed in the chariot cities, and with the king at Jerusalem.

Comment: It could be that 40,000 stalls were for horses; but 4,000 for the 1,400 chariots themselves (1 Kings 10:26) and some horses. Or, there were 40,000 horses in 4,000 stables, 10 horses / stable, which would be reasonable. Another possibility is that 1 Kings 4:26 speaks of the number of horses Solomon had in total throughout his kingdom, whereas 1 Kings 9:25 speaks only of the 4,000 he had in Jerusalem. The Septuagint reads 4,000 in 1 Kings 4:26. There could have been a slight copying error between 'arbaim' [forty] and 'arbah' [four]. Our position is that the original texts were inspired and infallible, but there may have been slight errors in translation and copying of those texts.

1 Chronicles 18:9 Now when Tou king of Hamath heard how David had smitten all the host of Hadarezer king of Zobah; He sent Hadoram his son to king David, to enquire of his welfare, and to congratulate him, because he had fought against Hadarezer, and smitten him; (for Hadarezer had war with Tou;) and with him all manner of vessels of
gold and silver and brass.

2 Samuel 8:9 When Toi king of Hamath heard that David had smitten all the host of Hadadezer, Then Toi sent Joram his son unto king David, to salute him, and to bless him, because he had fought against Hadadezer, and smitten him: for Hadadezer had wars with Toi. And Joram brought with him vessels of silver, and vessels of gold, and vessels of brass

Comment: Joram is clearly another name for Hadoram
Ezra 2:5 The children of Arah, seven hundred seventy and five.
Nehemiah 7:10 The children of Arah, six hundred fifty and two.

Comment: The list in Ezra was made in Babylon, when the Jews who wanted to return to Judah made a kind of register. The Nehemiah list was made when they actually arrived in Jerusalem. The differences in numbers reflect the fact that some died on the way; others maybe registered but didn't come, preferring to stay in the soft life of Babylon at the last minute. Other areas show higher numbers in Nehemiah's list of those who arrived; because presumably others at the last minute decided to come with them.

Also, the Ezra list was compiled before the people had been ordered by their genealogies. By Nehemiah's time, everyone had been placed in families more accurately, especially those who didn't know their genealogy. This would account for some of the differences of numbers for the different families and areas.
2 Kings 8:25 In the twelfth year of Joram the son of Ahab king of Israel did Ahaziah the son of Jehoram king of Judah begin to reign. Two and twenty years old was Ahaziah when he began to reign; and he reigned one year in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Athaliah, the daughter of Omri king of Israel.
2 Chron. 22:2 Forty and two years old was Ahaziah when he began to reign, and he reigned one year in Jerusalem. His mother's name also was Athaliah the daughter of Omri.

Comment:This would appear to be a case of a confusion between the Hebrew letter for 'twenty' and that for 'forty'; the difference is miniscule. It would seem this was a copyist's error. However, it is just possible that 2 Chron. 22:2 is referring to the 42nd year of the kingdom of his mother's family, i.e. it was the 42nd year of the reign of the family of Omri in Israel.
2 Sam. 8:4 And David took from him a thousand chariots, and seven hundred horsemen, and twenty thousand footmen: and David houghed all the chariot horses, but reserved of them for an hundred chariots.
1 Chron. 18:4 And David took from him a thousand chariots, and seven thousand horsemen, and twenty thousand footmen: David also houghed all the chariot horses, but reserved of them an hundred chariots.

Comment: The difference between 700 and 7000 is a matter of a point over one of the letters. This would then be a copyist's error, not an error of the original inspiration. Alternatively, the smaller number of 700 may refer to the chief officers captured; or seven 'hundreds' or companies, of 10 men each, making the 7000 total of 1 Chron. 18:4.
2 Samuel 24:9 And Joab gave up the sum of the number of the people unto the king: and there were in Israel eight hundred thousand valiant men that drew the sword; and the men of Judah were five hundred thousand men.
1 Chronicles 21:5 And Joab gave the sum of the number of the people unto David. And all they of Israel were a thousand thousand and an hundred thousand men that drew sword: and Judah was four hundred threescore and ten thousand men that drew sword.

Comment: The 800,000 men of Israel compared to the 1,100,000 could be because the 800,000 were the potential men of war who were numbered, excluding the standing army which David already had- comprised of 24,000 men who served every month, i.e. 288,000 / year. If they had 12,000 officers, 1,000 for each tribe, then this would explain the 'missing' 300,000 (see 1 Chron. 27:1).

The differences in the numbers of Judah could be because the 30,000 not numbered in 2 Sam. 24:9 refer to those of Levi and Benjamin, whom Joab didn't count; or, 470,000 was rounded up to 500,000.

4.6.4 The Bible: Written By Inspiration

God's spirit is His power, thoughts and disposition, which He reveals through the actions which His spirit performs. We mentioned in the previous section how God's spirit was seen at work in the creation: "By his spirit he hath garnished the heavens" (Job 26:13) - the spirit of God moving upon the face of the waters to bring about the present creation (Gen. 1:2). Yet we also read that "by the word of the Lord" the world was made (Ps. 33:6), as exemplified by the Genesis narrative recording that "God said" things were to be created, and it happened. God's spirit, therefore, is very much reflected in His word. Likewise our words express our inner thoughts and desires - the real 'us' - very accurately. Jesus wisely pointed out: "Out of the abundance of the heart (the mind) the mouth speaketh" (Mt. 12:34). So if we would control our words, we must firstly work on our thoughts. God's Word, then, is a reflection of His spirit, or thoughts. It is such a blessing that in the Bible we have God's words written down so that we might understand God's spirit or mind. David spoke of how God's word and "own heart" are parallel (2 Sam. 7:21); God's mind/spirit is expressed in His Word. God achieved this miracle of expressing His spirit in written words by the process of *INSPIRATION.* This term is based around the word "spirit":

In-spirit-ation

"Spirit" means "breath" or breathing, "Inspiration" means "in-breathing". This means that the words which men wrote while under "inspiration" from God were the words of God's spirit. Paul encouraged Timothy not to let his familiarity with the Bible lead him to forget the wonder of the fact that it is the words of God's spirit, and therefore provides all that we need in order to have a true knowledge of God.

"From a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 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 (complete), thoroughly furnished ('thoroughly equipped', N.I.V.) unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:15-17).

If the inspired Scriptures can provide such a totality of knowledge, then there is no need for some 'inner light' to show us the truth about God. But how many times do people speak of their personal feelings and experiences as being the source of their knowledge of God! If an acceptance in faith of God's inspired Word is enough to equip completely someone in the Christian life, there is no need for any other power of righteousness in our lives. If there is such a need, then God's Word has not completely equipped us, as Paul promises it will. To hold the Bible in our hands and believe that it really is the Word of God's spirit takes quite

some faith. The Israelites were reasonably interested in what God's Word had to say, as are many "Christians" today. We all need to carefully reflect on Hebrews 4:2.

"Unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them (Israel in the wilderness): but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it".

Instead of growing to have total faith in the power of God's spirit-word, it is far more attractive to take a spiritual short-cut: to reason that a power of righteousness suddenly comes upon us, which will make us acceptable to God, rather than having to experience the pain of consciously bringing our lives into obedience to God's word, and thereby letting God's spirit truly influence our hearts.

This unwillingness to accept the huge spiritual power which is in God's word has led many Christians to question whether all the Scriptures are fully inspired by God. They have suggested that much of what we read in the Bible was just the personal opinions of the writers. But Peter effectively disposes of such woolly reasoning.

"We have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it...above all, you must understand (this is vital!) that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:19-21 N.I.V.).

We must "above all" believe that the Bible is inspired. The doctrine of inspiration is so often emphasized in the Bible text (e.g. Mt. 15:4; Mk. 12:36; Acts 1:16; 28:25; Heb. 3:7; 9:8; 10:15).

The Writers Of The Bible

A solid belief in the total inspiration of the Scriptures is therefore vital. The men who wrote the Bible were irresistibly carried along by the spirit which inspired them, so that their words were not their own. The Word of God being the truth (Jn. 17:17) and providing rebuke and correction (2 Tim. 3:16,17), it is not surprising that with many people it is unpopular - for truth hurts. The prophet Jeremiah suffered much opposition for speaking forth the words God inspired him with, and so he determined not to record or publicize the words which he was given. But because the writing of God's Word is a result of God's will rather than human desire, he was "carried along by the Holy Spirit" so that he had no choice in the matter. "I am in derision daily, every one mocketh me...Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay" (Jer. 20:7,9). Peter describes this idea of the Bible writers being 'carried along' with the same Greek word used in Acts 27:17,27 about a ship being 'driven' by the wind, out of control.

Likewise when Balaam was determined to curse Israel, the spirit of God made him speak out a blessing on them instead (Num. 24:1-13 cf. Dt. 23:5). He could not 'escape from' God's word (Num. 22:12 Heb. 1:1).

A surprising number of the men whom God inspired to speak His word went through periods of reluctance to do so. The list is impressive.

· Moses (Ex. 4:10)

· Jeremiah (Jer. 1:6)

· Ezekiel (Ez. 3:14)

· Jonah (Jonah 1:2,3)

· Paul (Acts 18:9)

· Timothy (1 Tim. 4:6-14)

· Balaam (Num. 22-24)

This all confirms what we learnt in 2 Peter 1:19-21 - that God's Word is not the personal opinion of men, but the result of men being inspired to write down what was revealed to them. The prophet Amos reflected: "The Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy?" (Am. 3:8). At times Moses lost the sense of his own personality, so strong was his inspiration by God: "All these commandments, which the Lord hath spoken unto Moses.." (Num. 15:22,23); these words were actually said by Moses (v. 17). Jeremiah spoke "from the mouth of the Lord" and yet Yahweh spoke "by the mouth of Jeremiah" (2 Chron. 36:12,22) - this is how close was the relationship between God and the men He spoke through. Their mouth was His mouth. There are many times in the writings of the prophets where it is hard to determine whether the personal pronouns refer to God or the prophet (e.g. Jer. 17:13-15) - so close was the manifestation of God through them. "The beginning of the word of the Lord by Hosea" (Hos. 1:2) prefaces His command to tell Hosea to go and show God's love towards faithless Israel by marrying and living with a worthless woman. Hosea was God's Word to men, as supremely the Lord Jesus was "the word made flesh", and we likewise must put into practice the spirit which is in God's word.

Another strand of evidence for this is that the writers of the Bible realized that they did not fully understand the things which they wrote. They "searched" for the correct interpretation - "unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things" which they wrote (1 Pet. 1:9-12). The actual words they recorded were not their own but God's and they wished to understand better the things they recorded for Him. The following provide obvious examples: Daniel (Dan. 12:8-10); Zechariah (Zech. 4:4-13); Peter (Acts 10:17). The child Samuel likewise didn't know Yahweh but still spoke His word (1 Sam. 3:7).

If these men were only partly inspired, we do not have access to the true Word or spirit of God. If what they wrote really was the Word of God, then it follows that they had to be completely taken over by God's spirit during the period of inspiration - otherwise the product would not have been God's Word in purity. An acceptance that God's Word is completely His, provides us with more motivation to read and obey it. "Thy word is very pure: therefore thy servant loveth it" (Ps. 119:140).

Thus the books of the Bible are the work of God through His spirit, rather than the literature of men. The truth of this is shown by considering how the New Testament refers to the Old Testament writings.

- Matthew 2:5 (R.V. mg.) speaks of how it was "written through the prophets" - God was writing through them. The R.V. margin always uses the word "through" when describing how God wrote by the prophets.

- Matthew 2:15 quotes from Micah, but says: "[that] which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet…". Likewise Hebrews 2:6: "one [actually David] in a certain place testified…". The personality of the prophet is irrelevant compared to the fact that it is God's word which He spake. There are other examples of where the name of the prophet is suppressed as if to show it is not so relevant (Mt. 1:22; 2:23; 21:4).

- "The Holy Spirit by the mouth of David spake..." (Acts 1:16). This is how Peter quoted from the Psalms (cf. Heb. 3:7).

- "Well spake the Holy Spirit by Esaias" (Acts 28:25 - this was how Paul quoted Isaiah). Luke 3:4 speaks of "the book of *the words of* Esaias" rather than just, 'the book of Isaiah'.

The human authors of the Bible were therefore relatively unimportant to the early Christians; it was the fact that their words had been inspired with the spirit of God which was important.

We will conclude this section with a list of verses which show that God's spirit is revealed to us through His written word.

- Jesus plainly stated, "The words that I speak...are spirit" (Jn. 6:63); He spoke under inspiration from God (Jn. 17:8; 14:10).

- We are described as being re-born by both the spirit (Jn. 3:3- 5) and the word of God (1 Pet. 1:23).

- "The words which the Lord of hosts hath sent in his spirit by the...prophets" (Zech. 7:12).

- "I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you" (Prov. 1:23) associates a true understanding of God's word with the action of His spirit upon us - reading the Book without understanding is of no avail, seeing that the spirit/mind of God is not being revealed to us.

- There are parallels between God's spirit and His word in many passages: "My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth..." (Is. 59:21); "For Thy word's sake, and according to thine own heart (spirit)" (2 Sam. 7:21); "I will put my spirit within you (your heart - see context)..."; "I will put my law... in their hearts" (Ez. 36:27; Jer. 31:33).

God is His spirit (Jn. 4:24), and God is His Word ("the word was God"); it evidently follows that His words therefore reflect His spirit. Our attitude to God's Word is our attitude to Him. Because that word is pure, therefore we love it (Ps. 119:140); when we break commandments, we are despising God's Word (Am. 2:4). This is where belief in inspiration has a powerful practical effect.

The Power Of God's Word

As God's spirit refers not only to His mind/disposition but also to the power by which He expresses those thoughts, it is to be expected that His spirit-word is not just a statement of His mind; there is also a dynamic power in that word.

A true appreciation of that power should make us eager to make use of it; any feelings of embarrassment associated with doing so should be overcome by our knowledge that obedience to God's word will give us the power which we need to accelerate out of the small things of this life, towards salvation. Out of much experience of this, Paul wrote:-

"I am not ashamed of the Gospel (the word) of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation" (Rom. 1:16).

Luke 1:37 (R.V.) harps on the same theme: "No word of God shall be void of power (spirit)".

Bible study and applying it to our lives is therefore a dynamic process. It is quite unrelated to the cold, academic approach of theologians and also to the 'feel-good' Christianity of many churches, whereby a few passages are briefly quoted, but no effort made to understand or apply them. "The word of God is quick (living) and powerful"; "the word of His (God's) power" (Heb. 4:12; 1:3). "The word of God...effectually worketh also in you that believe" (1 Thess. 2:13). Through the Word, God is actively at work in the minds of true believers, every hour of the day.

The Gospel which you are learning is therefore the true power of God; if you allow it to do so, it can work in your life to change you into a child of God, showing the spirit/mind of God to some degree in this life, preparing you for the change to God's spiritual nature which will come at Christ's return (2 Pet. 1:4). Paul's preaching was "in demonstration of the spirit and of power" (1 Cor. 2:4).

We are surrounded by those who have a semi-faith in the Bible as God's Word, despite their claims of commitment to Christ. Similarly they claim to believe in God, and yet fail to accept that He is a real person. By denying the total inspiration of Scripture and its supremacy over our personal feelings and convictions, they are denying God's power. The words of 2 Timothy 3:5 come to mind: "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof", i.e. the power of the word of the Gospel.

Our fundamentalism is mocked by the world ("You don't believe it like that, do you?!"), and so was that of Paul and his band of preachers: "The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God" (1 Cor. 1:18).

Bearing all this in mind, can't we each hold the Bible in our hands with an ever greater measure of respect, and read it with ever more eagerness to understand and obey?

The Attitude Of God's People To His Word

A sensitive reading of the Biblical record indicates that the Bible writers not only recognized that they were inspired, but they also treated other Bible writers as inspired. The Lord Jesus is pre-eminent in this. When Jesus quoted from the Psalms of David, he prefaced this with the

words, “David in spirit...” (Mt. 22:43), showing his recognition of the fact that David’s words were inspired. Jesus also spoke of Moses’ “writings” (Jn. 5:45-47), showing that he believed Moses to have literally written the Pentateuch. Some Bible critics have doubted whether Moses could write, but the attitude of Christ clearly contradicts their approach. He called Moses’ writings “the commandment of God” (Mk. 7:8,9). It is also claimed that much of the Old Testament is myth, but Jesus and Paul never treat them as such. Jesus spoke of the Queen of Sheba as an accepted historical fact (Mt. 12:42); he did not say, ‘As the story goes about the Queen of Sheba...’.

The attitude of the Apostles was identical to that of their Lord. It is epitomized by Peter who said that his personal experience of hearing Christ’s words with his own ears was eclipsed by the “more sure word of prophecy” (2 Pet. 1:19-21). Peter believed that Paul’s letters were “Scripture” as much as the “other Scriptures”, a phrase normally used about the Old Testament writings. Thus Peter saw Paul’s letters as being as authoritative as the Old Testament.

There are many allusions in Acts, the Epistles and Revelation to the Gospels (e.g. cf. Acts 13:51; Mt. 10:14), indicating not only that they were all inspired by the same spirit, but that the Gospel records were treated as inspired by the New Testament writers. Paul in 1 Timothy 5:18 quotes both Deuteronomy 25:4 (in the Old Testament) and Luke 10:7 as “Scripture”. Paul hammers home the point that his message was from Christ, not himself (Gal. 1:11,12; 1 Cor. 2:13; 11:23; 15:3). This was recognized by the other apostles; thus James 4:5 quotes Paul’s words of Galatians 5:17 as “Scripture”.

God “has spoken” to us in Christ; there is therefore no need for any further revelation (Heb. 1:2). It can be observed that the Bible alludes to other writings which are now not available (e.g. the book of Jasher, the writings of Nathan, Elijah, Paul to Corinth), and John’s third Epistle implies that John had written an unpreserved letter to the church which Diotrephes had refused to obey. Why have these writings not been preserved for us? Evidently because they were not relevant to us. We can therefore rest assured that God has preserved all that is relevant for us.

It is sometimes claimed that the New Testament books were gradually accepted as being inspired, but the fact that the Apostles treated each other’s writings as inspired surely disproves this. There was a miraculous spirit gift available to test whether letters and words which claimed to be inspired really were so (1 Cor. 14:37; 1 Jn. 4:1; Rev. 2:2). This means that the inspired letters were immediately accepted as inspired. If there was any unguided human selection of what went into our Bible, then the book would have no authority.

Summing Up

The Qur’an says that the Old and New Testaments were given to men as inspired by God

The texts we now use clearly contradict the Qur’an

Muslims therefore say that the texts were corrupted.

Seeing the manuscript evidence for the Old and New Testaments goes back well before the birth of Islam, it follows that this must have happened before the 1st century AD

Islam claims the original Old and New Testament Scriptures were lost long ago.

And yet the Qur'an says that they were in existence in the 1st century and at the time of Muhammad.

How can this be, if they were lost or corrupted? Where are the original, inspired texts?

There is *no* evidence any such radically alternative text of Old and New Testaments ever existed.

If the true, inspired Old and New Testaments existed at the time of Muhammad and were read by "the people of the book" [i.e. Jews and Christians]…then this would mean that from the 1st up to at least the 7th centuries there were false and true Old and New Testaments circulating. But there is no evidence of this. And yet there is evidence e.g. from the Dead Sea Scrolls that the early manuscripts were faithfully transcribed over the ages. Where did these other 'uncorrupted' texts come from? Who copied them out over the centuries? There are too many fundamental questions that remain unanswered.

4-6-5 The Missing Body Of Jesus

Islam considers Jesus to be a great prophet, but says he didn't die nor rise from the dead. This raises at least two fundamental questions:

- The teachings of Jesus were based around His predictions of His forthcoming death and resurrection. If these didn't come true, then how can He be a "great prophet"? For the whole thrust of His message was falsified if He neither died nor resurrected. He promised life to His followers conditional upon His own resurrection. "Because I live, ye shall live also" (Jn. 14:19). He surely isn't worth accepting as a prophet if His teaching was so fundamentally deluded.

- If we are to accept Jesus as a prophet, surely His words must be written down somewhere for this claim to be true? If the New Testament is so hopelessly corrupt, as Islam claims, then where is the true record of His words?

If Muslims accept that the words of Jesus as recorded in the New Testament are true, then they really have to accept the rest of the book. For they would be hard pushed to prove that the four Gospels are inspired by God but the rest of the New Testament isn't. If the New Testament is indeed the inspired record, as Christians believe it to be, then the repeated stress it gives to the death and resurrection of Jesus must be given its' full weight. The words of Jesus Himself state in crystal clarity that He died and resurrected: "I am he that liveth and was dead; and behold, I am alive for ever more, Amen; and I have the keys of hell and of death" (Rev. 1:18). These words teach that His resurrection is the basis of the Hope He offers to mankind. And Paul was inspired to write in perfect harmony with this: "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept…For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward they that are Christ's at his coming" (1 Cor. 15:20-23).

And perhaps most piercingly, Paul extended this logic : "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins….if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable" (1 Cor. 15:17). These words are so relevant to Islam. If Jesus Christ is

merely a prophet whose words are helpful for "this life", then not only are we listening to a deluded man, but "we are of all men most miserable". But the example of the disciples and early Christians shows that they were not in this case at all. They were willing to suffer the loss of all things for preaching the good news of the resurrection of Jesus. They felt impelled by the reality of the resurrection to preach this, with no prospect of personal gain but only loss. They smiled at their sufferings (Acts 4:18-20; 5:41), and turned the world upside down by their witness (Acts 17:6). Extra-Biblical history confirms that the Roman world was indeed overrun by the Christian preaching of the resurrected Jesus. And the question inevitably arises: why did they do this? A.D. Norris has correctly observed:

"They did it

(i) Because they had stolen the body and let it corrupt somewhere else, and had the ability (for no purpose) to elaborate a vast framework of deceit from Scripture and invented appearances;

(ii) Because a Jesus not quite dead had struggled inexplicably from the tomb and gasped an agonized greeting in their terrified ears

(iii) Because Jesus rose from the dead.

These are not three choices. We have a simple decision to make: conviction, or mental suicide" (*The Resurrection Of Jesus Christ* p. 13). Theories of stolen bodies and swoons would not have motivated men like Paul to make the dramatic changes which they did, nor would they have been enough to motivate the world-changing evangelism which was inspired by the resurrection of Jesus. Further, despite everyone wanting to know what had become of the body of Jesus of Nazareth, nobody has ever claimed that they obtained the corpse or skeleton. Why would the idea of the resurrection of Jesus become so popular straight after His death, if indeed His corpse or skeleton was still lying in the tomb where He was buried? *Where is, then, the missing body?*

Men like Confucius and Muhammad developed a large following before their deaths. Yet Jesus died the death of a loser. Why, then, was the movement He started so successful, when His ministry ended in apparent failure? Only His resurrection provides an answer.

If Jesus didn't rise from the dead, then the bones of Jesus lay somewhere in Palestine. And there's been a huge search for them. Significantly, nobody has ever seriously claimed to have found them- anywhere! When His corpse was the most hunted for of all time. There are of course other stories of 'resurrections' around the world. But not one of them had the effect which that of Jesus of Nazareth had. Those missing bodies didn't transform the world by radically transforming countless individual human lives. There's an account of a supposed 'resurrection' of a man in Tibet in 1953, documented in Chogyam Trungpa, *Born in Tibet* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1966) pp. 95 ff. The account describes the dead body getting smaller over a period of days, and then disappearing. But nobody knows where the man went to. There was no record of anyone meeting the man later. He didn't change anyone's life. At best, this is a story of a missing body- not a resurrection. The more one considers those stories, they make the resurrection of Jesus the more unique.

4.7 Islamic Claims About Muhammad

There are many embellishments around the personality of Muhammad which have been made in Muslim tradition; but there is a difference between the image which many Muslims have of Muhammad, and the actual information which is contained within the text of the Qur'an. For example, the idea that there is *nur-I-Muhammadi*, "the light of Muhammad", is not found in the Qur'an. It is purely an Islamic tradition. The New Testament clearly states that Jesus is the light of the world (Jn. 8:12).

If Muhammad was indeed the last prophet, whose word in the Qur'an is unalterable, then there should be no need for a Muslim to rely upon the traditions or sayings of other Muslims as the basis for faith and living. Seeing that the Qur'an was written down some time after Muhammad died, it follows that those who wrote down the oral traditions were not prophets; they were not inspired by God's spirit to write. The Biblical account of inspiration is far more appealing, and brings God that much closer to His word. Every word is as it were the breathing of God Himself to us, albeit through the pens of men. Those words aren't just the writing down of a man's words, remembered and passed on by uninspired men, written down by fallible people who lacked the Spirit of God guiding them. The Ahadith, or short stories about Muhammad , rest for their authority upon the good reputation of those who passed them on. There is no mechanism to show whether or not the stories were passed on accurately or not. Because of this there are variations in Islamic belief and practice, resulting in the divided state of Islam (Shi'ite, subdivided into the Twelvers and the Seveners; Alawites; Druze; Sunni etc.).

Muslim claims that the Old Testament predicts the coming of Muhammad raises the question of whether the Old Testament is corrupt or not. Muslims quote from the Old Testament; and yet they claim that the original Old Testament given to Moses has been lost, and that the Old Testament text which we now have has been corrupted. They can't have it both ways. Their quotation of Deuteronomy 18:18 as relevant to Muhammad is an example: "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him". The similarities with Jesus are far greater than with Muhammad:

- Moses and Jesus both left Egypt to do God's work (Mt. 2:15)- Muhammad was never in Egypt.

- Both forsook riches (Heb. 11:25,26 cp. 2 Cor. 8:9). Muhammad never did this.

- Deuteronomy 18:15-18 makes it clear that the similarity between Moses and the later prophet would be in that like Moses, the coming One would be a mediator between God and His people. As Moses sprinkled the people with blood under the old covenant, so Jesus "is the mediator of a new covenant" through His own blood (Heb. 9:15).

- The Jews who believed thought that Jesus fulfilled Deuteronomy 18:18: "Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world…Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the Prophet" (Jn. 6:14; 7:40). Acts 3:22 specifically says that this is indeed so: "For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you".

- When the Jews asked Jesus to give them a sign, just as Moses had done (Jn. 6:30), He created bread in the same way as Moses gave manna in the wilderness; and then He discoursed about the similarities and superiorities between Him and Moses: "I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (Jn. 6:48-51).

- Muhammad was hardly a prophet "from among their brethren", as he was not a Jew. The phrase "their brethren" is used in the context (Dt. 18:2) to refer to the other tribes of Israel apart from Levi (as Judges 20:13). Earlier in Deuteronomy 17:15 the Jews were told they could only have a king "from among your brethren…you may not put a foreigner over you".

- "I will put my words in his mouth" was not uniquely true of Muhammad . The same words are used of Jeremiah (Jer. 1:9) and also Jesus: "For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak" (Jn. 12:49,50).

Again, the desperation of Muslim claims raises questions as to why they have to resort to this level of appeal if truth is really behind them. Thus the Qur'an claims that Jesus prophesied the coming of a prophet called Ahmad (61.6). But although there are some similar letters to 'Muhammad' , these are two different words. The two names exist to the present day as quite different personal names. Muslims claim that the *parakletos* of John's Gospel is really *periklutos*, a word with a similar meaning ["one who is praised"] to Ahmad. But these are two totally different words in the Greek text. If as Muslims claim the New Testament was corrupted, then the question is, where are the original uncorrupted manuscripts? Is it not that Islam has been driven to create evidence for the erroneous claims of the Qur'an ? In any case, the *parakletos* was to abide "for ever", as a comfort to the disciples, as a replacement and substitute for the personal presence of Jesus which they were now losing - not to appear hundreds of years later as a person called Muhammad . The *parakletos* is clearly defined as the Holy Spirit (Jn. 14:26), which they were to wait in Jerusalem until they received (Lk. 24:49; Acts 1:4,5).

A similar desperation is found in claims that the Gospel Of Barnabas ought to be included in the Bible, and it denies the crucifixion and prophecies of Muhammad. Yet this 'Gospel' was first published in 1907, although it seems to have been written some time before that, and was subsequently reprinted by Muslims. It totally contradicts the other Gospels and the rest of the New Testament - as well as the Old Testament. Thus it claims that the Jubilee year came every 100 years (*The Gospel of Barnabas* p. 104), whereas the Old Testament teaches this was to be every fiftieth year (Lev. 25:11). Further the text says: "The year of Jubilee, which now cometh every hundred years", as if alluding to the way that Pope Boniface in the 14th century decreed that the year of Jubilee should be observed every 100 years. Parts of the 'Gospel' quote from Dante's *Divina Comedia* and *Inferno*. And the Qur'an claims there are seven heavens (2.29), whereas the Gospel of Barnabas says there are 10 Heavens (p. 223). It speaks of "the vegetative soul", quoting from Aristotle. And Nazareth is presented as a harbour city on Galilee (p. 23), when it was inland. The Qur'an says that Mary experienced "the pangs of childbirth" and pain (19.23), whereas 'Barnabas' repeats the Roman Catholic idea that she brought forth Jesus without pain (p. 5). 'Barnabas' says that Jesus said "I am not the Messiah" (pp. 54,104), whereas the Qur'an often says He was the Messiah (3.45 etc.).

4.8 Islam And Women

by John Thorpe:

In spite of current Moslem propaganda, many Moslem women know that they lack protection from men. In their marriage they have no right to demand that their husband remains faithful to them. The husband can divorce them very easily for any reason, without their being able to prevent it, but they have no similar right themselves. On divorce their ex husbands do not need to support them beyond a limited period of time. They can be deserted sexually for no particular reason and they may be required to accept the presence of another woman. They can also be beaten by their husbands.

Real Christianity provides guarantees for women on all these points as well as on all other points claimed by Moslems. The Bible requires that women are to be treated equally with men (Gal. 3:28), excepting for the duties of speaking during meetings (1 Cor. 14:34), although in any family it is the husband who is to be the leader (Eph. 5:22; Col. 3:18; 1 Pet. 3:1). The problems listed above are all met in the Bible. Husbands must love their wives and look after them (Eph. 5:25; Col. 3:19). They must remain faithful (18 verses in the New Testament, including Mt. 5:27,28). They may not leave their wives (Mt. 5:32), or even abandon them sexually (1 Cor. 7:5). They may not add another wife to the family (Mt. 19:5; 1 Tim. 3:2,12). This provides a level of security for women which is simply not available to Islamic women.

4.9

A Summary Of The Christian Gospel

1. GOD

1.1 There is a personal being called God

1.2 whose character is a perfect blend of righteousness and mercy

1.3 having a real, personal existence,

1.4 whose image we bear.

1.5 The angels are His messengers

1.6 who cannot sin,

1.7 sharing God's nature.

1.8 The Christian hope is to be given God's nature in a bodily form at Christ's return.

2. THE SPIRIT OF GOD

2.1 God's spirit refers to His power, breath and mind,

2.2 through which He achieves all things

2.3 and is everywhere present.

2.4 The Holy Spirit refers to this power used to achieve certain ends.

2.5 At various times in the past, men possessed the miraculous gifts of the spirit.

2.6 These are not at present available,

2.7 God's power now being revealed to us through His Word.

2.8 The Holy Spirit does not force people to be spiritual against their own will.

2.9 The Bible was completely inspired by God's spirit.

2.10 The Bible is our only authority in our relationship with God.

3. THE PROMISES OF GOD

3.1 The Gospel was preached in the form of the promises made to the Jewish fathers.

3.2 The seed of the woman in Genesis 3:15 refers to Christ who was temporarily 'bruised' by sin, the seed of the serpent.

3.3 In fulfilment of God's promises, planet earth will never be destroyed.

3.4 Abraham's and David's seed is Christ;

3.5 we can be in Christ by belief and baptism,

3.6 so that these promises have relation to the true believers.

4. GOD AND DEATH

4.1 By nature man is mortal, prone to sin, and

4.2 cursed as a result of Adam's sin.

4.3 Christ had this human nature.

4.4 The soul refers to 'us', our body, thinking or person. There is no such thing as an ‘immortal soul’.

4.5 The spirit refers to our life force/breath and disposition.

4.6 Death is a state of unconsciousness.

4.7 At Christ's return there will be a bodily resurrection only of those who have heard the true Gospel and are accountable for their response.

4.8 Knowledge and appreciation of God's word will be the basis of the judgment.

4.9 The full granting of immortality will occur at the judgment seat.

4.10 The punishment of the responsible wicked will be eternal death.

4.11 'Hell' refers to the grave. It is not a place of torture for the wicked.

4.12 'Gehenna' was an area outside Jerusalem where rubbish and criminals were burnt.

5. THE KINGDOM OF GOD

5.1 The people of Israel were the Kingdom of God in the past.

5.2 This has now been ended, but will be re-established at Christ's return,

5.3 in the form of a world-wide Kingdom on earth, ruled over by Christ on God's behalf.

5.4 The first 1000 years (or 'Millennium') of this Kingdom will see the true believers of all ages ruling over the ordinary mortal people who are alive at Christ's return.

5.5 The Kingdom is therefore not now established politically.

5.6 We are saved by grace through our faith, rather than by our works.

6. GOD AND EVIL

6.1 The 'devil' as a word means 'false accuser' or 'slanderer'.

6.2 'Satan' as a word means 'adversary',

6.3 and can refer to both good and bad people.

6.4 Figuratively, the devil and satan can refer to sin and the flesh.

6.5 The serpent in Eden was a literal animal;

6.6 the Genesis record of man's creation and fall is to be understood literally rather than in symbolic terms.

6.7 'Demons' as sinful spirits, departed spirits or forces of sin do not exist.

6.8 Christ 'casting out demons' means that he cured sicknesses.

6.9 Lucifer does not refer to a sinful angel.

6.10 God is all powerful; He does not share His power with any sinful being who is opposed to His ways.

6.11 Trials in the life of a believer ultimately come from God rather than being the result of 'bad luck' or a sinful being called ‘the devil’.

7. JESUS CHRIST

7.1 The 'trinity' as widely understood in Christendom is a doctrine which is not taught in the Bible.

7.2 Christ was born of the virgin Mary

7.3 who was an ordinary woman of human nature.

7.4 Jesus had human nature,

7.5 but had a perfect, sinless character,

7.6 Jesus died as a perfect sin offering of his own free will.

7.7 Jesus was raised after his death on the cross.

7.8 Jesus did not physically exist before his birth;

7.9 although he was in God's mind/purpose from the beginning.

7.10 Jesus died as a sacrifice for our sins

7.11 in order to gain salvation both for us and himself.

7.12 Jesus died as our representative,

7.13 not as a substitute as widely believed in Christendom.

7.14 The Law of Moses was ended by Christ's death,

7.15 therefore we do not have to keep it now, including the Sabbath.

8. BAPTISM

8.1 Without baptism, there can be no hope of salvation;

8.2 belief and baptism allow us to share in the Abrahamic promises,

8.3 and is for the forgiveness of sins.

8.4 Baptism is by complete immersion in water

8.5 of an adult who knows the Gospel.

8.6 Those immersed without a full knowledge of the true Gospel must be baptized again, properly.

8.7 Understanding the true Gospel is required for baptism to be valid.

9. LIFE IN CHRIST

9.1 After baptism, a believer must seek to be separate from the ways of this sinful world,

9.2 and develop Christ-like characteristics.

9.3 Participation in occupations and pleasures which lead us to break the commandments of God are incompatible with a truly Christian life.

9.4 Baptized believers should meet with and have fellowship each other, whenever and wherever humanly possible.

9.5 Baptized believers should regularly break bread and drink wine in memory of Christ's sacrifice.

9.6 Regular prayer and Bible reading are necessary for the baptized believer.

5.1 The Jewish Messiah

That Israel needs a dramatic salvation at the present time is evident to all; time and again the Old Testament prophets remind us that " It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" ; the arm of flesh cannot save man. There is in the Old Testament scriptures much teaching about a Messiah who will save Israel politically and the seed of Abraham spiritually. It is therefore of the utmost importance for all of us, not least the Jewish race to whom the Bible primarily refers, to search those Scriptures to find the Truth about Messiah's identity.

The importance of the subject is well summarized by two Jewish writers, Chaim Pearl and Reuben Brookes, in 'A Guide to Jewish Knowledge': " The belief in the Messiah...is as fundamental to us in our modern world as ever it was in days gone by. It is this Jewish teaching on Messiah which gives Judaism its character of optimism and which must inspire us to achieve national redemption...when the Law of God will reign supreme...Jews who remain faithful to this teaching of their ancient faith have constantly before them an ideal which can fill their days with a practical programme of noble activity, which will help towards ...the Kingdom of God on earth" .

But just desiring the coming of Messiah isn't enough: " Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord! to what end is it for you? the day of the Lord is darkness, and not light. As if a man did flee from a lion and a bear met him...the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come...even the messenger of the covenant whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts.

But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth?" (Amos 5:18,19; Mal.3:1,2).There are inherent problems with any religion which seeks the salvation of man from the Mosaic system. The point must be made that even within the Old Testament there is ample indication of a recognition of these problems, as we will now proceed to show.

The New Covenant

" Behold, the days come saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with them in the

day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt" (Jer.31:31-34). The fact that a new covenant is spoken of indicates that the first covenant had some weaknesses; if it was all that man needed for salvation a second covenant would not have been necessary. There is therefore the implication that this new covenant was to be better than the first. Jer.31 goes on to say that this new covenant would be established with Israel when laws of God are written on the hearts of Israel, and all Jews know God " from the least to the greatest" . It will also be at a time when Israel's sins are forgiven - and therefore have been confessed: " All shall know Me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more" . A massive repentance of Israel, and Jewry in totality knowing the ways of God, has not yet occurred since the time of Jeremiah. Today many Jews living in the land are atheists. There is a time in the future, therefore, when after a massive national repentance this new covenant will be established with Israel.

This new covenant replaces the animal sacrifices of the Old Covenant, and must therefore be based around the sacrifice which superseded them. Seeing that " the life is in the blood" and that sin brings death, it follows that the only way to properly make amends for sin under the Old Covenant was for the sinner to die. However, God was prepared to accept the offering of animal blood to represent the sinner's recognition that he deserved death. This was by reason of the fact that it pointed forward to a greater, more effective sacrifice, on account of which God was willing to forgive men's sins. That sacrifice must therefore have been of a perfect human being. This was prophesied in Gen.3:15 - the " seed of the woman" would overcome permanently the seed of the serpent, i.e. sin, although at the same time himself being temporarily wounded by sin. The means of victory over sin was therefore to be through one individual. The victory over sin which he was to win would be at a certain point in time, when he would be " bruised" , or temporarily wounded, and sin thereby overcome. Therefore after this sacrifice the animal sacrifices could be suspended. It is this total access to forgiveness of sins which the new covenant speaks of. Thus Zech.9:9-11 speaks of Messiah coming into Jerusalem " lowly and riding upon an ass" - just as Jesus did. Speaking of him we read there :" By the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water" . Thus the new covenant made through Messiah would be through his blood, which would enable victory over sin to the extent that there could be escape from permanent death, the result of sin, by means of resurrection. Isaiah 49 is a marvellous prophecy of how Messiah was rejected by Israel, and therefore offered to the Gentiles. He is encouraged in language which has links with the passage just considered in Zech.9: " I will give thee (implying 'in sacrifice') for a covenant of the people...that thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; and to them that are in darkness (spiritually? In death?), Shew yourselves" (Is.49:4-9). This precisely fits the case of Jesus - rejected by Israel, accepted widely by the Gentiles, whose blood is the means of a new covenant. The destruction of the Temple, priesthood and altar soon after his death shows the impossibility of continuing any longer under the Old Covenant. The blessings of that new covenant are there for the taking by any who wish to associate themselves with Messiah's sacrifice by baptism into the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Now consider Hos.3:4,5: " The children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice...Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king...in the latter days" . This same total Jewish repentance is here said to be after being a long time without offering the animal sacrifices of the law, and without a king or member of the royal (Davidic) line as their leader. Surely that

time is now - " the latter days" of Daniel, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, when Israel will be regathered and invaded in a final holocaust before Messiah's coming.

The watchful Bible reader will notice a sharp difference between the promises to Abraham and the Mosaic law. Abraham was promised a seed who would inherit the earth for ever (Gen.13:15-17; 22:17,18; 17:8). He was promised eternal life because of his faith. Faith may be hard, but it is something we are capable of. To keep every little command of the Mosaic law in perfection was almost impossible - and " Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them" (Deut.27:26). Thus Habakkuk commented " The just (justified in God's sight) shall live by faith" (Hab.2:4). The Old Covenant's emphasis on works (e.g. Lev.18:5) was unrelated to this requirement of faith. The very existence of Divine Law results in our warped, sinful human nature being unable to totally obey it. Our very nature leads us to disobey whatever God clearly tells us. The fact that the Law did not promise salvation but the promises to Abraham did suggest that the Old Covenant of the law was a temporary measure until the coming of the promised seed of Abraham. We either keep the sacrifices and every letter of the Old Covenant, or accept that Messiah, the seed of Abraham, has come.

The Day Of Atonement

On the day of atonement the High Priest entered the Most Holy place to make a covering for the sins of Israel. That place was the supreme place of God's manifestation to man, and yet man generally could not enter it; he could not go beyond the veil. The High Priest had to offer blood for his own failures and those of the people, and he could not remain in that place. His brief, annual visit thus showed how close access to God was possible, but was yet to be more comprehensively developed. The offering for the sins committed by Israel during the past year meant that the sacrifices for sins which had been offered during that time were not sufficient. And of course how could they be, seeing they were the blood of animals? It is a Divine principle that the life is in the blood. Sin results in death. Sacrifice for sins therefore necessitates the death of the sinner; a substitute animal will not do. But if the sinner were to literally pour out his own blood in death, then he would be dead and without salvation. The Mosaic Law made no promise of eternal life or resurrection, only of long life now. Thus the Mosaic system could not offer eternal life - i.e. salvation. But it was appointed by God, and those sacrifices were acceptable to God to some degree. There was purpose in their being offered, but of necessity they must have been a temporary measure, suggesting that what was required was a human offering who could somehow overcome death and make a sacrifice from which he and others could benefit.

This point is made explicit by the prophecy of Ps.40:6-8, a clear prophecy of the Messiah: " Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast Thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do Thy will, O my God: yea, Thy law is within my heart" .

This describes Messiah as being totally obedient to the word of God, coming specifically to end the system of sacrifices which were not ultimately what God wanted; a human offering was necessary.

The Melchizedek Priest

If our reasoning so far has been followed, then it is to be expected that Ps.110 should speak of an everlasting priest " after the order of Melchizedek" (Ps.110:4) - a priest to whom even Abraham paid tithes, and who had no proven genealogy - i.e. he was not a priest under the Old Covenant. The person David is speaking of is his great descendant who was promised to him; and David was of the tribe of Judah. Therefore his Messiah-descendant would be a priest but not of the tribe of Levi, showing that Messiah was to bring in a new priesthood. Seeing that all records of genealogy were lost soon after the time of Jesus, it was impossible for the Levitical priesthood to operate after him, seeing that priests had to be able to prove their genealogy (Ezra 2:62). This all strongly suggests that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah who established a new priesthood and therefore a new covenant on his death. " Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek" (Ps.110) shows that Messiah was to be declared an immortal priest at a certain point in time; therefore he could not have always had immortality. In the light of all this, it is not surprising that David describes this great Messiah as " my Lord" (Ps.110:1), who was to sit on the right hand of the throne of God in Heaven (he would not have spoken in such a way concerning his son Solomon). Thus Messiah was to be greater than David, and all men. For of no other person are such high honours spoken as sitting in Heaven on the right hand of God.

Prophecies Of Messiah

So far we have shown it was necessary for Messiah to be:

- An acceptable offering for sin whose sacrifice benefited others

- A man, whose blood was shed.

- A man totally obedient to the Word of God.

- The seed of Abraham whose coming would end animal sacrifices and reliance on the Mosaic system for those who recognized Him.

These things are amplified and repeated in many other prophecies of Messiah. The Old Testament speaks so much of Messiah so that there would be no excuse for him not being recognized when he came. The fact that Jewry disagrees within itself about what Messiah will be like, indicates that they need to apply themselves more fully and on a personal level to Bible study of the prophecies of Messiah.

Zechariah 3

Zechariah 3 is a vision of Messiah in the presence of a number of Angels who " stand by" (v.1,4). He is clothed with " filthy garments" which are then changed to priestly robes, and he is promised that if he is obedient " I will give thee places ...among these (Angels) that stand by" . Messiah was thus capable of failure; he had a change of nature, to that of Angels', after first bearing the " filthy" human nature. An Orthodox Jewish commentator has paraphrased the passage as, " In the resurrection of the dead I will revive thee, and give thee feet walking among the Seraphim" - i.e. the Angels. That commentator was correct in reasoning that a change of nature from human to Divine involves death - the end of the sinful, human nature - and resurrection and transformation in order to exist in the new immortal nature.

The Promises To David

That Messiah would be subject to a resurrection was hinted at right back in the promises to David: " I will set up thy seed after thee...I will establish His kingdom" (2 Sam.7:12). For the phrase " set up" the Septuagint uses a Greek word elsewhere translated 'resurrect'. This great seed of David was to be the son of God (2 Sam.7:14) and also a literal descendant of David (v.12). Thus Messiah was to have one Divine and one human parent, as prophesied in Is.7:14 " A virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" - God with us. The meaning of the child's name being related to the means by which he was born, it follows that a 'virgin' here does not just mean a young woman. The Septuagint translation of the Bible, made by Egyptian Jews 200 years B.C., uses the word 'parthenos' for " Virgin" , which definitely means a virgin in the sexual sense. Thus we have here a prophecy of a virgin birth of Messiah, by the direct activity of God upon the virgin rather than that of a man.

David himself recognized that the promise about his seed was not just relevant to his natural son Solomon: " My house is not so (at the moment)...Thou hast spoken also of thy servant's house for a great while to come" (2 Sam.23:5; 7:19). Psalm 16:10 describes Messiah's brief death and resurrection: " Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption" - i.e. he would be raised before decomposition of the body set in. And after this, he was to ascend to Heaven: " In thy presence is fullness of joy; at Thy right hand are pleasures for evermore" (Ps.16:11). This cannot apply to David, seeing he died and has been buried many years.

Other hints at a virgin birth are to be found in the description of David's Messiah-seed as the begotten son of God (Ps. 2:6,7; 89:26,27). For God to beget a son involves His action upon a woman to make her conceive His son, without the intervention of a man. This is exactly how millions of people believe and have believed since the first century that Jesus of Nazareth came into existence.

It is a consistent Divine principle that sin must result in death. In order for Messiah to resurrect from death to eternal life and ascension to Heaven (" pleasures for evermore" , Ps.16:11), he must therefore have been sinless. This is confirmed by a number of other scriptures. Thus Messiah is called by God " the man that is my fellow" (Zech.13:7) - a man can only be called God's " fellow" due to his supreme righteousness. Messiah " is just (righteous), and (therefore) having salvation" (Zech. 9:9). Thus he was to bring salvation to others through his own righteousness.

For this reason Jer. 23:5,6 calls Messiah " The Lord our righteousness" , showing that through that one man's perfect character, God's righteousness would be imputed to His people. He was to be the promised seed of David: " I will raise unto David a righteous branch, and a king shall reign and prosper...he shall be called, the Lord our righteousness" . The fact that the Targums apply this to Messiah shows that the promised seed of David was not just Solomon, as many Jews claim, seeing that he can hardly be called " The Lord our righteousness" due to his later apostasy.

Isaiah's Suffering Servant

This prophecy has several descriptions of a man who has to suffer greatly in order for salvation to be attained. The following points about Messiah emerge from Isa.52:13-53:12:

- He was to suffer physically more than any other human being will ever do (52:14).

- His suffering would result in 'sprinkling' " many nations" (52:15). The idea of sprinkling recalls the sprinkling of the blood in order to atone for sins under the Law, perhaps specifically referring to the sprinkling of the water of separation for cleansing (Num.19). The blood of his sufferings would therefore enable people from many nations to have forgiveness of sins.

- The news about him would be widespread, but be disbelieved by the Jews (52:15; 53:1-3).

- Messiah's own people would deliberately stop themselves perceiving his Messiahship: " We hid as it were our faces from him...we esteemed him not" (53:3). This recalls the language of Lev.13:44,45, suggesting that Israel would perceive Messiah as smitten with the leprosy of sin. The record of the New Testament, along with the commentaries of the Talmud, show that many Jews have branded Jesus as a sinner unfit for their association.

- One of the reasons for this would be because of his sufferings (53:2,3). " There is no beauty that we should desire him...we did esteem him smitten of God" ; i.e. Israel generally would not be able to accept the idea of a suffering saviour/Messiah. This is a frequent Jewish objection to Jesus.

- He would have a distinctive hallmark of not speaking up in his own defence (53:7).

- He was perfect, although he died with wicked men (53:9). The idea of a Messiah who dies is also expressed in Mic.5:1 and 2 Sam.23:7, both admitted by Rabbis to be Messianic passages.

- God worked through Messiah's death to make it a sacrifice for sins, as a result of which he obtained eternal life for himself and carried away the sins of " his seed" (53:10,11). Messiah was " bruised" to overcome sin - as prophesied of the Messianic " seed of the woman" in Gen.3:15. Therefore the once-off victory over sin prophesied back in Gen.3:15 was fulfilled in the death of Messiah described in Is.53.

- Through his suffering and death, " he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors" (53:12). " Thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed...he shall see (the result) of the travail of his soul" (v.10,11), indicating that Messiah was to be resurrected.

Murdered Messiah

So many other prophecies speak of this suffering Messiah in language which does not ring totally true of those characters, e.g. David and Hezekiah, to whom they may primarily refer. Thus Ps. 22 speaks of a group of men mocking the Messiah as he stood in agony, his bones sticking out (v.17), God appearing not to respond to his prayers(v.1-3), his hands and feet pierced (crucifixion is about the only form of death or torture which could be described like this,v.16), his clothes parted amongst his persecutors (v.18), and then many people worldwide coming to praise God because of His vindication of His servant by answering his prayers for deliverance from death (v.22-31).

This indication that Messiah was crucified needs to be coupled with passages which speak of Israel rejecting their Messiah, to show that Jesus is the only likely candidate. No other person claiming to be Messiah has been so consistently rejected by all Jewry. Ps.118:22 speaks of

Messiah as the stone that the Jews rejected (He is called " the stone" in Gen.49:24; Dan.2:43,44; Zech.3:8,9). Isa.8:14 speaks of Him as the stone which Israel will stumble at. It is also worthwhile considering how many of those who typified Messiah such as Moses, David, Joseph and several of the judges were initially rejected by their brethren, although later accepted.

The Repentance Of Israel

We have outlined so many characteristics of Messiah from the Old Testament that to anyone with a fair general knowledge it must be evident that there is great similarity between the Jewish Messiah and the claims made about Jesus Christ. So far we have made no reference to the New Testament, although much of our reasoning can be found there too. The Christian account of Christ dying as the perfect, sinless sacrifice for sins, a man of our nature who managed to overcome sin and through whom salvation from sin is now available to the whole world, all chimes in so accurately with the Old Testament record of the Jewish Messiah. The Jewish attitude to Messiah in rejecting him due to his suffering and lack of worldly appeal was and is definitely true of the Jewish attitude to Jesus Christ. This cannot be the result of a forgery by Christians. Especially telling is Zechariah's prophecy of the Jews weeping as a man for his only child, when at his second coming they see the marks in the hands where they crucified Christ (Zech. 12:10; 13:6). The style of their weeping will help them realize how God felt at the (temporary) loss of His only son at their hands through the crucifixion. These references to the fact that Israel were to reject their Messiah and then eventually accept him after a long time is surely one of the clearest indicators that Jesus Christ is indeed their Messiah. Time and again Israel are reminded that the Messianic Kingdom can only come on a major repentance of Jewry (Lev. 26:40-42; Dt. 30:1-3; 1 Kings 8:47,49; Jer. 3:12,13; 4:1,2; Zech. 6:15; Is. 59:20: Ps. 81:13,14; Acts 3:19,20 R.V.; Rom. 11:15). That Kingdom will be when Israel nationally accept the New Covenant. This has already been made, seeing that Israel have broken the Old Covenant by their disobedience, resulting in God's divorcing of them, and the destruction of the temple and priesthood make it impossible to keep the Old Covenant. It therefore follows that Israel's repentance and their acceptance of the New Covenant are the same thing. We have shown above that their repentance will be for killing their Messiah, through whom the New Covenant was made. All logical analysis points to this Messiah being Jesus- and the sooner Israel accept him, the quicker His Kingdom will be established.

Farewell...

Finally, may I say that if only the idea of accepting Jesus as Messiah can be accepted as possible, so many familiar Scriptures will open to you as having echoes of the crucifixion; e.g. Isaac carrying the wood of his own sacrifice and obediently allowing himself to be offered as the first seed of Abraham so clearly points forward to the record of Jesus Christ's crucifixion. May we also say that the popular idea that Christ was God and existed before his birth destroys the purpose of Messiah as outlined in Scripture. The seed of David and Abraham can hardly have existed before their time; and to be a good, powerful High priest he had to be of our nature, able to sin, but yet completely overcoming our fleshly nature which he shared to open a way for us to join him in being given God's nature, which cannot sin and therefore die.

But above all, pray for humility and understanding so that the Scriptures themselves can give you that courage and ability to accept that which has seemed impossible for so very, very long.

5-1-1 Appendix: Jesus Of Nazareth Is The Messiah Judaism Expected

Risto Santala has extensively documented how the writings of the Rabbis actually paint a picture of Messiah which is exactly in accordance with who Jesus of Nazareth actually was[(1)]. He shows how the various Midrashim pointed forward to a singular Messiah figure who would be called by the name of the Lord, who would unite grace and truth, be conceived by the Holy Spirit, do signs and wonders, be called "the truth" and give Israel a new Torah. They even predicted that there would be 2000 years of Torah [following 2000 years since creation], and then 2000 years of Messiah, followed by a 1000 year sabbath on earth. This all makes perfect sense if Jesus is indeed Messiah. And most significantly, the Jewish prayerbook *Sidur ha-Shalem* contains a prayer for the Jewish New Year which speaks of Messiah as "Jesus, the Prince of the Countenance".

The New Testament describes the work of Jesus through allusions to the Psalms. But each of the passages alluded to had in fact already been interpreted by the rabbis in their various Targums and Midrashim as applying to Messiah. Messiah was to be despised (Ps. 22:6; 69:19-22); rejected (Ps. 118:22); mocked (Ps. 22:7,8; 69:8,20; 89:51,52); whipped (Ps. 129:3); impaled on a stake (Ps. 22:1,2,14-17); thirsty (Ps. 22:16); given wine nixed with gall (Ps. 69:20-22); have lots cast for his clothes (Ps. 22:18,19); have unbroken bones (Ps. 34:21); rise from the dead (Ps. 16:10); ascend to Heaven (Ps. 68:19); be at the right hand of God (Ps. 80:17; 110:1); be High Priest (Ps. 110:4); judge the nations (Ps. 89:3-5); reign eternally (Ps. 89:35-37); be the Son of God (Ps. 2:7); speak in parables (Ps. 78:2); calm a storm (Ps. 89:10); have Hosanna sung to him (Ps. 118:25,26); be blessed for ever (Ps. 45:1-4,8,18); and come in glory at the Last Day (Ps. 102:6-23). *The picture which the rabbinic writings had created of Messiah was exactly the person whom Jesus was and whom the early church preached.* Santala's writings give all the actual rabbinic references.

Further, Santala shows how the idea of a *suffering Messiah* (so difficult for modern Judaism to accept) was initially taught by the rabbis in their commentaries upon Zech. 12:9-14; 13:6,7 and Isaiah 53. "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced" was understood by RaShi, RaDaq and Ibn Ezra as referring to Messiah; and the Talmud [*Sukka* 52b] agrees with this. The fact the atoning sacrifice spoken of had to be without sin precluded, in earlier Jewish interpretation, any reference to the nation of Israel in this passage; and yet this is how it is now understood in Judaism. A. Lukyn Williams quotes even 16th century rabbis [Rabbi Elia de Vidas and Rabbi Moses Alshekh] as admitting about Isaiah 53: "Our ancient sages have preserved for us the witness of tradition that this refers to the Messiah…. Thus the Messiah suffered on account of our sins, and was wounded" [(2)].

The Biblical record in Luke 2, as well as the Dead Sea Scrolls literature, all indicate that there was a strong wave of Messianic expectation around the time of Jesus' birth. Yet Israel would not recognize Him. And the Rabbis after the time of Christ began to change their position on Messiah, saying that he would not be a singular person, but rather an idea, a personification, etc. It's not surprising, therefore, that there is definitely a 'bad conscience' within Jewish people about Jesus; hence their anger when you try to share Jesus with them. If you preach Christianity to a Moslem, Buddhist, Hindu or atheist, you receive a quite different reaction to what you receive when preaching to a Jew. There is evidently a pang of conscience within the

Jewish people, prefigured by the bad conscience of Joseph's brothers, until they finally accepted Joseph as their Lord. That conscience is surely indicated by the way in which Isaiah 53 is omitted from the Synagogue's yearly *haphtarot* readings, and how it is markedly absent from the mediaeval commentaries. There is simply the statement in brackets: "Some things are missing here". And indeed they are… One rabbi even admitted that Is. 53:2, which speaks of Messiah as being born from land that had not been ploughed and in which no seed had been planted, was clearly a reference to the Virgin Birth of Jesus.

The following bullet point questions can usefully be put to Jews- many of them are discussed within Orthodox circles anyway:

- Can the Torah liberate man or give him salvation?

- What is the basis of salvation?

- Were all of Moses' laws intended to be eternally binding?

- Where do we make a difference between the commandments of God and those of men?

- Will Messiah give a new Torah?

- How can Torah be kept today if animal sacrifices aren't offered? The contradictions within Judaism are especially apparent when one considers what it teaches about the impossibility of now keeping the laws about making animal sacrifices: "Keeping the law is worth many offerings" (Ecclus. 35:1-5). But the law of Moses includes the commands about making offerings- so how can this law be 'kept' and then such 'keeping' of it be declared as better than making those offerings?

Notes

(1) Risto Santala, *The Messiah In The Old Testament In The Light Of Rabbinical Writings* (Kukkila, Finland: BGS, 1992). See too his *The Messiah In The New Testament In The Light Of Rabbinical Writings* (Kukkila, Finland: BGS, 1992).

(2) A. Lukyn Williams, *A Manual Of Christian Evidences For Jewish People* (London: SPCK, 1919).

5.2 The Historicity of Jesus of Nazareth

The Historicity Of Jesus And The New Testament: Objections

a) The Christian " proof" for Jesus' Messiahship rests upon circular reasoning - they reason, " The Old Testament says this about Messiah: the New Testament says Jesus fulfilled this, so Jesus is the Messiah" . But the historical accuracy and truth of the New Testament cannot be proved.

b) The historical evidence for the existence of Jesus is too weak to prove he ever existed. " Even Josephus...barely makes mention of Jesus. In his Antiquities of the Jews...there is one small, lonely paragraph about Jesus...this is a very meagre comment to make regarding a 'king of Israel'" (Samuel Levine, 'You Take Jesus, I'll Take God', 1980).

c) The implication of Matt. 27 is that Pilate was peace-loving and just, but Philo and Josephus paint a reverse picture. The New Testament record is framed to make the Jews look guilty.

Comments:

If, as some Jews claim, there is no evidence that Jesus of Nazareth ever existed, then the very existence of Christianity is difficult to explain. It is asking an awful lot to expect anyone to believe that millions of people over the last 2,000 years have based their beliefs on someone who never existed, and to have such an intense faith in him that they were motivated to spread their faith in him worldwide, often at the risk of persecution and death. Christians and Jews generally have no difficulty accepting that Mohamed once lived, whilst rejecting his claims and teaching. Indeed we accept that most famous historical characters existed without demanding a critical review of the evidence. Frequently analysis has been made of widely accepted historical events, e.g. that the battle of Hastings was in 1066, and have found the concrete evidence relatively hard to come by.

The fact some Jews so intensely deny the very existence of Jesus of Nazareth is surely indication of an over reaction, a desire to find a convenient excuse not to face up to the reasons for accepting his Messiahship. This appears especially true when it is appreciated that the early Jews themselves accepted that a person called Jesus had existed in the first century. The following historical evidences for the existence of Jesus of Nazareth show that in no way can he be dismissed as a theological invention of men. Much helpful information in this section has been gleaned from Gary Habermas, 'Ancient Evidence For The Life Of Jesus'.

1) Tacitus was a Roman historian whose two major books about the first century (" Annals" and the " Histories") both mention Jesus and Christianity. He wrote in the " Annals" (about 115 AD):

" A class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilate" .

The emperor Tiberius reigned from 14-37AD, during which period Christ was killed, according to this record. Tacitus also describes how the beliefs of this group " Broke out not only in Judaea, the first source of (these ideas), but even in Rome" , and he goes on to describe how the Christians were widely hated, and many put to death in Rome. All this accords with the New Testament record of Jesus, the disciples and the apostles first spreading their teaching in Judaea, and then throughout the Roman world, including Rome, with great opposition to them.

2) Suetonius, another Roman historian, commented on the reign of Claudius (41-54 AD): " Because the Jews at Rome caused continuous disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, he (Claudius) expelled them from the city" . " Chrestus" is another spelling of " Christ" . Incidentally, Acts 18:2 describes how a Jewish couple named Aquila and Priscilla had to leave Rome because of the persecution of the Jews there.

Suetonius comments later about the persecution of Christians at the time of Nero: " After the great fire at Rome...Punishments were also inflicted on the Christians, a sect professing a new and mischievous religious belief" . This reference to the existence of a group called "

Christians" in the first century suggests that a person called " Christ" existed earlier in that century.

3) F.F.Bruce (" Christian Origins" p.29,30) draws attention to the fact that there are references to a history of the Eastern Mediterranean written by a historian called Thallus about 52AD. Bruce shows elsewhere (" The New Testament Documents" , p.113) that a scholar named Julius Africanus quoted from Thallus, mocking his description of the darkness at the crucifixion of Jesus as due to the eclipse of the sun. This suggests that Thallus wrote an account of the crucifixion of Jesus which occurred some years before he wrote his history in 52AD.

4) Pliny, a Roman Government official, mentions at length the existence of a very active group of people called Christians in the latter years of the first century. Their keeping of the memorial service is referred to by him: " They were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when they sang in alternate verses a hymn to Christ" (" Letters of Pliny" , translated by W.Melmoth, Vol.2, X:96). The Roman emperors Trajan and Hadrian both mentioned the problem of dealing with Christians. For references to this, see " Letters of Pliny" , Vol.2, X:97 and Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History, IV:IX respectively. The existence of this group since the first century and their extraordinary tenacity during persecution would suggest that they were followers of a real historical character who lived in the first century.

5) Most significantly, the Talmud itself in Sanhedrin 43a refers to the death of Jesus, and it is acknowledged that this part of the Talmud dates from the early period of that book's compilation (i.e. 70-200AD):

" On the eve of the Passover Yeshu (Jesus) was hanged. For forty days before the execution took place, a herald went forth and cried, 'He is going to be stoned because he has practiced sorcery and enticed Israel to apostasy. Anyone who can say anything in his favour, let him come forward in his behalf'. But since nothing was brought forward in his favour he was hanged on the eve of the Passover" .

" Hanged" can be an idiom for crucifixion - it is used like that in the New Testament (Gal.3:13; Luke 23:39). This passage describes the Jews wanting Jesus stoned (in accordance with Mosaic law, presumably?), but mentions that actually he was hung. The explanation for this is given by the New Testament description of how the Jews had to use Roman law to effect the death of Jesus - which would have been by hanging.

Sanhedrin 43a also describes how five disciples of Jesus were judged and sentenced to death, again showing that the Jews traditionally have believed in the existence of the historical Jesus. Sanhedrin 106b even says that Jesus was 33 years old when he died; exactly as required by the New Testament. Maier (" First Easter" , p.117,118) quotes from the fifth century Jewish document " Toledoth Jesu" , which claims that the disciples tried to steal the body of Jesus after his death, but a gardener named Juda heard of their plans and removed the body of Jesus elsewhere, handing it over later to the Jews. Justin Martyr writing in 150AD records that the Jews sent out special messengers to claim that the body of Jesus had been stolen (" Dialogue with Trypho" , 108), and Tertullian (" On Spectacles" ,30) has a similar account when he wrote in 200AD.

Between them these strands of evidence show that the Jews of the early centuries AD believed in the existence and violent death of the historical Jesus.

6) The Greek playwright Lucian, writing in the second century, pokes fun at the Christians who " worship a man to this day (who) was crucified" (Lucian, The Death of Peregrine, 11-13, in " The Works of Lucian" , vol.4, translated by Fowler and Fowler.

7) Josephus is the most well known historian of the first century. In his " Antiquities" , written 90-95AD, he mentions James, " the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ" . He also speaks in another section of the same book in terms which clearly corroborate the New Testament picture of Jesus:

" Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man...For he was one who wrought surprising feats...He was Christ...he appeared to them alive the third day, as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him" .

So pointed is this passage that some have claimed that it is an interpolation. That there is still reason for using this passage to support the contention that there was a man called Jesus of Nazareth who lived in the first century is provided by the following considerations:

- Eusebius (Ecclesiastical History, 1:XI) quotes this section of Josephus.

- Respected scholars support this first reading as being original, and can show that this section is written in the same style as the rest of Josephus' work (See Daniel Rops, " The Silence of Jesus' Contemporaries" , p.21; J.N.D. Anderson, " Christianity: The Witness of History" p.20; F.F.Bruce, " The New Testament Documents" p.108,109).

- There is no textual evidence for this being an interpolation

- Professor Schlomo Pines claims that the Arabic edition of Josephus' works had been discovered which was almost certain to be the original. The passage referred to above occurs there, but without the obvious doctrinal statements concerning the resurrection and Messiahship of Jesus which were made in the extract given above. This seems reasonable, seeing Josephus was a Jew. Pines first made his findings public in articles in " The New York Times" , Feb.12 1972, in which he quotes the debated passage of Josephus about Jesus from the Arabic version: " At this time there was a wise man who was called Jesus. And his conduct was good and he was known to be virtuous. And many people among the Jews and other nations became his disciples. Pilate condemned him to be crucified and to die. And those who had become his disciples did not abandon his discipleship. They reported that he had appeared to them three days after his crucifixion and that he was alive; accordingly, he was perhaps the Messiah concerning whom the prophets have recounted wonders" .

This account fits in admirably with that of the New Testament.

5.3 Jewish Objections to Jesus

Sayings of Jesus

a) Jesus accused God of forsaking him on the cross (Matt. 27:46), therefore he did not expect to die. So if he claimed to be Messiah he did not think Messiah had to die. He clearly didn't think it was God's will that he should die.

Matt.27:46 could be translated 'My God, how hast Thou forsaken me!'; remember that there are no punctuation marks in the original Greek manuscript; those we have are inserted by the translators. If we accept this equally permissible translation, the problem disappears. If Jesus died, it would be obvious that he would have felt forsaken by God; God may 'leave' us to see how we will cope with a trial. It does not necessarily show His rejection of us. Thus of Hezekiah we read " In the business of the ambassadors...God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart" (2 Chron.32:31). The original Hebrew word translated " left" here is also frequently translated " forsake" . As Hezekiah was " left" or 'forsaken' by God to prove how strong his spirituality really was, so Jesus was 'forsaken' on the cross, so that God could see what was in his heart.

Jesus was actually quoting from the prophesied words of Messiah in Ps.22:1. This shows that there was no indication of weakness on His uttering those words, and the fact he was quoting from the Psalms shows that he was not speaking those words due to surprise at being faced with death. We have shown elsewhere how many passages indicate that Messiah would have to die. Therefore Jesus did expect to die, which is abundantly proved by even a cursory glance at the New Testament: Matt.16:21,27; 19:28; 20:18,19; 26:27-29,31,32,64.

b) Jesus said he had not come to destroy the law (Matt. 5:17), but his followers, e.g. Paul in Acts 15, said he did. (See S.Levine, p.80).

Jesus said that he had come not to destroy the Law but to fulfil it (Matt.5:17). The Greek for " destroy" here means strictly to unloose or start to disintegrate. He fulfilled the law in his death as the perfect sacrifice on the cross, but until then he never advocated the unloosing or negating of even the smallest commandment: " One jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all (i.e. of the law) be fulfilled" (Matt.5:18). However, His speaking of fulfilling the law implies that the Law was a prophecy which he was soon to fulfil. Therefore there would be no point in continuing to try to keep the law if its object was now fulfilled.

Paul's objection was to Gentiles being saddled with the ceremonial (but not the moral) aspects of the Mosaic Law. It should be noted that no words of Paul are cited in Acts 15. Paul did keep parts of the Law (e.g. Acts 21:20-25), but this seems to have been to placate some of the early Jewish Christians whose consciences were weak. He quite clearly teaches that the Old Covenant laws have been done away (Col.2:13-16), and that through association with Christ there is no spiritual difference between Jews and Gentiles (Gal.3:27-29) - they are under the same covenant and therefore have the same responsibilities of service towards God.

c) Jesus' command not to resist evil (Matt. 5:39) is unrealistic and contrary to the Old Testament.

The spirit of the Law was one of love and self-subjugation. It did not teach that in private life one should actively resist evil. Christ's law is intended for individuals, whereas some of the injunctions of the Old Covenant were for the whole nation of Israel. Nationally, Israel were never told that once settled in the land they ought to resist evil. They were promised that if they were obedient, then God would look after them from any evil that might be ranged against them. There are many examples of people not resisting evil in Old Testament times - e.g. David's attitude to Saul and to his family later; Joseph's passive submission to the evil of his brethren and willing forgiveness of them. Thus in their individual lives, Jews under the Old Covenant did practice Jesus' policy of non resistance to evil, and his teaching about this summed up the spirit of the Old Covenant.

d) The words of Jesus in Matt.10:34-37, Luke 14:26 etc. contradict the spirit of the passages which speak of Messiah as talking words of peace (e.g. Isa. 11).

Once the idea of two comings of Messiah is appreciated (see comments on Zech.9:9 regarding this), such apparent contradictions fall into place. If Messiah was to die and be persecuted at his first coming and then return to establish the Messianic Kingdom of peace at his second coming, then it is to be expected that those who accepted him at his first coming would be at variance with those who rejected and persecuted him. If they persecuted him, they would persecute those who accepted him too. Therefore to accept him would result in a certain degree of division within Israel, to whom Jesus was primarily talking in the verses cited.

e) Jesus did not preach to the Gentiles, as Messiah was to do (e.g. Zech. 9:9). Both Jesus (Matt. 14:24) and Paul (Acts 13:46) " made it clear that the message was to go to the Jews only" (Levine).

It is hard to believe that such a conclusion could be drawn by someone who had read the New Testament only once. Paul called himself " the apostle of the Gentiles...a teacher of the Gentiles" (Rom.11:13; 2 Tim.1:11); and Jesus gave his followers the great commission of preaching the good news about Him worldwide (Mark 16:15), having earlier stated that whoever heard them effectively heard him. Isaiah 49 describes the depression of Messiah at the failure of Israel to respond to his preaching, but he is encouraged by God telling him that due to this he has been given as a light to the Gentiles. Jesus must have been aware of this, seeing that he often hinted at the future response of the Gentiles to his message (John 10:16; Acts 1:8; 9:15). However, it is true that the general principle of New Testament preaching was to appeal to the Jews first, and then to the Gentiles (Acts 13:46; 18:4-6; 26:20; 28:23-28). The fact that Christianity is a worldwide religion shows that Christ certainly has been preached to the utmost ends of the earth.

f) Faulty statements were made by Jesus, e.g. Matt. 16:28. Jesus expected to have a quick kingdom; when this was not to be Christians invented their second coming doctrine. Also quoted is Matt. 24:34.

Jesus' statement that some of those with him would live to see him coming in his Kingdom occurs immediately before the record of his transfiguration. It seems fair to conclude that he was referring to this when he spoke of 'coming in his kingdom'. " Coming" would have been a familiar Old Testament idiom for some form of manifestation - e.g. God " came down" to see the tower of Babel and Sodom, but this does not necessitate a literal coming of God in terms of physical movement. The vision which the disciples saw at the transfiguration was of Jesus in glory, with his face shining brighter than the sun and with dazzling white clothes. This would have taken their minds back to the visions of glory of the Old Testament and the description of Messiah in his Kingdom as " the sun of righteousness" (Mal.4:2), making them realize that Jesus of Nazareth really was the Lord of glory, the supreme manifestation of God Himself, and this was how he would be revealed in the day of his Kingdom (Matt.17:2 cp. Dan.10:5,6; 7:9).

Matt.24:34 says that the generation who sees the sign Jesus had just described of the fig tree putting out leaves would not pass until all was fulfilled. He was not necessarily speaking of the generation that were then present. The fig tree being either barren or fruitful is a symbol of Israel's spiritual state (Hab.3:17,18; Jer.24:2-5; Mic.7:1-4; Hos.9:10; Is.30:17; Joel 2:22).

Jesus prophesied that the Jewish tree was to dry up after his death, i.e. spiritually wither (Luke 23:31). Therefore he was not speaking of the tree's bearing of leaves being in the time of that immediate generation that heard his words. However, he knew that eventually they would repent, and the generation which saw that would also see His return to establish the Kingdom. This is in line with the many Old Testament prophecies that speak of Jewish repentance (i.e. spiritual fruit) before the revealing of Messiah to them.

The Personality of God

Objection:

Judaism claims that " God is not physical" (S. Levine 'You take Jesus, I'll Take God',p. 93), so it is not possible for God to have a son, seeing He is not corporeal. If Messiah is to be a human being, he cannot be the begotten Son of God.

The nature of God is fundamental to appreciate if we are to have any true understanding of what Bible based religion is all about. The Old Testament consistently talks of God as if He is a person; the person to person relationship with God which both Old and New Testaments speak of is unique to the true Jewish hope. It was largely through the influence of Maimonides in the twelfth century that the concept of a non-personal God became popular in Judaism; Biblically this is not even hinted at in the Old Testament scriptures. The following are strong arguments in favour of a personal, corporeal God:

- " God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (Gen. 1:26). Thus man is made in the image and likeness of God, as manifested through the Angels. These words cannot apply to man's mental image, because by nature our minds are totally distanced from God and in many ways fundamentally opposed to His righteousness. " For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Is. 55:8,9). Therefore the image and likeness which we share with God must be in physical image. Whenever Angels have been seen on earth they are described as having the form of men - e.g. Abraham entertained Angels unaware, thinking that they were ordinary men. Our creation in the image of God surely means that we can infer something about the real object of which we are but an image. Thus God, whom we reflect, is not something nebulous which we cannot conceive of.

- The Angels themselves are a reflection of God. Thus God could say of Moses " With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently...and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold" (Num. 12:8). This is referring to Moses' instruction by an Angel which carried the name of the Lord (Ex. 19:5,6). If the Angel was the similitude of the Lord it follows that God is in the same form as the Angels- i.e. in human shape physically, although with an infinitely higher nature than flesh and blood. " The Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend" (Ex. 33:11; Dt. 34:10) show that the Lord was manifested in His Angel, whose face and mouth reflected that of the Lord Himself.

- Because we are in God's image, " He knoweth our frame" (Ps. 103:14); He wishes us to conceive of Him as a personal being, a Father to whom we can relate. This would explain the many references to God's hands, arms, eyes etc. If God were a wisp of essence somewhere in the heavens - which has to be our conception of God if we reject His being personal-then these references are misleading and serve no teaching purpose.

- Descriptions of God's dwelling place clearly indicate that " God" has a personal location: " God is in Heaven" (Ecc.5:2); " He hath looked down from the height of His sanctuary; from the Heaven did the Lord behold the earth" (Ps. 102:19,20); " Hear Thou in Heaven Thy dwelling place" (1 Kings 8). Yet more specifically than this, we read that God has a " throne" (2 Chron. 9:8; Ps.11:4; Is.6:1; 66:1). Such language is hard to apply to an undefined essence which exists somewhere in Heavenly realms.

- This reasoning is all confirmed by Ezekiel's vision of the Heavenly organization; having described the cherub-chariots of Angels around the throne, " above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne...and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it" (Ez. 1:26). With the utmost reverence we suggest that here we have a dim vision of the throne of God itself, with the likeness of God Himself in human form sitting upon it. Note the emphasis of the word " likeness" - this was not a vision of Heaven itself.

- Isaiah 45 is full of God referring to His personal involvement in the affairs of His people: " I am the Lord, and there is none else...I the Lord do all these things...I the Lord have created it. Woe unto him that striveth with his maker...I, even my hands have stretched out the heavens...look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth" . This last sentence especially shows the personal existence of God - He desires men to look to Him, to conceive of His literal existence with the eye of faith.

- God is revealed to us as a forgiving God. Yet forgiveness can only come from a person: it is a mental act. Thus David was a man after God's own heart (1 Sam.13:14), showing that God has a mind (heart), which is capable of being replicated to some limited degree by man, although man by nature is not after God's heart.

If God is not a real, personal being, then the concept of spirituality is hard to grapple with. If God is totally righteous but is not a material being, then we cannot really conceive of His righteousness manifested in human beings. Both apostate Christendom and Jewry have the notion that God's righteousness enters our lives through a nebulous 'holy Spirit' that somehow makes us into God's mental image, and acceptable to Him. Conversely, once we appreciate that there is a personal being called God, then we can work on our characters, with His help and the influence of His word, to reflect the characteristics of God in our beings.

God's purpose is to reveal Himself in a multitude of glorified beings. His memorial name, Jehovah Elohim, indicates this ('He who shall be mighty ones', in approximate translation). If God is not a physical being, then the reward of the faithful is to have a non-physical existence like God. But the descriptions of the faithful's reward in God's coming Kingdom on earth show that they will have a tangible, bodily existence, although no longer subject to the weaknesses of human nature. Job longed for the " latter day" when he would have a resurrection of his body (Job 19:25-27); Abraham must be one of the " many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth (who) shall awake...to everlasting life" (Dan. 12:2) so that he can receive the promise of eternal inheritance of the land of Canaan, a physical location on this earth (Gen. 17:8). " Saints shall shout aloud for joy...let them sing aloud upon their beds...and execute judgment upon the heathen" (Ps. 132:16; 149:5,7). A failure by both Jew and Gentile to appreciate passages like these, as well as the fundamentally literal, physical import of the promises to Abraham, has led to the wrong notion of an " immortal soul" as being the real form of human existence. Such an idea is totally devoid of Biblical support. God is an immortal, glorious being, and He is working out His purpose so that men and women might

be called to live in His future Kingdom on this earth, to share His attributes, expressed in a bodily form.

It should be evident that there can be no sensible concept of worship, religion or personal relationship with God until it is appreciated that God is personal, that we are in His image physically, albeit a very imperfect image, and need to develop His mental image so that we may take on the fullness of His physical image in the Kingdom of God. So much more sense and comfort can now be gained from the passages which speak of God as a loving Father, chastening us as a Father does his son (e.g. Dt. 8:5). In the context of Messiah we read that " It pleased the Lord to bruise Him" (Is. 53:10). We have shown elsewhere how God's promise to David of a seed who would be God's son also required the miraculous birth of a human being; once the corporeal, personal nature of God is appreciated, then this becomes logical to accept.

5-3-1 Jewish Objections To The Ancestry Of Jesus

The great amount of energy devoted by Jewish critics to objecting to the genealogies of Jesus as found in the New Testament (Mt.1 and Luke 3) fail to take into account that whilst such genealogy is not without value, there is a major example in the Old Testament of a case where genealogy was quite an irrelevant issue. Melchizedek, king of Jerusalem and early High Priest (Gen. 14:18-20) has not received the attention from Judaism which he deserves. He was greater than Abraham, seeing that Abraham paid tithes to him, although it can be taken as certain that Abraham himself as the head of his household would have been a priest. Remember that he offered Isaac as a sacrifice without recourse to any other priest. Yet Melchizedek was clearly far superior to him, seeing that he pronounced the Divine blessing upon Abraham (Gen. 14:19). The observant reader of Genesis cannot fail to be struck by the laboured emphasis on genealogy for all the characters that are introduced. But this is not given us for Melchizedek; the record is framed so that he appears on the scene without reference to his parents or descent. Yet he was arguably the greatest priest brought before our attention in the Old Testament. Thus questions over the genealogy of Jesus should not affect our judgment of his priesthood. Nothing whatsoever is known nor can be known of the genealogy of Melchizedek, and yet no questions are raised by the Jews over the validity of his priesthood. Therefore the arguments over the genealogy of Jesus are not particularly relevant.

The Ancestry of Jesus: Objections

a) The New Testament genealogy traces the ancestry of Jesus through his mother's line, but genealogy is not reckoned through women, therefore this provides no evidence that Jesus was the seed of Abraham and David.

It should be noted that Luke's list is composed of males (with the exception of Mary).Therefore she was clearly a descendant of David and Abraham. Today Jewish descent has to be through the mother - something which those Jews who use this objection must find hard to answer? Gen. 3:15 describes the Messiah as the seed of the woman; it is fitting, therefore, that Messiah's matrilineal genealogy should be provided, and that his Messianic descent (i.e. as the seed of Abraham and David) should be shown through his mother's line. It should be remembered too that the daughters of Zelophehad had inheritance rights and were allowed to trace their inheritance, showing that it is not an immutable Divine principle that inheritance cannot go through women (consider Num. 26:33; 27:1-7; 36:2-11).

There are other examples of this. Jair's father was of the tribe of Judah (1 Chron.2:22); yet in Num. 32:41 he is described as " the son of Manasseh" , showing that his mother must have been of the tribe of Manasseh. His descent was reckoned for some reason through his mother rather than his father. 1 Chron. 2:34 records that Sheshan " had no sons, but daughters" . According to the Jewish objection that genealogy cannot be reckoned through the woman, Sheshan would have no subsequent genealogy. However, he is described in 1 Chron. 2:31 as having a son, presumably from the fact that he gave his daughter in marriage to his Egyptian servant (1 Chron. 2:34). Thus his seed was still reckoned through a woman. Hiram is described as " the son of a woman of the daughters of Dan" (2 Chron. 2:14). Other examples of this could be given.

b) Jesus was not a true descendant of David - the genealogy through Joseph is irrelevant because Christians say that Joseph was not the real father. Jesus was not a proven descendant of David so he was not the Messiah.

The genealogies do prove that Joseph was a descendant of David, indeed the rightful king of Israel had there been a monarchy at the time of Jesus. Jesus was his adopted son; he was " as was supposed" , or 'as was reckoned by law', the son of Joseph (Luke 3:23). The record in Luke appears to be that of Mary; Joseph being " the son of Heli" was probably by reason of marrying Mary, the daughter of Heli (Lk.3:23); the Talmud speaks with gross vitriolic about Mary the daughter of Heli going to hell for her blasphemy, referring to Mary the mother of Jesus. This shows that the Jews accept that Mary was the daughter of Heli. Heli's father was Matthat, who can be equated with Matthan the grandfather of Joseph. Thus a family tree can be constructed:

Thus Mary and Joseph were cousins (hinting at an arranged marriage?), and therefore Jesus was a son of David through both his mother and father by adoption. In the light of this it is evident that the question mark over the validity of a genealogy through Joseph is an irrelevancy, seeing that Joseph and Mary had a common grandfather. The point has to be made that a humanly fabricated genealogy would be sure to make some glaring errors, especially if it was produced by simple, uneducated men as the Jews claim the New Testament was. The wonder of the New Testament genealogies is that closer study reveals ever more intricate internal evidence for their truth and reliability, rather than exposing more problems.

If Jews will only accept " a proven descendant of David" as their Messiah then they will never accept him, seeing that there is now no proof of Jewish genealogies at all, let alone going right back to David. In view of this, surely Jewry should not make questions of genealogy a touchstone of whether they will accept Jesus as their Messiah.

c) Jeconiah is mentioned in Matthew 1 as an ancestor of Jesus but in Jeremiah we read of Jeconiah being cursed. It was prophesied that his seed would never sit on the throne, so Messiah cannot be Jesus if he was a descendant of Jeconiah.

This objection accepts for sake of argument the truth of the genealogies recorded in the New Testament. They show that Jeconiah was in the royal line, and was therefore a direct descendant of David, to whom it was promised that a descendant of his would be Messiah (2 Sam.7:12-16). Jews accept that Messiah is still to come; they therefore must accept that a descendant of David, and therefore Jeconiah, will be Messiah. Therefore they cannot truly

believe that Jeconiah's descendant will not be Messiah. The great Jewish thinker Maimonedes reasoned that Messiah must come from the line of Solomon - which passed through Jeconiah.

The curse on Jeconiah reads: " Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days: for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah" (Jer. 22:30). The Hebrew word translated " childless" comes from a root meaning 'demolished', suggesting that his children would be destroyed, rather than that he would have no children; he would be 'written childless' by reason of his children being destroyed. The reference to his " seed" is to be taken as parallel to the 'children' who were to be 'demolished'. The curse was therefore limited only to his immediate children, who were not to reign on the Davidic throne as originally intended. This is confirmed by Jer. 22:28 asking the rhetorical question: " Wherefore are they cast out, he (Jeconiah) and his seed, and are cast into a land which they know not?" . This confirms that Jeconiah did have " seed" , he was not literally childless, but they were " cast out" and taken to captivity in Babylon. The phrase " cast out" begs the question 'cast out from what?'. The answer surely is 'From reigning on the throne of David'. A tablet has been discovered in Babylon mentioning five sons of a man named Coniah - the same person mentioned in Jer. 22? It is worth remembering that Jeconiah's grandson was Zerubbabel, whom God was clearly willing to see reigning over Israel (see the many references to him in Zechariah).

Of additional interest is the fact that Jeconiah is mentioned in Matthew's genealogy, which we have suggested is showing Christ's ancestry going back through Joseph. Joseph was his adopted father. Jesus was therefore associated with the curse on Jeconiah through his adopted father, although it was not personally applicable to him because he was God's son rather than Joseph's. Thus he was associated with the curses that were to come on Israel without being personally deserving of them; he was " made a curse for us" , thereby redeeming us from the curses of God on sinful man. " Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us" (Gal. 3:13).

5.4 Jewish Objections To The Christian Doctrine Of Atonement

Reconciliation with God:

Objections

The Christian argument that a truly acceptable sacrifice for sin requires the shedding of blood is invalid because there are examples of God providing forgiveness without the shedding of blood, provided there was genuine repentance. From here the Jews go on to justify their idea that they can now be acceptable to God, despite having no sacrifices and no temple. They quote a number of passages which seem to suggest that forgiveness has been granted without shedding of blood.

Comment:

If the Jewish arguments are true and there is no need for sacrifices to gain forgiveness, then the obvious question arises " Why were they instituted?" . It is a fundamental principle of sacrifice, misunderstood by both Jews and apostate Christendom, that the animals offered were representative of the offerer and God's requirements for sacrifice, rather than substitutionary. The mere offering of the blood of bulls and goats could not of themselves remove the individual's sin; yet seven times in the Pentateuch the Jews were forbidden to eat

blood because " the life of the flesh is in the blood...for it is the blood that maketh atonement" (Lev.17:11). If the sacrifices were substitutionary, then any animal would have done- and it should have died instead of the offerer. The fact that the offerers still died indicates that they were not substitutionary. Also worthy of consideration is the fact that the laws concerning animal sacrifices were designed to highlight certain characteristics of that sacrifice; it could not be an animal that had died naturally or had been hunted to death (Lev.17:15), but one willingly led to sacrifice. All sacrifices had to have no blemish, thus excluding many animals. They therefore pointed forward to an ideal sacrifice which was to be willingly made, representative of the offerers. " It is the blood that maketh an atonement" -to argue that sacrifice is not necessary for forgiveness is to contradict this basic principle.

However, some of the verses quoted by Jewish objectors which show that forgiveness was possible without actually killing an animal, indicate that this statement about blood making atonement is a general principle; it does not mean that the blood of the slaughtered animal itself made atonement. In any case, it should be obvious that the blood of a senseless, amoral animal is hardly a meaningful atonement for human sin consciously committed. Sin is the transgression of the law of God, and therefore any representative sacrifice had to be someone subject to God's law. Animals do not fit this. Seeing that " the life is in the blood" , life must atone for life, and blood must be shed to atone for blood that ought to be shed. Sin brings death. Therefore salvation of a man from sin requires the death of a man; the death of an animal is really an unacceptable sacrifice if that animal points forward to nothing else. Once it is appreciated that those slaughtered animals pointed forward to a perfect human sacrifice, then it is understandable that they provided a temporary covering of sin.

Gen.3:15 says that sin must be overcome (hit on the head, in the terms of that verse) through the seed of the woman -not through an animal sacrifice. Isa.53 also speaks of Messiah, a human being, bearing sins. The fact that there was a Day of Atonement also needs to be considered. Whatever the circumstances of individual cases, the nation as a whole was utterly dependent on the sacrificial ritual of the day of Atonement for God's forgiveness; thus it was a continual statute for them every year (Lev.16:34), and not keeping it properly was punishable with death or excommunication (Lev.23:29), so important was it. Whenever the ark was separated from the tabernacle, as in Eli's time, or when the temple was destroyed, this law could not operate. Strictly speaking, Israel were, and still remain, an unforgiven nation whilst they seek their forgiveness through the Old Covenant system. The only way out of this predicament is to accept a new covenant which does not rely on a day of Atonement ritual to gain forgiveness; one which is " established upon better promises" . The very fact that a New Covenant is mentioned implies that there were problems with the previous one.

It must also be remembered that sin offerings were obligatory under the Mosaic Law; if only repentance was required, this would not have been the case. It must also be recognized that God has the prerogative to forgive without requiring a blood sacrifice to be immediately made; He is not subject to strictures which men may try to place upon His love. However, seeing how much the importance of blood offerings is emphasized, it is surely presumptuous to conclude that if we are still under the Old Covenant we can claim that such offerings are no longer necessary for us to perform. The Jewish conscience is not totally clear on this point, seeing that in some Jewish traditions a rooster is killed on the day of Atonement and swung round the head to associate it with themselves. And every Jew who ponders the deliverance from Egypt at Passover, must reflect on the fact that it was only due to the Angel seeing the blood associated with the household that they were saved from death: " When he seeth the blood...the Lord will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto

your houses to smite you" (Ex.12:23). Because of this they were to remind their children each year of " the sacrifice of the Lord's Passover" (Ex.12:27) which saved them from death.

Putting all this together a more accurate picture of God's way of reconciliation emerges. The animal sacrifices themselves could not take away sin; this is confirmed by the examples quoted of forgiveness being possible without slaughtering an animal. But without the principle of blood there can be no atonement. As sacrifices are representative, those slain animals represented an ideal sacrifice yet to come. In this we see the purpose of the sacrifices -to point forward to a perfect sacrifice, which passages like Isa.53 and Gen.3:15 make clear was to be a human being, a " seed of the woman" . Thus when we read " It is the blood that maketh atonement" (Lev.17:11), there is reference here to the blood of the future sacrifice which the animal offerings typified, rather than to the blood of the slaughtered animals itself. Most of the examples of forgiveness quoted relate to those in God's covenant, which was confirmed and validated by the shedding and sprinkling of animal blood. We have shown that this blood was not effective in itself, it relied for its efficacy on " the blood" of the covenant to which it pointed forward. Therefore that future blood of sacrifice would have enabled the forgiveness of those who had lived within the covenant previously, seeing that " the blood" was ultimately what that covenant depended on for its efficacy. The New Testament expounds this at length (see Heb.9:15 R.V.; Rom.3:25; 5:17).

The fact that atonement was possible without sacrifice of animals but still needing " the blood that maketh atonement" clearly shows that the sacrifices made were pointing forward to a one off, specific offering of " the blood" . Other passages indicate that this sin bearing offering was to be of a human being, who to fulfil the type of the animal sacrifices would be without moral blemish, and would not die naturally. The true Christian understanding of the atonement fits in precisely with this.

All the specific verses quoted in the following list can be understood against this background; but further attention will now be given to each one.

a) Solomon's prayer told the Jews that if they were scattered and then repented, they only needed to pray towards the temple and they would be forgiven.

The temple made prayers acceptable (1 Kings 8)

There is now no temple, so Israel in their present dispersion cannot take comfort from this passage that the Old Covenant does not require animal sacrifices. Careful examination of the record of Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple reveals that it is highly likely that the dedication was on the day of Atonement. The following points are not conclusive in themselves but added together make a fair case:

- The day of Atonement was in the seventh month (Lev.16:29); Solomon's dedication was held " at the feast in the month Ethanim, which is the seventh month" (1 Kings 8:2).

- Apart from keeping this feast, the people stayed behind afterwards to keep another feast which lasted seven days (1 Kings 8:65). This corresponds beautifully with the fact that the day of Atonement was on the tenth day of the seventh month, followed five days afterwards by the Feast of Tabernacles, which lasted for seven days (Lev.23:27,34,41). This certainly suggests that the dedication of the temple was at the day of Atonement; and what more fitting than for the people to remain behind to keep Tabernacles centred around their new temple?

- Solomon's prayer of dedication is evidently shot through with allusions to the curses that would come upon Israel if they disobeyed, as recorded in Lev.26 and Deut.28. Solomon speaks as if these curses will definitely come upon Israel, and he is praying that God will shorten the punishments when they come for the sake of prayers made " toward" (or 'in') the temple. An example: " When Thy people Israel be smitten down before the enemy...when Heaven is shut up, and there is no rain" (1 Kings 8:33,35; clearly referring back to Lev.26:17 and Lev.26:19 respectively). Repentance and forgiveness is a major theme in his prayer; indeed, the density of reference to these ideas in this passage is the highest in the Old Testament. This all fits into place if this prayer is being offered on or around the day of Atonement, when Israel were to confess their sins.

- The first day of Atonement seems to have been held when the tabernacle was re-dedicated after its desecration by Nadab and Abihu; the feast was a memorial of this (Lev.16:2,8,17,18,21,29 and context). It was therefore fitting that the dedication of the temple should also be on the day of Atonement.

- " All the men of Israel...all the children of Israel...all Israel with him (Solomon), a great congregation" (1 Kings 8:2,63,64) emphasizes what a major gathering this was. The gathering of Israel to the feasts such as the day of Atonement could be described in similar words.

- The Hebrew word Solomon uses for " forgiveness" in the prayer means literally 'to send away, to let go' (Dr. Young, Analytical Concordance). This immediately suggests the scapegoat that was 'let go' into the wilderness on the day of Atonement, bearing Israel's sins.

If Solomon's prayer and dedication of the temple was indeed on the day of Atonement, we can understand why " Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord" (1 Kings 8:22) to make his prayer. Numerous animal sacrifices had just been made on that altar (v.5), which were followed by this prayer for forgiveness, and then followed by peace offerings (v.63), representing the fuller fellowship with God now possible due to the atonement that had been made. It is against this background that we can consider Solomon's prayers for Jews who might be scattered abroad, unable to present themselves before the Lord at the day of Atonement in the Jerusalem temple. He is asking God to extend the blessing of forgiveness which was made available to the congregation present on that day to those who were far away, by reason of their prayers for forgiveness still being acceptable on account of God's eyes and presence being upon that altar within the temple. Remember that Solomon was standing in front of it as he offered that prayer, showing that the blood of the sacrifice that was accepted for atonement was central to the temple and Solomon's requests. Thus their forgiveness was on account of the sacrifice made on that altar, so that their sins would be 'let go', or " forgiven" , as the scapegoat was 'let go', even though they were not physically present at the ceremony. Thus closer examination of this case confirms that forgiveness was still not possible without association with the shedding of " the blood of the atonement" , which we have shown elsewhere pointed forward to a perfect human sacrifice, on whose account God was willing to pass over sin.

b) God ultimately prefers obedience rather than sacrifice (1 Sam. 15:22).

" To obey is better than sacrifice"

The context of this verse needs to be considered: " Saul said unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the word of the Lord...but the people took of the spoil...which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the Lord...and Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (1 Sam.15:20-22).

There is nothing here to indicate that animal sacrifices were not required under the Old Covenant to gain forgiveness. The sacrifices the people were making were probably not sin offerings, but some form of dedication or peace offering. Saul and the people were clearly disobeying the specific command of God to destroy the spoil from Amalek; but instead they were keeping it for themselves, justifying this by offering some of it in sacrifice to God. Samuel was saying that careful obedience to God's word must precede acceptable sacrifice; the 'work' of sacrifice in itself was meaningless without an obedient heart first of all. Some years later, David perhaps alluded back to this incident in his own reflections on his sin with Bathsheba, which he suggests was as bad as Saul's sin of rebelling against the word of God concerning Amalek: " Thou desirest not sacrifice...the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit...then shalt Thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering, and whole burnt offering" (Ps.51:16,17,19). Thus God does not desire the sacrifices of an unrepentant sinner; but once there is a broken, repentant spirit, then their sacrifices are a pleasure to God.

Most powerful of all is the fact that these words of Samuel are quoted by Messiah in Psalm 40, a passage which describes Messiah as superseding the animal sacrifice system. It describes how many tried to kill Messiah (v.12,14), and how he was resurrected by God: " He (God) brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay" (v.2). The spirit of Messiah is clearly in this passage. Having reflected on his deliverance like this, Messiah states: " Sacrifice and offering Thou didst not desire; mine ears hast Thou opened (Heb. 'digged', referring to the practice of 'digging' a servants ear, Ex.21:2-6, showing that Messiah was to be a slave to God's word): burnt offering and sin offering hast Thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book (i.e. all through the Old Covenant) it is written of me, I delight to do Thy will, O my God: yea, Thy law is within my heart" (Ps.40:6-8). Thus through His perfect obedience to the word of God, Messiah was the perfect sacrifice for the sins of mankind. We have explained earlier the reasons why God had no " desire" for animal sacrifices in themselves to atone for sin, and how these were only effective by reason of the perfect sacrifice to whom they pointed forward. The emphasis here on Messiah's total obedience to the word of God explains the allusion to the example of Saul, who was a classic example of disobedience to the word. We may be meant to infer that the example of the first king of Israel stands in total contrast to that of Messiah, the last and greatest of Israel's kings. The Hebrew word for " delight" in " Hath the lord as great delight in ...sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord?" is the very same word translated " desire" in Ps.40: " Sacrifice and offering Thou didst not desire" . Messiah saying that he " delights" to do God's will (Ps.40:8) is also the same word.

God did not " require" , or 'request' (Hebrew) animal sacrifices but rather the offering of a perfectly obedient man. The question naturally arises 'For what did God not request animal sacrifices?'. The answer must be 'To be a totally acceptable covering for sins'; otherwise there would have been no need for this person described here to say that he came to provide the sacrifice which God required. If this person was perfect, as Ps.40 requires, then it follows that although by reason of having human nature he would have to die, his death would not be because he had sinned, which is the fundamental reason for death. Seeing there was no reason

apart from the physical constitution of his body why he should have to die, it would follow that God would raise him from the dead, which is what v.2 of the Psalm describes. It should be noted that " in the volume of the book" of the covenant this person was hinted at. Therefore any system of interpretation of the Old Covenant that denies that all its laws and sacrifices point forward to this perfect sacrifice must be faulty. The intricacy with which the offering of Jesus and the exposition of it by the Christian writers of the first century fulfils these types is surely proof enough that Jesus was that perfect sacrifice.

c) The scapegoat on the Day of Atonement was the sin-bearer for Israel, and it was sent away alive, therefore a sin-bearer does not have to be sacrificed.

The scapegoat

To infer from the fact that one animal was sent away into the wilderness alive at this ceremony that animal sacrifices were not needed to gain atonement disregards the whole theme of this feast, which is the great emphasis that is placed on " the blood" in the record of the feast in Lev.16. The High Priest had to kill a bullock to atone for the sins of himself and his family, and then present two goats before the Lord. Through a system of lots (i.e. the Urim and Thummim?) one goat was chosen to be sacrificed, whilst the other was let go into the wilderness. Notice that they are described as " two kids of the goat for a (singular) sin offering" (Lev.16:5). The fact one of them was sacrificed shows that atonement was not possible without the shedding of blood. As Israel watched the terrified scapegoat running off into the wilderness they would have beheld a powerful cameo of how far God was willing to put away sin from man. We have shown in our comments on Ps.40 above that it was necessary for a perfect Messiah to be resurrected for his offering to be complete. The sin offering being comprised of a dead and living goat suggests that the true atoning sacrifice would be so on account of both its death and subsequent (resurrected) life. Paul seems to be alluding to the day of atonement when he writes: " We were reconciled (Greek: 'atoned') to God by the death of His Son (and) being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life... by (which) we have now received the atonement" (Rom.5:10,11). The Christian understanding of Jesus thus clearly fulfils these types of the day of Atonement.

There seems to be good reason to interpret the Most Holy place as representative of Heaven. " The Lord is in His Holy Temple (in the Shekinah of the Most Holy), the Lord's throne is in Heaven" (Ps.11:4). David's plea " Send Thee help from the sanctuary" was answered: God " will hear him from His holy heaven" (Ps.20:2,6). He describes the place where the ark dwelt, i.e. the Most Holy, as God's habitation (2 Sam.15:25), which is language elsewhere used about Heaven (1 Kings 8:30). The High Priest had to lay aside his High Priestly robes when he entered the Most Holy, showing that there was something lacking in the system of Levitical priests. It was there that he obtained atonement for Israel's sins, and then went outside to the masses of expectant worshippers to pronounce them a forgiven people. We have seen that Messiah is the one who obtains true atonement, and is therefore able to enter Heaven itself as a result of his sacrifice, to obtain forgiveness for his people. As the High Priest came out of the most holy and then blessed the people, so Messiah must return from Heaven (having ascended there first) to pronounce His people's forgiveness. When God's people are eagerly awaiting His appearance and have made suitable confession of sins, then Jesus will return from Heaven, having obtained eternal redemption.

d) Nathan could immediately assure David that his sin was forgiven - without any sacrifice. David said in Psalm 51 that after he was forgiven, then he would sacrifice.

David's forgiveness

David as an adulterer and murderer should have been stoned to death, according to the law. When he departed from Jerusalem after Absalom's rebellion, Shimei " cast stones at David" and taunted him by shouting " Thou man of blood, and thou man of Belial" (2 Sam.16:6,7). It appears that Shimei was reminding David of the Mosaic command to stone adulterers to death (Deut.22:24); doubtless for this reason David replied " So let him curse, because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David. Who shall then say, Wherefore hast thou done so?" (2 Sam.16:10). The fact is that this commandment was not enforced by God, on His prerogative. This does not mean that the command about stoning was invalid, or that it had been superseded by another command. Similarly, God went outside of the Old Covenant to grant forgiveness to David, yet His doing so does not mean that animal sacrifice was unnecessary under that system. Jews at present claim they are still under the Old Covenant, and therefore there can be no forgiveness without sacrifice until they accept a New Covenant, with better promises of reconciliation with God. David's clear faith in Messiah as his promised descendant must have been one of the reasons for God overlooking his sin. Many of the Psalms which foretell Messiah's sufferings (e.g. Ps.22,69,32) have links with Isa.53 and other Messianic passages. Yet these Psalms were primarily written by David during his time of suffering after his sin with Bathsheba; thus David may have been well aware that he was now experiencing some of the sufferings of his great Messiah-descendant, on account of whom forgiveness was possible. There are copious indications that these Psalms had a major fulfilment in the crucifixion and sufferings of Jesus.

It is also objected that David says that once he is forgiven, then he will offer sacrifice. However, by contrast what David appears to be saying is that God does not want to receive sacrifice from someone who is living in guilty conscience of sin through refusing to repent, but that rather there must be a humble spirit of repentance, after which sin offerings can be meaningfully offered: " Thou desirest not sacrifice...the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit...then shalt Thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness" (Ps.51:16-19). To interpret this as meaning God does not require sacrifices at all under the Sinai covenant, is to fly in the face of the multitude of commands which show God did require animal sacrifice under that covenant.

Repentance alone is not a sufficient basis for forgiveness; God's pronouncements in the Garden of Eden (Gen.3) require death as a result of sin; death is the only way through which God will forgive sin. If the sinner dies to make amends for his own sins, then he is dead and has no way of reconciliation or salvation. Therefore a representative sacrifice was needed through which the sinner could be saved by associating himself with it. These principles applied to David too. Animal sacrifices are not suitable representatives of sinful man, and therefore it is vital to associate ourselves with the atoning sacrifice of the one perfect man, Jesus, through baptism into his death and resurrection, and partaking of the symbols of that sacrifice in bread and wine as he appointed.

e) Hosea says that prayer, not sacrifice, would atone for Israel's sin (e.g. 6:6 & 14:2).

Prayer gaining forgiveness

" I have desired mercy and not sacrifice" (Hos.6:6) is another expression of the issue considered in b). It is possible that Hosea is referring back to Samuel's very similar words in 1 Sam.15:22, although as we have seen in our consideration of that passage above, this does

not provide support for the thesis that forgiveness is possible for those under the Old Covenant without sacrifice.

The repentant sinner was to " confess that he hath sinned in that thing: and he shall bring his trespass offering unto the Lord for his sin which he hath sinned" (Lev.5:5,6). Such confession of sin would have involved prayer to God; but it was followed by sacrifice. The rising up of fragrant incense towards Heaven was symbolic of the prayers of the people, offered through the mediatorship of the priests. Seeing Israel have no priesthood now, they are without any means of entering the presence of God; hence the importance of accepting Jesus as the true intercessor and High Priest in Heaven itself, clothed with the white linen of a perfect character. The incense altar on which the incense was offered had to be sprinkled with blood, both at its dedication and on the day of atonement (Lev.16:18 cp.v.12). We have shown previously that " the blood" of the animals on the day of atonement was not efficacious of itself, but represented the blood of the future perfect sacrifice. Thus Israel's prayers were acceptable to God by reason of that blood. It should be noted that it was the altar of incense rather than the altar of burnt offering which was sprinkled with blood on the day of atonement. That day was a day of remembering of Israel's sins of the past year, and its very existence indicated that the animal sacrifices were not totally efficacious. Similarly, the prayers of Israel for forgiveness were only given some form of acceptability by reason of the shed blood that was sprinkled on the incense altar on that day.

Hos.14:2 is mentioned in this objection as proof that prayer alone could bring forgiveness without reference to sacrifices: " Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto Him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips" . The Hebrew word for " calves" means a young bullock or ox, and this is how the word 'par' is elsewhere translated. Thus there is definitely a connection here between the idea of animal sacrifice and their words. This suggests reference back to Hos.6:6 " I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings" . We have explained previously that verses like this do not mean that the animal sacrifices were unnecessary. It would appear from the context of Hosea 14 that it is speaking of the final repentance of Israel, when they finally reject the worship of " idols" of all kinds for good (14:8). Earlier in the prophecy God has announced that His married relationship with Israel as His wife has ended (2:1-5); to this day many Rabbis teach that God and Israel are still separated, although the marriage contract between them still stands. However, on a wholehearted repentance of Israel in the last days (as a result of Elijah's second ministry, Mal. 4:5,6), God promised in Hosea to take Israel back as His wife. Hos. 14 refers to this: " I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away" (v.4). Therefore it is not possible to take these words of Hos.14 and say that they can apply to Israel at any time before this final repentance. Their final repentance as outlined in passages like Zech.12:10 will involve remorse for having persecuted their Messiah. For this Messiah to be Jesus perfectly fits the bill in this respect. In that day they will no longer trust in the Old Covenant and its animal sacrifices, but rather pray for forgiveness trusting in Jesus' atoning blood; which is why they will be heard.

f) Prov. 16:6

" By mercy and truth iniquity is purged" (Prov.16:6)

This does not necessarily disprove the necessity of animal sacrifices under the Old Covenant; as we have shown previously, there had to be an acceptable attitude both to God and to others

before God was prepared to accept their sacrifices. Proverbs is often a practical commentary on the Mosaic Law, and this would be an important point to make with regard to the attitude they had towards animal sacrifices. It must be remembered that sacrifice does not force God into forgiving sin; it makes the forgiveness of sin possible, and this is granted as a result of God's mercy, not just the sacrifice alone. " Mercy and truth" is used earlier in Proverbs with reference to the correct way of keeping the spirit of the Law: " Forget not My law...let not mercy and truth forsake thee...write them upon the table of thine heart" (3:1-3). This last phrase refers back to the ten commandments written on the tables of stone, suggesting that " mercy and truth" refers to an acceptable keeping of the spirit of the law. This was necessary in the offerer before making sacrifices for forgiveness.

However, letting Scripture interpret Scripture suggests a further meaning of " mercy and truth" . The phrase often refers to the promises made to Abraham and the patriarchs concerning their seed having eternal life on earth, one of his seed being Messiah, and through him the seed being delivered from their enemies. Mic.7:20 makes the link obvious: " Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn to our fathers from the days of old" . Other examples of this are Gen.24:27; 32:9,10; 2 Sam.7:15; 15:20; Ps.115:1. The passage in Proverbs would therefore be saying that on account of the promises to Abraham, sin would be forgiven. The offer of salvation from mankind's enemies (Gen.22:17,18) must surely refer to salvation from sin -what greater enemies do we have? This was to be through Abraham's seed, Messiah, indicating that he was to provide salvation from sin. We have shown previously that this was only possible through a perfect human sacrifice. It is understandable, therefore, that the New Testament interprets the Abrahamic promise of blessing to come upon all families of the earth (Gen.22:17,18) as meaning the forgiveness of sins made possible through the perfect sacrifice and resurrection of Jesus (Acts 3:25,26), the benefits of which have been offered to all the world. Thus " mercy" is a relevant word to associate with the promises once it is realised that they speak of forgiveness; and " truth" is also pertinent seeing that the promises were confirmed by God's remarkable guarantee: " By Myself have I spoken" .

Many other passages use the word " blessing" in a context of forgiveness, and by so doing connect the Abrahamic promise of forgiveness through the seed of Abraham with forgiveness. Ps.32:1 is a clear example: " Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered" . David is speaking here about the forgiveness he had experienced after the Bathsheba incident, which we have shown in d) above was forgiveness made possible outside of the Old Mosaic covenant. Therefore the promises to Abraham were part of a different covenant to that made at Sinai. The new covenant of Jer.31 was for the forgiveness of sins (" I will make a new covenant...for I will forgive their iniquity" ,v.31,33), and as such it was based on the Abrahamic promises. Thus the Old Covenant made with Israel at Sinai was a temporary arrangement, made until the confirmation of the promises made to Abraham concerning forgiveness. True forgiveness can only come through a perfect offering, and therefore when that offering was made the Abrahamic promises were confirmed, and the Old Covenant ended. This is what happened on the death of Jesus, the perfect sacrifice who took away the sin of the world. Because the Abrahamic promises offered true forgiveness, they also offered eternal life: " The land of Canaan for an everlasting possession" (Gen.17:8). This was in no way offered by the covenant made at Sinai. In no way can the Jewish concepts of Messiah cope with all the requirements of the Abrahamic promises.

It is noteworthy that the next verse in the Proverbs passage also has an allusion to the Abrahamic promises: " When a man's ways please the Lord, He maketh even his enemies to

be at peace with him" (Prov.16:7, cp. " Thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies" , and the patriarchs finding peace with the hostile tribes which surrounded them). The references in other scriptures to God saving Israel from their sins by His mercy no doubt refer to His keeping these same Abrahamic promises.

g) Isa. 27 (destroying the idols led to forgiveness).

Forgiveness due to repentance alone? (Isa.27:9)

Isa.27:9 is interpreted as suggesting that forgiveness is available just on repentance, rather than requiring blood sacrifice. If this is true, then all the emphasis on blood in the Mosaic rituals is pointless. The translation in the A.V. is obscure, so we quote from the Septuagint (translated by Orthodox Jews before Christ): " Therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be taken away; and this is his blessing, when I shall have taken away his sin; when they shall have broken to pieces all the stones of the altars as fine dust" .

This seems to be saying that the blessing of forgiveness will come upon Israel when they destroy their idols. We could justifiably argue that the mention of " blessing" takes us back to the promises to Abraham and the new covenant (see f) above), and that therefore this promise of forgiveness on realistic repentance is only true for those Jews who chose to be under the new covenant, and thereby reject the system of reconciliation with God offered by the Old covenant made at Sinai.

The reference here to breaking in pieces the altars and groves refers in the context of Isaiah to the " high places" which had been set up to replace the Divinely appointed altar at Jerusalem. Hezekiah, in whose time Isaiah prophesied (Isa.1:1), was notorious for his systematic destruction of these altars (2 Chron.29:16; 31:1; 2 Kings 18:4), so much so that even the invading Babylonians had heard about it (2 Kings 18:22; Is.36:7). It is therefore fair to assume that this is the fulfilment of this prophecy of Isaiah. However, Hezekiah prefaced his purges with a public ceremony of sin offering at the beginning of his reign (2 Chron.29:21); he then went ahead and made his purges of the illegal altars etc. Thus the taking away of Jacob's iniquity referred to in Isa.27:9 was due to blood sacrifice followed by their actual destruction of the altars. Obviously the sacrifice alone would not have made atonement without there being some sign of repentance in practice.

h) Miriam was smitten with leprosy and was healed without sacrifice.

The healing of Miriam (Num.12:9-15)

Miriam was smitten with leprosy for her part in the rebellion against Moses' authority. The living death of leprosy is an obvious type of sin. Moses prayed " Heal her now, O God, I beseech Thee" . However, it can be inferred that God was not happy to grant immediate reconciliation: " If her father had but spit in her face (cp. Deut.25:9 -suggesting she was unwilling to build up her brother's house?), should she not be ashamed seven days? let her be shut out from the camp seven days, and after that let her be received in again. And Miriam was shut out from the camp: and the people journeyed not, till Miriam was brought in again" .

It is fair to assume that Miriam had to go through the ceremony of cleansing for leprosy as outlined in Lev.14:1-8. This was a ritual based very much on that of the day of Atonement; two birds (cp. two goats on the day of atonement) were taken, one was killed and the blood

sprinkled on the ex-leper, and the other let " loose into the open field" , as the scapegoat was. It was not until this was done that Miriam could return to the congregation, and therefore to fellowship with God. Thus blood still needed to be shed to make atonement for her. The camp of Israel only moved on when they were led on by the guiding Angel. The fact that the point is emphasized that they remained stationary for 7 days may possibly suggest that the Angel would not lead them onwards towards the promised land whilst Miriam was still in her state of separation from God, which was only resolved by the sacrifices outlined above.

i) Abimelech was forgiven by Abraham's prayer, without shedding blood.

Abraham's prayer for Abimelech (Gen. 20:7,17)

Abimelech and his household were cursed by God with the inability to produce children as a result of Abimelech's relationship with Sarah. He was advised to ask Abraham to pray for him so that this curse would be taken away now that he was no longer intending to take Sarah as his wife. However, that prayer was not for forgiveness, because Abimelech did not know that Sarah was married; he was not knowingly breaking God's laws. That he did not sin is made quite clear by God: " God said unto him in a dream, Yea, I know that thou didst this in the integrity of thy heart; for I also withheld thee from sinning against Me: therefore suffered I thee not to touch her" (Gen. 20:6). Therefore Abraham's prayer was for God's curse on Abimelech of infertility and eventual death to be lifted, not for his forgiveness (20:7).

j) In Ezra's time the Jews separated from their foreign wives, thereby gaining forgiveness without shedding blood.

Separation from sin brings forgiveness

The contention that in Ezra's time the Jews only had to separate from their foreign wives to receive forgiveness fails to appreciate that blood sacrifices were only acceptable once the sin had been repented of and rectified where necessary. And Ezra 10:19 is conclusive: " They gave their hands that they would put away their wives; and being guilty, they offered a ram of the flock for a trespass offering" .

5.5 Jewish Objections To Christian Usage Of Old Testament Passages

1) Psalm 2 - This is about David, not Jesus. Psalm 89 is parallel to Psalm 2 and supports this. The concluding verse " Kiss the son..." should be translated " serve with purity" .

This Psalm speaks of the Lord's " anointed" , who was also to be His begotten son (v.2,7,6, where " set" is " anointed" in Hebrew). 'Mashiach', the Hebrew for 'messiah' means literally " an anointed one" , and therefore it is reasonable to interpret this Psalm as speaking of Messiah. It has definite allusions to the promise to David about his great descendant:

Ps.2

2 Sam.7

" Yet have I (God) set My king upon My holy hill of Zion"

" I will set up thy seed after thee..

Ps.2 describes how all opposing kings will be overcome by God.

establish the throne of His Kingdom...

" Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten thee"

" I will be his father, and he shall be My son" -only possible by God begetting a son of an unmarried woman.

This shows that Ps.2 is not about David, but about his promised son. That this did not only refer to Solomon is shown by David's comment that " Although my house (immediate family) be not so with God; yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant" (2 Sam.23:5). This indicates that David looked for a future, eternal fulfilment of the promise of his seed, unrelated to any primary fulfilment it might have in Solomon. David's description of the promise as speaking of his house " for a great while to come" (1 Chron.17:17) would be irrelevant if it only had fulfilment in Solomon. Any parallels with Ps.89 are by reason of that Psalm being a commentary on the promises to David which Ps.2 also refers to. It is difficult for Jews to argue that Ps.2 has had any major fulfilment so far; David's messiah/seed was to be surrounded in Jerusalem by many armies who will resent his rule over them (v.2,3), and who will be destroyed by God's intervention on behalf of Messiah, with the result that his Kingdom is then worldwide (" the uttermost parts of the earth" , v.8). It is easy to see how this will occur when Jesus returns to earth to reign in Jerusalem as David's seed.

2) Psalm 22

a) Ps. 22 refers to the Jewish people collectively; the references to parting of garments and bones sticking out sounds like Auschwitz.

b) Jesus did not expect God to deliver him. The person in Ps. 22 did. Jesus expected to be crucified (Matt. 20:19).

This Psalm contains much language which it is impossible to apply to a group of people. It is a Psalm of David, and therefore refers primarily to the sufferings which he endured, perhaps during the time of Absalom's rebellion. In view of this, it is hard to make it refer to a group of people. If it does do so, then this must be by reason of very indirect allusion. The person referred to was surrounded by jeering spectators, who in particular mocked his spiritual claims(v.8), leading him to reflect that it was God who created him in the womb (v.9,10). The man's bones suffered greatly (v.14), burning thirst tormented him (v.15), his hands and feet were nailed (v.16), his garments were parted (v.18). The rest of the Psalm then describes how God vindicates and rescues this man from death, so that he promises to " declare Thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise Thee" (v.22). This last verse makes it hard to interpret this person as a group of people, seeing that he declares God to " the congregation" of his brethren. The Jews admit in the Talmud that Jesus was crucified. This prophecy in Ps.22 undeniably fits the scene of crucifixion, especially of Jesus. Verse 30 mentions how " A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation" , which is very much the language of Isa.53 concerning God's suffering servant/Messiah who would save Israel from their sins by his sacrifice. This connection confirms that Ps.22 is about an individual rather than Israel generally.

However, it is true that some of the descriptions of Messiah's sufferings do have faint echoes in them of the sufferings of Israel. Jewish prison art discovered at Auschwitz indicates that many Jews who suffered there came to appreciate that what they were going through had a remarkable similarity with the sufferings of Jesus on the cross. And in their holocaust to come this will be repeated on a much greater scale, until they mourn for their Messiah whom they pierced in crucifixion (Zech.12:10). It is worthwhile highlighting the extent to which the punishments of apostate Israel came upon Jesus on the cross, seeing that there he was Israel's sin bearer, whom they only need to identify themselves with to gain the benefit of His atoning sacrifice.

Judgments on Israel

Experienced by Jesus on the Cros

Hos.2:3,6 = Matt.27:27-29; Jn.19:28

Josh.22:13 = Lk.18:33

Ps.89:30-32; Is.28:18 = Mt.27:30

Ez.22:1-5 = Jesus mocked by Gentile Roman soldiers, Mt.27:27-31

Is.50:2,6 = Mt.26:67; 27:30; Lk.18:32

Jer.18:16 = Mt.27:39

These similarities are too close to have been engineered humanly; if it is accepted that Jesus was crucified, it does not seem unreasonable to accept that the sufferings of Jesus described in the New Testament really did happen. It therefore follows that Jesus of Nazareth did bear the sin and judgments of Israel, and therefore he is their saviour-Messiah.

The claim that " Jesus did not expect God to deliver him" reveals a poor knowledge of His words. He definitely did expect God to deliver him: Matt.16:21,27; 19:28; 20:18,19; 26:27-29,31,32,64.

3) Psalm 110:1 - " The Lord said to my lord" . The Talmud interprets David's lord as Abraham, not Jesus. The rest of the Psalm refers to God's advice to Abraham before his battle with the four kings in Gen. 14.

To say that this refers to Abraham is ludicrous. " The Lord (God) said unto my (David's) Lord, Sit thou at my right hand" (110:1). The person referred to is therefore David's 'lord', who was asked to sit at the right hand of God, in Heaven. There is no record of Abraham ever being promised that he would go to heaven. This person was to be ordained a priest by God : " Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek" (v.4). Yet we are told that Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek and was blessed by him (Gen.14:19,20), showing that Melchizedek was both separate from and superior to Abraham. " Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies" (Ps.110:2) recalls the promise to Abraham that his seed would " possess the gate of his enemies" (Gen.22:17,18). Again, Ps.110 must refer to Abraham and David's seed, who would be a king-priest after the order of Melchizedek, rather than to Abraham personally.

The seed of Abraham sitting at God's right hand in Heaven, until He is revealed in glory to rule a world now subdued under God's command, fits in neatly with the Christian concept of Jesus having ascended to Heaven, where he now sits awaiting His return to the earth to establish God's perfect Kingdom here. At that time " Thy people (Messiah's people of Israel) shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning" (110:3), suggesting a major repentance and spiritual rebirth of Israel at this time. Again, this undeniably ties up with Jesus returning from Heaven to be accepted by a repentant Israel.

8) Micah 5

a) Micah 5:1,2 parallels 1 Sam. 17:12 - it is saying that David, the ancestor of Messiah, was born in Bethlehem.

b) Micah 5:5 says Messiah is to bring peace - which Jesus did not.

This passage is widely recognized amongst Jews as having application to Messiah, the great seed of David. To argue that it is only about David is surely just being contrary. The Jewish Soncino commentary is explicit in its support of a Messianic meaning. It says the chapter is " A prophecy of the Messianic King and Israel's destiny among the nations" , further commenting on verses 1-5: " This prophecy of the Messiah is comparable with the more famous 'shoot out of the stock of Jesse' prophecy in Isaiah 11. To hearten the people in their calamitous plight, Micah foretells the coming of one from Bethlehem (i.e. of the house of David) who, in the strength of the Lord, will restore Israel to the land and rule over them in God's name in abiding peace" .

The Midrash (Breishis Rabba 2:4) interprets this passage (correctly, from the Christian viewpoint) as meaning that the concept of Messiah has always been with God from the beginning.

Micah 5 is speaking of Messiah in the future tense: " Thou, Bethlehem...out of thee shall he come forth unto me (i.e. as God's very own son, implying a virgin birth?) that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been of old, from everlasting" (Mic.5:2), showing that this is about a future person, although his ancestry (" goings forth") goes far back. 1 Sam.17:12 just makes the point that David was from Bethlehem Ephratah -and because Messiah is to be the great descendant of David, it is fitting that he should have been born in David's city. The Hebrew phrase " mikedem" which is translated " from of old" recurs in Mic.7:20, speaking of the promises to the patriarchs (also of the seed/Messiah) " which Thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old" . " From everlasting" (Heb.'mime olahm') means " from ancient times" (see R.V.margin; N.I.V.). This idea of things being done from " everlasting days" occurs in Isa.63:9,11 concerning the Exodus from Egypt; in Amos 9:11 concerning David and Solomon's time; and in Mic.7:14 concerning the time of the Assyrian invasion. Thus it does not necessarily mean from eternity in absolute terms.

We have mentioned elsewhere that to fulfil all the Messianic promises, Messiah must have two major comings. Verse 1 describes how this Messiah will be treated: " They shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek" . Verse 2 then refers back to how despite this (" But thou, Bethlehem...") He will have been born as the descendant of David who was to be Israel's king/Messiah. The prophecy continues " Therefore (because of their smiting of Messiah in v.1?) will He (God) give them (Israel) up, until the time that she which travaileth

hath brought forth: then the remnant of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel...(then) he shall be great unto the ends of the earth (the Messianic Kingdom). And this man shall be the peace, when the Assyrian shall come into our land" (Mic.5:3-5). From all this it should be clear that there are two comings of Messiah; one at which he is persecuted by Israel after having been born as their Messiah at Bethlehem, followed by a period in which Israel are rejected by God until they repent, at which time Messiah will come again to save Israel from an Assyrian invasion and establish the Messianic Kingdom worldwide. Assyria has its modern counterpart in the Arab powers surrounding Israel. At any moment we will see a massive Arab invasion of Israel, and the horrors of the ensuing holocaust will lead Israel to repent of their rejection of their Bethlehem-born Messiah, Jesus. Due to this, He will then intervene on God's behalf to save them from the 'Assyrian' invasion, and then establish God's eternal Kingdom worldwide.

5-5-1 Christian And Jewish Interpretation Of Isaiah 53

6) Isaiah 53

a) This shows that suffering leads to purification, but there is no hint here that it is speaking of a sacrifice which will provide future atonement.

(b) Parts of Isaiah 53 are in the past tense, e.g. " Who hath believed our report?" . Therefore it cannot be a prophecy of the future. Phrases like " He hath borne our griefs" occur, rather than " he shall bear our griefs" . The present tenses in Isaiah 53:3 show that at least part of that prophecy is referring to the times of Isaiah. There are some future tenses in Isaiah 53 showing that the whole passage cannot refer to the future; only parts of it can.

(c) The " servant" of Isa. 53 refers to the Jewish people as a whole - the term " My servant" is used like this in Isa. 49:3.

(d) Isa. 53:7 says that the servant would not open his mouth, yet Jesus did do so in his sufferings (Matt. 27:46). By contrast, the Talmud (Berochos 61 b) gives examples of how Jewish martyrs died in silence.

(e) Isa. 53:10 describes the servant having children and living a long life. This does not apply to Jesus.

This passage was discussed earlier in the transcript, and therefore only the specific objections raised will be discussed here:

a) Isa.53 does speak of sacrifice; God would make " his soul" , i.e. " him" , " an offering for sin" (v.10). The Law required that the offerer lay his hand on the sin offering before it was killed, to associate himself with it (Lev.4:4,15,24,29). In this way the animal bore the offerer's sins, in the same way as the scapegoat bore Israel's sins on the day of Atonement. This fact is definitely alluded to here: " Bearing their iniquities" (v.11), " He bare the sin of many" (v.12), " the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" (v.6). These verses are conclusive that a human offering and sin-bearing sacrifice is being described here . It is noteworthy that the bullock's blood was to be " sprinkled" seven times before the Lord to make atonement (Lev.4:6,17); and the same Hebrew word occurs earlier in this same

suffering servant prophecy: " My servant...his visage was so marred more than any man...so (on account of his sufferings) shall he sprinkle many nations" (Is.52:13-15).

We have shown earlier that the blood of the slain animals was not in itself a valid way of atoning for sin -it pointed forward to " the blood" of the perfect sacrifice. That perfect sin-bearing sacrifice, which Isa.53 shows was to be made by the willing death of the suffering servant, therefore gained forgiveness of sin for all time. The seed of the woman was to destroy sin, the seed of the serpent, through his own temporary sufferings (the bruising on the heel, Gen.3:15). " Sin" in this context must include all the transgressions which have ever been committed, and all those which ever would be after the time that perfect sacrifice was made on Calvary's cross. This perfect sacrifice would not be so if there were other sacrifices still needed after it had been made. Therefore this perfect sacrifice which the " volume of the book" of the Old Covenant constantly pointed forward to (Ps.40:7), would provide atonement for future sins. Thus in the same way as the efficacy of the perfect sacrifice reached back to provide forgiveness of the sins committed under the Old Covenant, so its efficacy reaches forward as well. It is noteworthy that the Orthodox Jewish book of Zohar interprets Isaiah 53 by saying that it illustrates how God chooses to smite one just man in order to save many others.

b) Unlike tenses in the Greek New Testament, tenses in the Hebrew Old Testament are frequently used as part of linguistic idiom. To accept arguments based upon them is something very few who appreciate Old Testament Hebrew would be willing to do. A good example of the problem with Hebrew tenses is found in Gen.17:5,6: " Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee (past tense). And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will (future) make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee" . The use of the past tense in " a father of many nations have I made thee" shows that this tense can be used to show Divine intention. The same principle is applicable in Isa.53 -the past tenses there indicate God's intention to do things which elsewhere in the same prophecy are spoken of in the future tense.

This " prophetic perfect" tense in Hebrew grammar is definitely recognized by Jewish expositors (e.g. A. Cohen in the Soncino Commentary on Obadiah 2). The apparent use of past and then future tenses is surely to teach that there was to be a certain order in Messiah's work as outlined in this passage -first sacrifice, and then honour. We have shown elsewhere that Messianic prophesies normally had a primary fulfilment; in this case the minor fulfilment was in Hezekiah, and therefore it is fitting that there is a mixture of tenses, as parts of the prophecy are more specifically relevant to him than others.

Another significant example of this is found in Ps.110:1: " The Lord (God) said to my (David's) Lord (Messiah), Sit thou at my right hand" . Seeing that Messiah was to be a descendant of David, it follows that he could not have existed before he was born, and therefore God could not have literally spoken to him. Thus David is using the past tense (" the Lord said") in a prophetic sense.

It is also evident that the present tense is also used in Old Testament prophecy to describe future events: " Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee" (Isa.60:1) describes Israel's future glories; similarly Isa.9:6 " For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given" . Due to His foreknowledge God can speak of things which are not as though they are.

c) We have shown in our comments on Ps.22 how on the cross Jesus bore many of the punishments for disobedience that were to come on Israel.

Therefore Christians see in this a confirmation of the fact that the suffering servant prophecies do often have a dual application to both Messiah and the people of Israel. However, the Targums interpret Isa.53 as specifically referring to Messiah (Sanhedrin 98b); there is good reason to support their implication that not all references to the " suffering servant" are to the people of Israel. Isa.49 speaks of the servant being called by God out of the womb (hinting at a virgin birth?), and being " His (God's) servant to bring Jacob again to him...to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel" (v.1,5,6). This clearly differentiates the " servant" and the people of Israel. The " we" referred to in Isa.53 is Israel: " When we shall see him (the servant) there is no beauty that we should desire him (as Jews today claim that they see nothing attractive in Jesus)...we esteemed him not...for the transgression of My (God's? Isaiah's) people (Israel) was he (the servant) smitten" . Similarly the same servant in Isa.49:7 is described as " him whom man despiseth... whom the nation abhorreth" when he came to save them from their sins. This is further proof that the Jews were firstly to reject their Messiah and subject him to tremendous mockery and death. No other individual has been so mocked by the Jews as Jesus. Israel desperately need a Messiah now -and that Messiah must be one whom previously they rejected, mocked and killed. The only candidate is Jesus Christ. There are many connections between the language used of the suffering servant in Isa.53, and that of Ps.22:6 and Ps.69:7,10,19 which also describe the suffering of Messiah. These verses again show how one individual is mocked by his Jewish brethren; seeing that the person spoken of here is the same as in Isa.53, this further proves that the person there is not the nation of Israel.

It must also be borne in mind that notable Rabbis have interpreted Isa.53 as referring to a personal Messiah:

- The Targum of Jonathan ben Uzziel, a Rabbi broadly contemporary with Jesus, comments on Isa.53: " Behold, my servant, the Messiah, shall prosper..." . Aben Ezra writes: " Jonathan ben Uzziel has interpreted it (Isaiah 53) of the Messiah who is to come, and this is also the opinion of wise men of blessed memory (i.e. Rabbis), in many of their Medrashes" .

- The book of Zohar and also Solomon ben Isaac make the same identification.

- Jarki, the 12th century Rabbi, comments on Isa.53: " King Messiah was among the generation of the wicked....as it is said, 'He was wounded for our transgressions'" .

- Rabbi Moses Alschech of the 15th century comments on the passage " Our Rabbis, with one mouth have reverently received by tradition that King Messiah is here spoken of" .

d) This quotation from Matt.27:46 concerning Jesus speaking during his sufferings supposes a certain degree of acceptance of the New Testament record. By this token it must be significant that Matt.27:12,14 emphasize how Jesus remained silent before his accusers " insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly" . Isa.53:7 is specifically speaking about Messiah's attitude before those who condemned Him: " He opened not his mouth...as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth" . That Messiah was to speak during his sufferings is shown by Ps.22:1-4 describing his agonized prayers during this time; Ps.69:3 is similar, describing how " I am weary of my crying: my throat is dried" . This definitely implies a verbal expression of prayer. We have mentioned above that there are many

linguistic and conceptual links between Isa.53 and these Psalms, showing that prophetically they speak of the same suffering servant. Therefore it is to be expected that he was silent before his accusers, but later cried mightily unto God whilst enduring the sufferings they inflicted on him. This is precisely what the New Testament records of the passion of Jesus.

e) This verse 10 seems to be teaching a death and resurrection of Messiah; he would be " bruised" (cp. Gen.3:15 -i.e. to conquer sin), so that " his soul (was) an offering for sin" , entailing his death. But then the verse continues " He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days" , implying that he is then given eternal life and many children (compare Ps.45:16). The fact that Jesus died young without literal children therefore fits the requirements of this verse, because Messiah was only to be given those things after his death and resurrection. To take " children" here as literal children tends to do violence to the fact that most of the other 37 references in Isaiah to children refer to them in a figurative, often spiritual, sense. To suddenly insist on a literal application here is quite out of keeping with this. It is understandable how through Messiah's perfect offering to overcome sin, he should be able to beget a new generation of men and women, figurative children, who would also overcome sin through his sacrifice. Hence the New Testament's emphasis on the doctrine of the new birth, as a result of hearing and responding to the word of Christ's Gospel (John 3:3-5; 1 Pet.1:23; 2 Cor.5:17).

5-5-2 Zechariah 9 And The Two Comings Of Messiah

9) Zechariah 9: The Two Comings Of Messiah

a) The description of a man riding on a donkey in Zech. 9:9 is very vague. Many men rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, and just because Jesus did is no proof that he is Messiah.

b) There is no indication that Messiah will have two comings. The Talmud in Sanhedrin 98a says that if the Jews were worthy then Messiah would come in the dramatic way described in Dan. 7:13,14; if unworthy, they would see Him coming in a lowly form, riding on a donkey as outlined in Zech. 9:9.

a) This part of the objection contradicts the quotation from the Talmud in b), which accepts the possibility of Zech.9:9 having a Messianic application. The argument is frequently used by Jews that the opinion of the Rabbis should be followed; but it seems here that objections are being made which contradict Rabbinic teaching. This in itself shows a desperation that is altogether illogical, and indicates that an appeal to rational logic is not enough to disprove the Messiahship of Jesus. If indeed the prophecy is as vague as this objection claims, then surely there was no point in Zechariah being inspired to write this. The New Testament records how when Jesus rode into Jerusalem on the donkey, the people immediately recognized this as a Messianic action, because they then lined the streets and shouted their praise of " the son of David" , i.e. Messiah (Matt.21:9).

b) Putting all Messianic prophecy together, it would be impossible for it all to be fulfilled in one coming of Messiah. We have mentioned in the transcript the prophecies of Messiah's rejection by Israel; they would hardly have done this to a Messiah who came in glory and irresistibly established His Kingdom on a perfected earth. It therefore follows that they did so to Messiah when he came in a lowly form, with no natural attraction for Israel (Is.53:2). However, there are other prophecies of Messiah coming in power and glory (Dan.7:13,14).

This must refer to His second coming, to establish the Kingdom of God on earth in fulfilment of the many prophecies about the Messianic Kingdom, not least in the promises to Abraham and David (Gen.22:17,18; 17:8; 2 Sam.7:12-16; Ps.45,72; Isa.11 etc.).

The quotation from the Talmud made in this objection, if it is true, opens up a great spectrum of doubt as to the validity of God's word. If some prophecies of Scripture will never be fulfilled due to Israel's unworthiness, then those parts of God's word are untrue. This seems an all too convenient way of overcoming a difficult problem for Judaism to grapple with. Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, and very soon afterwards was crucified by the Jews, followed 40 years later by the destruction of the temple and therefore the end of the Old Covenant. If what is suggested in the Talmud is true, then Israel are therefore declared unworthy -by reason of crucifying Jesus. However, there may well be a principle of deferment- that prophecies have their fulfilment deferred depending on the spiritual state of those with whom the prophecy deals. The case of Jonah's prophecies against Nineveh well indicate this. Thus the coming of Messiah in glory may be delayed (in human eyes) due to Israel's unworthiness, but the prophecy of it in Dan.7:13,14 will never be negated -otherwise we have the frightening prospect of God's word not being totally true, and being prone to failure. David so often expressed the opposite view in the Psalms: " For ever, Lord, Thy word stands fast...Thy word is pure from the beginning...therefore Thy servant loveth it" . With this principle of the infallibility of God's word established, the Jews have to accept that the two different comings of Messiah which the prophecies speak of must both be fulfilled; and this can only be by Messiah having two comings.

The quotation from the Talmud shows that the Jews recognize that there are Messianic prophecies which cannot be fulfilled at the same coming of Messiah. If they accept that God's word is inspired and therefore certain to be eventually fulfilled, they will accept that there must be two comings of Messiah.

We have shown in the latter part of our comments on Dan.9 that two comings of Messiah are hinted at there, seeing that he is called " Messiah the prince" , whereas elsewhere it is quite clear that Messiah is to be a king, reigning on David's re-established throne in Jerusalem (2 Sam.7:12-16; Ps.72,89). It is also instructive to consider the typical pattern set by many of Israel's previous saviours:

- Moses was rejected by Israel at his first coming and appeal to them; but on his return 40 years later he was accepted by them.

- David was rejected by his brothers.

- Joshua (same word as 'Jesus') approached the promised land with Israel, but due to their faithlessness in his report they failed to enter it; 40 years later they approached the land a second time with Joshua-Jesus, and entered it. We have shown earlier that Isa.53 is a prophecy of the suffering of Messiah; it is prefaced by the complaint " Who hath believed our report? And to whom is the arm (that Hebrew word is from the same root as that translated " seed" , alluding to the promised Messiah/seed of the promises) of the Lord revealed?" (Isa.53:1,2). This is alluding to Israel's disbelief of Joshua and Caleb's report concerning the promised land. This resulted in their wilderness sufferings for 40 years until they summoned enough faith to enter and inherit the land, having accepted the testimony of Joshua-Jesus. So Israel too have suffered and will yet suffer in the " wilderness of the people" (Ez.20:35) due to their rejection of the promised rest offered in Jesus, although afterwards they will be

pleased to enter that rest under Jesus' leadership. The conquest of Canaan under Joshua has many connections with the latter day prophecies of Israel's future victories over their Arab neighbours under the leadership of Jesus.

- Joseph was rejected by his brethren due to his claims of special Divine revelation, as Jesus was by Israel. However, in their time of crisis they threw themselves at his feet, and after battling within themselves to have faith in his love and forgiveness, were saved by him out of their trouble. This all points forward to how the Jews will look upon Jesus whom they thought they had disposed of so long ago, and accept his offer of salvation from the dire straits they will soon be in at the hands of their enemies. Not without significance is Joseph's name at this time: 'Zaphnath Paaneah', meaning literally 'Saviour of the world'. This in itself cements Joseph as a type of Messiah.

- Elijah at his first ministry went about doing good deeds, as well as denouncing Israel's sin. He was persecuted by them, and then taken up into Heaven. At his second coming Israel will accept him, as they proclaim each Passover (cp. Mal.4). This typifies exactly the position with Jesus.

- An Israel dominated by superficial Saul persecuted David, God's anointed King (i.e. His messiah, anointed one). Only a remnant of Jewry accepted him, suffering with him in his troubles. But after successive Philistine military victories, David returned and was accepted by the people, who marvelled at his mercy to the house of Saul. The words 'Philistine' and 'Palestine' are linguistically connected; thus again we see the connection between an Arab victory over Israel and their acceptance of God's true Messiah.

- Similarly the book of Judges records many incidents in which Israel cried unto the Lord and repented due to the oppression by their Arab neighbours, which God responded to by sending them a " saviour" -a Jesus. Many of these " saviours" suffered experiences which Jesus, the ultimate saviour and judge of Israel, also experienced. Note that Mic.5:1 describes the persecuted Messiah as " the judge of Israel" . Consider the following:

a) Gideon was opposed to his father's household and the men of his city, although later they accepted his reformation of their false worship (Jud.6:27-32). Initially they wanted to kill him, but his father intervened so that in some strange, unrecorded way he overcame this death sentence. This exactly fits the position of Jesus as recorded in the New Testament, his Father preserving him from the death sentence by means of resurrection. Gideon was from a small, despised family -as Jesus was despised by Israel for his poor background.

b) Israel were unwilling to fully support the great campaigns and victory of the great judge Deborah (Jud.5:15-17).

c) Jephthah, " the son of an harlot" , was " thrust out" by his brethren. In Israel's time of distress through the invasion of the children of Ammon (modern Jordan/Syria), they pleaded with him to return and be their leader: " They said unto Jephthah, Come, and be our captain...therefore we turn again to thee now, that thou mayest go with us...and be our head...the Lord be witness between us, if we do not so according to thy words" (Jud.11:1-10). This desperate pleading will only be matched by Israel's pleading for the return of Jesus when their Arab neighbours have brought them to their knees. Compare their initial mockery of Jephthah's parenthood (" Thou art the son of a strange woman" , v.2) with the Jewish claim that Jesus was the illegitimate son of a Roman soldier by a whore. Again, the pattern is clear;

initial rejection of God's appointed saviour, mockery of his parenthood, the saviour in exile, then Israel's fervent repentance and desire of him as a result of their Arab oppression. It cannot be gainsaid that this makes Jesus of Nazareth the true Jewish saviour. During his exile, Jephthah lived in the land of Tob, a word meaning spiritually good, joyful, gracious etc.- a fitting type of Heaven, where Jesus spends his exile after his initial rejection.

d) Ibzan, a later judge, was from Bethlehem, the record twice stresses (Jud.12:8,10). This emphasis points us to Messiah, who was to be a Bethlehemite (Mic.5).

e) Samson was born by the intervention of God on his mother's womb, as in a far fuller sense was Jesus. He was betrayed by his brethren (Jud.15:9-13), but after winning the greatest ever victory against the Philistines (cp. the Arabs, Jud.16:30), was finally accepted by his brethren (so Jud.16:31 implies).

As a footnote to all this, it needs to be pointed out that the Talmud and most of the early Jewish writings teach the doctrine of the two Messiahs -one who would suffer and die, and the other who would rule and reign (see, e.g., the Babylonian Talmud, Sukkah 52a). This shows the Jewish acceptance of the problem of making all the Messianic prophecies apply to just one coming of Messiah. They clearly indicate two comings of Messiah.

5-5-3 Christian And Jewish Interpretations Of Isaiah 7:14

4) Isaiah 7:14 - This is not about Jesus.

a) The birth of Immanuel was to be a sign to king Ahaz, so it must refer to a child born then.

b) The Hebrew word " almah" translated " virgin" only means a young woman; a virgin in the sexual sense would be denoted by the Hebrew word " Bethulah" .

c) Jesus was called " Jesus" and not " Immanuel" .

This is a classic bone of contention in Jewish/ Christian debate. However, the outcome of this has often been held to be highly significant on deciding the Messiahship of Jesus. In view of all the other evidence available, this should not be the case.

" The Lord Himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" .

This being spoken to King Ahaz, it is evident that this must have a primary application to his time. But it can be proved that most Messianic prophecies have a dual application, to an individual contemporary with the time of the prophecy, and also on a far grander scale to the future Messiah. Jewry seems reluctant to accept this; yet the promises to David provide an example which cannot be gainsaid. He was promised a seed who would build a temple, and whose kingdom would be established by God (2 Sam.7:12-16). David's son was Solomon, and he fulfilled these aspects of the prophecy (1 Chron.22:6-11; 28:5-7). However, the following considerations show that there is another, greater descendant referred to:

- David recognized that God's promise was about his family " for a great while to come" (1 Chron.17:17).

- He confessed that his present family was not the real fulfilment of the promises, and that this must lie in the far distant future (2 Sam.23:5).

- The seed would have an everlasting Kingdom and rule on an everlasting throne (2 Sam.7:13,16); i.e. he would have eternal life.

- This state of affairs would be seen by David, in his presence (2 Sam.7:16). This rules out application to Solomon, and suggests that David would have to be resurrected to behold this.

- Solomon ended his days sunk in apostasy. He hardly fits this prophecy of an everlasting seed of David who will rule the everlasting Messianic Kingdom.

It is, however, clear that the prophecy must have some reference to Solomon. Similarly, many other Messianic prophecies can be expected to follow a similar pattern. We need to imagine Isaiah standing before the court of Ahaz, pronouncing that " The virgin shall conceive" (R.V.margin). The Hebrew word 'almah' means a mature, unmarried woman, who by inference was a virgin. Its other uses in the Old Testament are all with regard to young women who were also virgins, e.g. Rebekah (Gen.24:43) and Miriam (Ex.2:8). The reason why the word 'bethulah' is not used (meaning a virgin in the strict sense of the word) is because the prophecy had a dual application, to a young woman in Isaiah's time, and also to the virgin who was to bear God's son, the Messiah. The Lord gave a " sign" (Hebrew: a marvel, a token, a wonder). For a young woman to have a baby would not be a great sign in that sense; therefore it is fitting if the prophecy also had a more significant future fulfilment. It is noteworthy that the Jewish translated Septuagint version uses the Greek word 'parthenos' for " virgin" here, which definitely means a virgin in the sexual sense. This is the basis of the word " parthenogenesis" , which is used to describe greenfly, wasps and other species reproducing without males. The book of Isaiah in this version " was translated in the second century B.C." (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 15th Ed., 1986), contrary to some desperate Jewish claims. Later Greek versions produced by the Jews after the time of Jesus change 'parthenos' to 'neanis', meaning a young woman. This very fact shows that the Jews have something to explain away here. It is clear from this that the Jews of the first and second centuries B.C. themselves understood the secondary application of this prophecy to be to a virgin miraculously giving birth to a child.

However, it could be argued that the sign was not bound to have relevance to Ahaz and his generation; " The Lord will give you a sign" could be referring to Israel nationally, rather than Ahaz individually. Thus God told Israel at Moses' time " The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee" (Deut.18:15), referring to Messiah. Yet that generation of Israel who first heard those words only saw that prophecy have a primary fulfilment in Joshua- its greater fulfilment in Messiah was to be after their time.

The objection that Jesus was called 'Jesus' and not 'Immanuel' is surely on weak ground seeing that Isa.9:6, which many Jewish commentators accept is about Messiah, lists several titles by which he would be called: " His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace" . It should be obvious that he could not have each of these as his personal name. And if, as the Jews agree, the prophecy of Isa.7:14 has a primary fulfilment at the time of Ahaz, which of his sons was called Immanuel? The reference to " The virgin" implies that she was a woman known to Ahaz- perhaps the woman he was engaged to? She of all people would be a young woman whose virginity he felt assured of.

However, " the virgin" also suggests reference to one particularly significant woman who would bear a child who would be the dwelling place of God among men -" God with us" . Such a child would therefore have to grow up to be of perfect character, and would display this to the Jewish world in the first instance (" God with us" is primarily referring to Israel). In the light of this, any application of this to a child born in Ahaz' time must at best be only a primary reference. The main fulfilment must be in one who was of perfect character and represented God's dwelling with flesh. In the light of this we can now link in the fact that the word for " virgin" does have some reference to a woman who has not had intercourse with a man. For her to conceive must therefore be due to God's begetting a child through her who would therefore be His son. This is exactly what is required by the promise to David, that David's great seed would be the begotten son of God (cp. Ps.2:7). Abraham's natural seed, Isaac, was born by the miraculous intervention of God's power on a woman; Abraham's greater Messiah-seed would also be born in a similar, yet even more miraculous way. In view of this the Christian concept of a virgin birth should not be such anathema to Jews. Thousands of people who met Jesus in person recognized that in Him was a perfection of character and holiness which was quite extraordinary. Millions of people worldwide are convinced from the New Testament record of Him, piecing together the records of His ways as recorded there, that He was perfect in character, and therefore a manifestation of God in the flesh, " God with us" .

5) Isaiah 11:1,2 - This cannot refer to Jesus because it says that in the time when Messiah comes (vs. 9,10 " in that day") Israel will be regathered and the animals live at peace. This did not happen when Jesus came.

We have spoken previously of the necessity of two comings of Messiah to fulfil the prophecies about him. Isa.11:1 describes the seed of David " coming forth" -a phrase which in the Hebrew suggests a physical going out, or public manifestation. At this time, " the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom...and might...he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes" . Thus Messiah was to have vast access to God's spirit-power, both to perform miracles (" might") and in terms of supreme spiritual understanding of God. An examination of the teaching of Jesus clearly shows that he did have immense knowledge of God's ways, and contemporary records attest to the extraordinary miracles he performed. However, this was but a minor fulfilment of what he will achieve when he 'comes forth' in the future.

That prophecies about the " branch" can have both primary and secondary fulfilments is indicated by the fact that these prophecies are all set in a context of the return of Israel from a time of suffering and captivity, with God re-establishing their Kingdom (Isa.4:2; 11:1; Jer.23:5; Zech.3:8; 6:12). Those references in Zechariah show that in some measure the branch prophecies were fulfilled at the time of the restoration under Zerubbabel. But there are many descriptions of the Kingdom of the branch which just do not fit in with the Kingdom which was established in Zerubbabel's time. Some examples:

" The branch...He shall build the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his (God's) throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne" (Zech.6:12,13 - untrue of Zerubbabel, seeing he never ruled in Jerusalem but returned to Babylon after rebuilding the temple).

" A righteous branch...a king shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment and justice in the earth...he shall be called, the Lord our righteousness" (Jer.23:5,6). This implies that the

branch would have a worldwide Kingdom and would be a King. Israel never had a king again after the exile to Babylon, and so this cannot primarily apply to the Restoration. Further, the Branch being " The Lord our righteousness" shows that it was through him that God would provide the necessary covering of righteousness which was needed for the proper forgiveness of sins through the imputation of God's righteousness. Thus the Branch had to be a perfect man who made that willing sacrifice which we have seen earlier was required by the types of the Law.

Isa.11 prophesies of the branch that he will bring about a time when " the wolf also shall dwell with the lamb...they shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain" . This lifting of the Edenic curse did not happen at the restoration. Therefore the branch prophecies must also refer to the future Messianic Kingdom.

However, Zech.3:8 and 6:12 clearly show that the Branch prophecies did have a fulfilment at the time of the Restoration. We have laboured this point to show that these prophecies can have one or more partial applications, but still await a fuller one in the future. The prophecies about the Branch being perfect, having the Spirit of God and supreme understanding of Him received some fulfilment at the first coming of Jesus, as we have shown above. But those describing the lifting of the Edenic curse and His ruling over a worldwide Kingdom will be fulfilled at his second coming.

To argue from the phrase " In that day" in v.10 that all these things must happen simultaneously is spurious; the phrase is introducing another strand of the prophecy, which follows in the rest of that verse 10. The A.V. recognizes this by inserting a paragraph break at v.10. However, the real answer to this is as outlined above, that " the Branch" prophecies are capable of more than one fulfilment, and that those fulfilments covered only some parts of the whole picture of " The Branch" , pointing forward to the day when Messiah will come and fulfil all the prophecies by setting up the Kingdom on earth, having redeemed Israel from their sins by His own perfect sacrifice.

7) Jeremiah 31: The New Covenant

a) Jer. 31:31-34 says that when the New Covenant is made the whole world will know God. This is not now true, therefore we are not living under the New Covenant now.

b) A new " covenant" (Heb. " bris") will " not mean a (new) set of laws, but...a creation of a closer relationship" (Levine). The word is used like this in Deut. 7:2.

a) " They shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me...for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (Jer.31:34) is describing the effects of " the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel" (v.33) upon Israel, not the world. Those Jews who are truly forgiven are therefore under the new covenant. Real forgiveness is only made possible by the offering of the perfect human sacrifice which the Law constantly pointed forward to; that sacrifice was in the death of the Lord Jesus, and because Israel generally will not associate themselves with that sacrifice, they are not under the new covenant of forgiveness. The Jewish claim that they are not now under the new covenant is devastating, seeing that true forgiveness for Israel only comes from this covenant: " I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel...not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers (when) I took them out of the land of Egypt (i.e. the covenant at Sinai); which my covenant they

brake...but..I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (Jer.31:31-34). The old covenant has been broken by Israel, and in response God has divorced Israel, confirming their breaking of the covenant. To this day the Rabbis openly accept Israel's divorce from God and the subsequent breaking of the old covenant. If they are not now under the new covenant, then they are under no covenant -they have no relationship with God whatever. The only way out is to accept the new covenant of forgiveness, which we have shown elsewhere to be related to the promises to Abraham of forgiveness through his seed/Messiah. Therefore only with the coming of and acceptance of Messiah can Israel be under this new covenant. Again the point must be emphasized that this total, permanent forgiveness of sins (which will not have to be brought up again at the day of Atonement), can only be possible through a perfect, human sacrifice being made. If Israel wish to have any covenant relationship with God, they have to have it through the new covenant, seeing the old covenant has been broken. And that new covenant requires that Messiah die for their sins. In the face of this, and the knowledge we should all have of God's desire to see Israel repent, it should be obvious that this sacrifice has already been made -in the person of Jesus. Small wonder there will be such joy and yet tears of sorrow that for so long they have not realized this.

b) The old covenant made at Sinai was clearly a set of laws as well as a definition of a relationship between God and Israel. The new covenant is also a set of (albeit different) laws and a definition of an even closer relationship -but " not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers" at Sinai (Jer.31:32). It is therefore faulty to argue that the new covenant does not fundamentally change the old covenant, as this objection reasons if taken to its logical conclusion. There was evidently a problem with the old covenant; due to man's weaknesses rather than any intrinsic fault in that covenant, it did not bring man to a full relationship with God. Therefore a new covenant was needed, in which God would write His law in human hearts (v.33) rather than on tables of stone, the " tables of the (old) covenant" .

See also notes on how the old covenant was broken and replaced under 'Miscellaneous Objections'.

5.6 Christian And Jewish Interpretation Of Daniel 9

Objections To The Christian Usage Of Daniel 9 Include:

a) The prophecy of the 70 weeks in Dan. 9 has been mistranslated - it would take 7 weeks for Messiah to come, not 69 or 70. It should be translated, " From the going forth of the word to restore and build Jerusalem unto one anointed, a prince, shall be seven weeks; and for sixty two weeks shall it be built again with streets and moats" (see S. Levine, " You Take Jesus, I'll Take God" , p. 30).

b) " Two events were to occur after the 62 weeks - the anointed one would be cut off AND the city and the sanctuary would be destroyed" . The death of Jesus and the destruction of the temple were not simultaneous.

c) The Christian interpretation makes the first 69 weeks consecutive, and then there is a long gap of about 1900 years until the 70th. week occurs.

d) The anointed one was Cyrus - this is what he is called in Isa. 45:1.

e) " Messiah" (Heb. " Mashiach") only means " anointed one" - it does not necessarily refer to one particular person.

f) The passage speaks of " Messiah the prince" . Christians say that this prophecy applies to the first coming of Jesus; but he was not a prince then.

g) Dan.9:27 says that Messiah was to confirm the covenant for one week. If a day represents a year, this means for seven years. But the ministry of Jesus only lasted 3.5 years.

Daniel 9

Any study of the prophecy of the seventy weeks must keep the context of the whole of chapter 9 in mind. In this chapter Daniel is praying for the sufferings of Jerusalem to come to an end, and for the forgiveness of Israel's sins. The prophecy being about the fortunes of Jerusalem, any reference in it to Messiah is incidental; He is not the main thrust of the prophecy. However, there can be no doubt that what mention that is made of him is valuable evidence as to both the character of Messiah and his identification with Jesus of Nazareth.

God's reply to Daniel's requests is found in the prophecy of the 70 weeks. It is clear from the Biblical history of Israel during their captivity in Babylon and in the period of their return and partial restoration that there were major spiritual weaknesses in the nation which ultimately would warrant God's judgment. The reply to Daniel's prayer typically shows the goodness and severity of God; He promises that:

- In the short term, there will be a decree made to enable the rebuilding of Jerusalem;

- A time for the ending of Israel's iniquity does lie ahead; their cleansing will be through the coming of their Messiah;

- To enable this, a new kind of covenant would be established with them;

- The means to forgiveness would involve a doing away of animal sacrifices and a destruction of the temple, with abominable idols standing there making it " desolate" .

- Eventually this desolation would be done away with.

Thus Daniel's prayer for the forgiveness of Israel and his enquiry about the fortunes of the temple is given a complex answer; very soon a command would go forth to rebuild the temple, but the full judgment for Israel's iniquity still had to come. This would be through the death of their Messiah, great desolation of the temple and other times of trouble. However, ultimately the death and work of their Messiah would enable the eventual cleansing of Israel from their iniquities in a permanent fashion, so that never again would God's House lie desolate.

This seems a fair interpretation of the passage under discussion:

" Seventy weeks have been determined upon thy people, and upon the holy city, for sin (offerings?) to be ended, and to seal up transgressions, and to blot out the iniquities (of Israel, which Daniel had been confessing in v.20), and to make atonement for iniquities, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal the vision and the prophet, and to anoint the Most

Holy. And thou shalt know and understand that from the going forth of the commandment for the answer and for the building of Jerusalem until Christ (A.V. " Messiah") the prince there shall be seven weeks and sixty two weeks: and then the time shall return, and the street shall be built, and the wall, and the times shall be exhausted (" even in troublous times" , A.V.). And after the sixty two weeks the anointed one shall be destroyed (" cut off" , A.V.), and there is no judgment in him: and he shall destroy the city and the sanctuary with the prince that is coming: they shall be cut off with a flood, and to the end of the war which is rapidly completed he shall appoint the city to desolations. And one week (" he" A.V.) shall establish the covenant with many (Jews -Dan.12:2): and in the midst of the week my sacrifice and drink offering shall be taken away: and on the temple shall be the abomination of desolations; and at the end of the time (the 70 weeks?) an end shall be put to the desolation." (Dan.9:24-27, Septuagint version; the Greek version of the Old Testament, translated by Jews 200BC).

From this it is clear that after 69 weeks (literally " sevens") from the decree to rebuild the temple Messiah was to be " cut off" . This ought to silence once and for all the constant Jewish objection to a suffering Messiah; he was to be " cut off" . The decree of Artaxerxes to rebuild Jerusalem was given, according to profane history, BC457. Gentile commentators have frequently multiplied 69 by 7 to give a period of 483 day/years that were to elapse before Messiah's death. However, Jewish time is often reckoned in Lunar cycles rather than Solar, as Europeans are accustomed to. On the basis of Lunar time, 69 weeks of years comes out at 486.5 Lunar years. Allowing for a BC/AD calendar inaccuracy of 4 years, this brings us to AD33.5 for the time of Messiah being cut off; which is exactly when Jesus was crucified, 33.5 years after his birth.

The 69 weeks being split into 7 weeks and 62 weeks is understandable once it is appreciated that most Bible prophecy has some immediate reference to the period around which it was given. 7 weeks of years would come to around 50 years. According to the records of the rebuilding of Jerusalem in Ezra, Nehemiah and Haggai it would appear that the bulk of the work was done in the 50 years after the issuing of the decree for rebuilding. This mini time period would doubtless have been of great encouragement to the Jews of the time as they laboured in the rebuilding work amidst so much opposition.

No matter how much debate there may be over the events of the 70th week, the above reasoning concerning the 69 weeks still holds true as regards the time when Messiah would die. The description of the sacrifices ceasing and the temple being desecrated by an " abomination" must apply to the final destruction of the temple in AD70. It cannot apply to the time of the Maccabees -despite the disruption of the temple services, the sacrifices did not " cease" permanently. The Hebrew word for " cease" is also translated in the Old Testament as " to cause to fail" , " suffer to be lacking" , " put down" , " to rid" , " to take away" , showing that the sacrifices in the second temple were to be ended permanently. The placing of abominations in the temple sounds like the Roman desecration of it with the idols of their legions after its final capture in AD70. Jesus also interpreted this part of Dan.9 with reference to the events of AD70 (Matt.24:15).

The abomination that caused desolation in AD70 can also be referred to the abomination of Israel's sins, which finally resulted in the desolation of both the land and the temple. Dan.8:11-13 (R.V.) has many connections with the prophecy of Dan.9 under consideration: " The daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down...an host was given against the daily sacrifice by reason of (Israel's) transgression...the transgression of ('making') desolation" . Israel's sins reached the maximum degree to which God was willing

to let them accumulate without intervening in judgment. If the Jewish crucifixion of Jesus a few years earlier was indeed their rejection of God's Messiah, then this is understandable. Deuteronomy chapters 28-31 consistently link the ideas of desolation and Israel's disobedience. Josephus (Wars of the Jews, 4.6.6-8) records how the Jewish Zealots made the temple a garrison in AD70 and thoroughly desecrated it by their actions even before the Romans took it.

If the middle of the 70th week was the destruction of the temple in AD70, and there ought to be little Jewish objection to this, then it follows that from BC457 to AD70 is 69.5 " weeks" . Now no commentator, Jewish or Gentile, has devised a scheme of interpretation which attempts to fit the 69.5 weeks into this period. Therefore, if AD70 was the middle of the 70th week, it follows that there was a gap in the fulfilment of the prophecy. Thus it should not appear unreasonable to say that the first 69 weeks had a chronological fulfilment from BC457 to AD33, and that the first half of the 70th week ended in AD70. Now it is of the utmost significance that the Jewish wars which culminated in the sacking of Jerusalem in AD70 began 3.5 years previously in AD66/67. Thus the first half of the 70th week of the judgments upon Jerusalem started at this time. We must ever remember that the 70 weeks prophecy was concerning the judgments upon Jerusalem and how God was going to deal with their sins, which formed the burden of Daniel's initial prayer.

This extraordinary gap in the 70 weeks between AD33.5 and AD66.5 must be significant. Does it not imply that something happened in AD33.5 which gave Israel the opportunity to repent, and that during that time the judgments to come upon them were suspended, although being resumed in AD66.5-70, presumably due to Israel's failure to do anything in the former period to avert those judgments? The Christian reasoning surely sounds uncannily true, that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah who was crucified in AD33.5, and that due to Israel's failure to repent as they should have done the judgments continued. It is noteworthy that the judgments on Jerusalem in the first half of the 70th week were to be by Messiah's armies (Dan.9:26). The idea of Messiah commanding an attack on Jerusalem in order to punish Israel for their sins is impossible to fit into the standard Jewish concept of Messiah. Yet if he is Jesus, all fits into place nicely -having been given control of all things on earth (Matt.28:18) after his resurrection, Jesus was able to send the Roman armies, effectively His armies, against Jerusalem in judgment. Indeed, Jesus foretold the future destruction of Jerusalem by God's armies (Matt.22:1-7); which became His when God gave Him all power after his resurrection. If the New Testament and Christianity is indeed a fake, made up by men, as Jewry is forced to claim, then those men who worked out these elaborate connections of thought and theology must have had access to a mind of superhuman dimension. Surely the very intricacy of how the teaching hangs together so beautifully should be proof enough?

The final half (i.e. 3.5 day/years) of the 70th week is difficult by anyone's standards. Masada, the last outpost of Jewish resistance to the Roman re-invasion, fell in AD73.5, suggesting that the final part of this week and indeed the whole prophecy, finished then. This would mean that by AD73 " reconciliation for iniquity...everlasting righteousness" as promised in Dan.9:24 would have been brought in. This would imply that by that date a major atonement would have been made, and there is no record of any special sacrifice having been made to this end amongst Jewish records. The idea of Jesus as the perfect sacrifice which permanently overcame sin, thus doing away with the need for animal sacrifices, seems to fit the requirements of the prophecy perfectly. In passing, the significance that this prophecy attaches to AD70 is helpful in explaining why Paul was happy to allow Jewish Christians to continue to keep the Mosaic Law initially, but it may be reasonable to infer that after AD70

the changeover period from Moses to Jesus had ended, and therefore it was no longer advisable or necessary for Jewish Christians to keep the Mosaic Law. The (new) covenant of Messiah was " confirmed" (the Hebrew implies violently, with strength) during the 70th week (Dan.9:27), and therefore the Old Covenant of the law (Deut.4:13) was finally done away then, although fundamentally Christians believe that this was done at the death of Jesus on the cross (Col.2:14-17). The " vision and prophecy" being " sealed" (Dan.9:24) at this stage may hint that it was by AD70 or just after that the Holy Spirit gift of prophecy was taken away, and inspired writing ceased. There is ample internal evidence that the whole New Testament canon was written before AD70.

However, it is also possible to argue that the second half of the 70th week refers to a time yet future. The new covenant of Messiah must be powerfully confirmed to Israel, and finally an end of all Israel's punishment for sin must be made, with the result that an end (i.e. a permanent end) must be made to the powers that desolate Jerusalem (v.24,27). Such an end clearly did not come in AD73, and the final deliverance of Israel from God's judgment and desolators of the temple mount must be yet future. It is therefore suggested that there will be a final 3.5 year downtreading of Jerusalem during which time Messiah's covenant will be confirmed mightily to Israel, and at the end of which time there will be a final end to Israel's sufferings and the destruction of their desolator. Naturally it is impossible to be dogmatic about these things -Jewish commentators are also very open-ended about the meaning of prophecies such as these. However, there are other references to a 3.5 year period of trouble for God's people in Daniel: " A time (a year), times (two years) and an half" , i.e. 3.5 years (Dan.7:25; 12:7; Rev.12:14). The New Testament speaks of a similar period:1,260 days -also 3.5 years (Rev.12:6; 11:3); 42 months (3.5 years) (Rev.11:2; 13:5). It seems fair to assume that they are all speaking of an identical or associated period of time. We have stressed that during the 70th week, the covenant of Messiah will be powerfully confirmed. Therefore we should see this happening during this final 3.5 years; and Mal.3:1 describes the coming of the future Elijah prophet as " The messenger of the covenant" , i.e. he will preach Messiah's covenant to Israel. It is thrilling to find that Jesus and James mention that Elijah's first ministry lasted 3.5 years (Luke 4:25; James 5:17); it would be so fitting in the light of this for Elijah's second ministry to last the same period of time.

Given the present world situation, this 3.5 year downtreading of Israel by those who would take every delight in desecrating Jerusalem and the temple area with their anti-Jewish abominations could begin any moment now.

As a final piece of fascinating speculation, it should be noted that this prophecy is concerning the 70 " sevens" . The idea of seven weeks of years, i.e. 49 years, must make every Jewish mind think of the year of Jubilee. The 70th Jubilee year will be around 1996, if the first Jubilee was kept 49 years after Israel entered the land of Canaan under Joshua. This would therefore associate the period around the end of the 20th century with the time when Israel's sufferings will end, and when through their Messiah their desolators and desolation will finally end. It is significant that one of the few indirect references to the year of Jubilee in Scripture is in the time of Hezekiah, where it would appear that the great invasion of the land by the Assyrians was in a Jubilee year (Isa.37:30 and context). That invasion and its dramatic destruction by God's direct intervention would therefore typify the events at the end of the 3.5 year period of suffering.

With this in mind, we can now briefly comment on what remains of the original objections to the Christian use of this passage:

b) The cutting off of Messiah and the temple's destruction do not have to be simultaneous, although they both occurred at some stage after the end of the 62 weeks; Messiah's death resulted in the abolition of the temple, seeing that on account of his death the Old Covenant had been done away.

d) Cyrus lived long before the decree to rebuild the city which is mentioned in Dan.9. Cyrus gave permission to build the temple. Respected Jewish Rabbis such as Kimchi, Jarchi and Saadias all agree that the day-for-a-year principle should be used in the interpretation of this prophecy. This rules out any reference to Cyrus as the Messiah spoken of here.

e) It is true that the term 'mashiach' (messiah) can refer to an 'anointed one' like the High Priest, or a prophet (e.g. Elisha) or a king in David's line. However, in the prophecies of the future Messianic Kingdom, it must be one great, specific messiah who is referred to. This person was to be a descendant of David and would rule the whole earth -see prophecies like Psalm 45,72; Isaiah 9,11; Jeremiah 23 etc. Judaism certainly speaks of 'Messiah' as a specific individual who is yet to come (see, e.g., Rabbi D.J. Goldberg: 'The Jewish People, Their History and Their Religion'). Josephus (Book 7.31) describes how the Jews at the time of Jesus were looking for Messiah to come at that time due to their study of Dan.9 and other such prophecies: " That which chiefly excited them (the Jews) to war was an ambiguous prophecy, that at that time, someone within their country should arise that should obtain the empire of the whole world. This they had received, that it was spoken by one of their nation" . This is confirmed by the New Testament recording that " all men were musing in their hearts" about Messiah at this time.

f) Messiah is elsewhere described as a King coming in the line of David (e.g. 2 Sam.7:12-16); here in Dan.9 he is spoken of as being a prince when he appeared about 483 years after the decree to rebuild the city. This in itself indicates that Messiah was to have two comings: firstly as a prince, and then returning as a King who has received his Kingdom. This is how Jesus saw himself in the parable of the nobleman (Lk.19:12). The time period of 69 weeks from the command to rebuild the city ended in both " Messiah the Prince" (Dan.9:25) and also in him being " cut off" (Dan.9:26), i.e. killed. Thus it would appear that it was at His death that Messiah became " the prince" , the definite article suggesting that this was the specific Messiah and the greatest ever prince. This is all fulfilled by Jesus Christ's triumphant death/sacrifice being rewarded by His being exalted to God's right hand in Heaven, and being made a " Prince and a Saviour" by Him (Acts 5:31), so that due to His death and subsequent glorification in resurrection he became " the prince of (i.e. over) the kings of the earth" (Rev.1:5).

g) This assumes that Messiah's making of " the sacrifice and oblation to cease" was at the end of His 3.5 year ministry. The exposition offered above applies this to His death bringing about the destruction of the temple in AD70.

5.7 Miscellaneous Jewish Objections To Christianity

a) Human blood was never allowed as an atonement. This is a pagan notion.

The use of human blood is as much a pagan notion as the use of animal blood. We have shown at length in the section on 'Reconciliation with God' that " the blood" that made atonement could not be the blood of animals; it pointed forward to the one all effective blood offering that was to be made in the sacrifice of Messiah. We have shown that Isaiah 53

clearly speaks of Messiah as a human sacrifice. If his blood was unnecessary for atonement, then He would have only needed to

suffer rather than die. Yet He is clearly described there as an offering. If animal blood was the atonement, then they would not have had to be continually offered, nor would there have been a remembrance made of Israel's sins each day of Atonement.

b) Deut. 30:8-14 says that it was quite possible for Israel to acceptably obey the Law. The blessings for obedience would not have been made if obedience was impossible. Man is therefore not condemned to sin, and therefore there is no need for someone to die for our sins.

These verses do not say that Israel would keep the whole law. Deut.30:10 is clear: " If thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God" . Throughout the prophets there is the continual complaint that Israel were being grossly unfaithful to God's commandments, and the majority of them throughout their history had been. " They were disobedient, and rebelled against Thee, and cast Thy law behind their backs, and slew Thy prophets which testified against them to turn them to Thee, and they wrought great provocations" (Neh.9:26). " I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way not good, after their own thoughts; a people that provoketh me to anger continually to my face" (Isa.65:2,3). The curses for disobedience outlined in the law have come upon Israel, showing their continued disobedience. If they repented, then they would receive the full Abrahamic promises of eternal inheritance of the land; Abraham and the true seed of Israel would be resurrected to receive the promises; they would have total victory over their enemies, and above all the presence of their saviour-Messiah. (Lev.26:39-45). This would necessitate Israel being regathered to their land and dwelling there securely. The existence of a massive diaspora and the paranoia in the modern state of Israel is proof enough that such repentance and subsequent blessing has not yet occurred.

Whilst technically total obedience to the law was possible, it was primarily a teaching mechanism to make men realize the seriousness of sin. Without the knowledge of the Mosaic law there would have been little appreciation of sin. However, the law also taught a correct understanding of the perfect sacrifice to which it pointed forward, which would ultimately save man from the sinfulness which the law emphasized. The law itself was perfect; it was the weakness of man which resulted in that law leading to sin and condemnation. Therefore by its very reason of being, the law was almost impossible for sinful man to keep. We have seen that the law pointed forward to one specific human sacrifice- " the blood" of atonement. If there were many men who had perfectly kept the law, this would not be necessary. The fact that no one except Jesus ever claimed perfect obedience to the law is proof enough that the Law was very difficult to keep.

Deuteronomy 30 is speaking of the time when Israel will be regathered after their dispersion (v.1-5), and their hearts will be circumcised as opposed to their flesh (v.6), resulting in God's word being in their heart (v.14). There are ample allusions here to the new covenant: " After those days (of sin and lack of covenant relationship with God) I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God...for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (Jer.31:33,34). This would lead us to conclude that when Israel are fully regathered and repent, then God will make the new covenant with them, so that they will be able to fully obey His word and therefore receive the blessings for obedience of Lev.26 and Deut.28 in the Messianic Kingdom. There is an

extraordinary emphasis on the heart in Deut.30 -the word occurs seven times, suggesting that the passage is speaking of the time when Israel's heart will be totally committed to God's law. This can only be under the new covenant, when God puts His law in Israel's heart. Similarly Ezekiel 36 describes Israel's dispersion and suffering (v.18-20), followed by God taking pity on them (v.21), their regathering, the surrounding nations coming to accept Israel's God (v.22,23), and " then...a new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh...and cause you to walk in My statutes, and ye shall keep My judgments and do them" (v.25-28).

It is to this time of Israel's obedience that Deut.30 refers, but this is when the new covenant is made with Israel, and God assists ('causes') Israel to be obedient to the Mosaic Law on account of the new covenant. Without this help Israel would be unable to be obedient to the law. For this reason it is common to read of references to Israel keeping parts of the Mosaic law during the Messianic Kingdom (Mal.3:4; 4:4,5: Ezekiel 40-46; 20:41; 36:26; Isa.60:7; 66:23; Zech.14:21; Mic.4:2); thus through God's making of the new covenant with Israel " He will magnify the law, and make it honourable" (Isa.42:21) through their obedience to it and the blessings for obedience to it coming upon the world during the Kingdom. The Elijah prophet comes as both the messenger of the new covenant and to turn the hearts of Israel (cp. God giving them a new heart) to be truly obedient to " the law of Moses My servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel" (Mal.3:1 cp.4:4-6). The " new covenant" can therefore be seen as an 'enabling covenant' enabling full obedience to God's law by Israel. If Israel are disobedient to Elijah, God will smite the land with a curse (Mal.4:6)- the curses for disobedience to the law outlined in Lev.26. By implication, if they are obedient to Elijah's new covenant then they will receive the blessings on the land promised for obedience to the law. From this it follows that Israel are now disobedient to the law, seeing that Elijah comes to lead them back to the true spirit of the law, which was the burden of his ministry at his first coming.

Returning to the original objection, it is not true that man is forced to sin. However, there is ample indication in the Old Testament that by nature, man is sinful, and therefore condemned to suffer the effects of sin. The record of the fall of man in Gen.3 makes this clear. We have shown above that Israel live and have lived without total obedience to the law of God. There is therefore a need for a perfect sacrifice to atone for Israel's sin. Jewry's rejection of the need for someone to die for their sins seems largely due to their refusal to accept that man is sinful by reason of so easily giving way to his inherent evil mind. The Jews recognize the existence of this evil heart (the 'Yetser ha-ra'), but seem unwilling to accept the degree to which it is present in our very natures. The following need some explaining by them:

- " The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it?" (Jer.17:9)- i.e. our inherent sinfulness is so great that it deceives us as to its very magnitude. Judaism's attitude to man's sinful nature is surely a prime example of such deception.

- David, a man after God's own heart, admitted " I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Ps.51:5).

- " Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble (referring to the curse on man in Gen.3)...who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean (i.e. woman)? not one...what is man, that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?...how can he be clean that is born of a woman?" (Job 14:1,4; 15:14; 25:4).

- " The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth...I will not again curse the ground for man's sake...neither will I again smite any more everything living, as I have done" (Gen.8:21; 6:5). This is referring back to the language of Gen.3, as if God is saying that because man is of inherently sinful nature, He will not again bring curses for sin upon the earth in such a form as will permanently affect it. It can be argued that before the flood, man did not eat the animals (Gen.9:2,3). His doing so afterwards would indicate an extension of the Edenic curse.

- The Mosaic provision for sins of ignorance, the day of Atonement, and its constant emphasis on the need for the shedding of blood indicates that sin was a major problem which ultimately could only be dealt with by sacrifice.

- God's dealings with Adam and Eve show that it is a principle with Him that sin brings death. All their descendants were subject to death, showing that by nature they were sinful. Thus even a perfect man would still need to die by reason of having mortal nature. For this reason the Messiah, being a man and descendant of Adam, would have to die, despite his perfection. It is for this reason that true Christians believe that Jesus would have died anyway, e.g. of old age, had he not died on the cross. Thus the Jewish problem with the concept of a Messiah who dies is quite unnecessary.

c) Christians claim that animal sacrifices cannot atone for sin, yet they are to be offered in the Messianic Kingdom, according to Ezekiel. Why, if they are ineffective?

This is the same question as asking why the animal sacrifices were offered before the time of the perfect sacrifice which they foreshadowed. We have shown that the offerings taught man about the principles of God concerning sin, sacrifice and reconciliation with God. Thus the law has been correctly described as a 'schoolmaster' which led men towards an understanding of the love and purpose of God as shown in the sacrifice of His son as the Messiah. This role of the law as a teacher will continue during the Messianic Kingdom. However, it is the purpose of God to fill this earth with a group of people who fully manifest Him -His memorial name 'He who will be revealed in a host of mighty ones' (Jehovah Elohim) reveals this plainly. The promises to Abraham speak of a time when the earth will be filled with the seed of Abraham, and all the enemies of mankind (i.e. sins) will be permanently overcome. This connects with God's promise in Eden, in which sin was to be finally overcome. Thus animal sacrifices will not need to go on for eternity. We can conclude therefore that the first part of the Messianic Kingdom will involve the teaching of the whole world about the God of Israel, and their entry into covenant relationship with him. The partial restitution of the Mosaic Law as outlined in Ezekiel 40-48 will be uppermost in this teaching programme. However, the time will come when this will have fulfilled its purpose. The New Testament sheds more light on what the Old Testament teaches more indirectly and by implication: " God will be all in all" (1 Cor.15:28), after a 1,000 year reign of Jesus sin will be eradicated from the earth (Revelation 20-22).

Thus instead of the sacrifices pointing forward to the perfect sacrifice as they did before Jesus, they will point back to His work. The Christian breaking of bread service similarly looks back to the sacrifice of Jesus. The New Testament describes the believers as the future king-priests in the coming Kingdom (Rev.1:6; 5:10; 20:6; 1 Pet.2:5,9); as it was God's intention that the whole of Israel should be " a Kingdom of priests" (Ex.19:6), so His new Israel will be also. The prospect before the believers during the first part of the Kingdom is

therefore to teach the nations, based in small centres worldwide, as the Levites of old were scattered throughout Israel to teach and judge the people.

d) A sacrifice was only valid if it was offered on the altar (Lev. 17). Jesus was not offered on an altar, so he cannot be a sacrifice.

The constantly underlined principle was that sacrifice could only be offered at the place where God had caused His name to dwell: " There shall be a place which the Lord shall choose to cause His name to dwell there; thither shall ye bring all that I command you; your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices...take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt offerings in every place that thou seest: but in the place which the Lord shall choose in one of thy tribes, there thou shalt offer thy burnt offerings" (Deut. 12:5,11,13,14,18). The altar is described as the place which God had chosen to place His name there no less than 15 times in the book of Deuteronomy alone. The guilt offering described in Deut.21:1-9 was not made on an altar, although the priests had to be present to " bless (i.e. forgive) in the name of the Lord" (v.5) after the sacrifice had been offered. Being a human sacrifice, Jesus was the fulfilment of the law, and therefore that sacrifice was a special case. God's name was to be carried by Messiah: " His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the prince of peace" (Is.9:6). Therefore he was the altar, the chosen place of God on which and in which God was willing to see atonement made once and for all (Heb.13:10).

The reference to the altar in Lev.17:11 emphasizes the importance of the blood rather than the altar: " The life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement" . The whole chapter is speaking of the importance of shedding blood.

However, it remains true that there was only one way of correctly offering to God and thus coming before Him in fellowship, and that was to offer on the altar at the one place where God had placed His name. Thus while the temple was standing Israel were able to pray towards that temple and the altar that was within it. The temple and altar were destroyed in AD70, as prophesied in Daniel 9 (see previous notes). It follows that God's name must still be dwelling somewhere so that man can come to God. Seeing it is not dwelling physically in the temple or on the altar, it follows that the temple and altar must represent the person that has replaced them, which according to Daniel 9 is " Messiah the prince" . Thus he can be described as both altar and temple, which symbology the New Testament uses about Jesus.

e) Only kosher animals could be offered on the altar, so the idea of a human sacrifice dripping with blood is contrary to the Old Testament concept of sacrifice.

'Kosher' is a post-Biblical term, meaning literally 'to be fit', and refers strictly to 'clean food' as outlined in Lev.11. We have shown that blood had to be shed for the forgiveness of sin, therefore a blood sacrifice on the altar is necessary. Messiah being perfect, he was the pre-eminently fit ('kosher') sacrifice to be offered there. Thus Heb.2:10 (N.I.V.) says that it was " fitting" that God should make Jesus the saviour because of his perfect character. Again, the laws about clean and unclean animals were for teaching purposes, seeing that there was nothing inherently harmful in some of the unclean meats. Messiah, the supremely clean food of sacrifice, fulfilled those things which this teaching foreshadowed. The altar having to be sprinkled with blood on the day of Atonement (Lev.16:18,19) shows that it is not abhorrent in God's sight to associate blood with the altar. The blood was drained out from the animal and

then offered in various ways to God; there was constant emphasis on the fact that the blood was not to be drunk by the offerer, because it represented the life, which was being taken by God. The bloodless animal therefore represented the dead body of the offerer, seeing the blood was the life. It taught that sin resulted in death, and the animal represented the offerer dying on account of his sin. However, Jesus was the offering for sin, therefore he gave his own personal life on the altar. His personal blood and body had to be offered to God, and therefore all this was as it were offered in one offering to God on the cross.

f) The Old Testament concept of atonement is concerning past sins - there is no hint of a sacrifice providing future forgiveness.

This was so by reason of the fact that the blood of the offerings made did not in itself save from sin. To demonstrate acceptance of the principle that sin brought death, the offerer laid his hand on the head of the animal to show it represented him, and then offered it to show that he accepted that he deserved to die. God was willing to accept this representative offering by reason of the fact that the blood shed pointed forward to some perfect offering yet future. This idea has been discussed at length in the section on 'Reconciliation with God'. It is therefore understandable that the offerings made did not relate to future sins, seeing that the offerer could not repent of his sins in advance and sacrifice for them. However, the fact that God was willing to accept the animal offerings as a temporary means of covering sin did in itself point forward to a future sacrifice which would be an all sufficient sin covering. That being made, there would be no need for any more offerings, seeing that forgiveness would be made possible through association with that perfect offering whenever one sinned, rather than through making yet another animal sacrifice. For this reason it is vital to show association of ourselves with the perfect sacrifice of Jesus by means of baptism into his atoning death and resurrection, and also continuing to show our association with this by our taking the bread and wine in memory of His sacrifice.

The claim that atonement for future sins is a concept alien to the Old Testament is surely contradicted by the teaching of the new covenant: " I will (future to the time of Jeremiah) forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (Jer.31:34).

g) The sin offering had to be female. Jesus was male.

This is incorrect. Most sin offerings required male animals. Lev.4 required a bullock for the High Priest or for the whole congregation, and a male goat for a ruler. In Lev.5:15,18, trespass offerings included rams (male animals). The R.V. here translates " trespass" as " guilt offering" . Isa.53:10, concerning the offering of Messiah, describes His sacrifice as a " guilt offering" (R.V.margin). We have seen that the guilt offering was a male animal, and Messiah too was male. The sin and trespass offering were closely related: " As the sin offering is, so is the trespass (guilt) offering: there is one law for them: the priest that maketh atonement therewith (i.e. both types of sacrifices were for atonement) shall have it" (Lev.7:7).

Further, it must be remembered that Messiah was to be the " seed of the woman" who through his sacrifice would overcome sin (Gen.3:15); therefore any female element in the typical teaching of the Mosaic sacrifices can be understood in this context.

h) The Torah is not very precise and is designed to need further explanation. This created the need for the Talmud and Rabbinic interpretation, and therefore their

teaching about Jesus should also be accepted. Deut. 17:8-13 says that the interpretation of the Law by the elders was to be accepted as the will of God.

Much of the need for further explanation of the Torah has arisen because Israel have been living for so long without a temple, altar and priests who can prove their genealogy. It is impossible to keep the law of Moses in the long term without these things, although during relatively brief periods of exile provisions such as those outlined in 1 Kings 8 were made. To get round this problem, Judaism has amassed a large body of extra-Biblical teaching to justify themselves. The old covenant has now been broken (Zech.11:10), God has divorced His people Israel, and therefore the Rabbinic pronouncements have become a religion in themselves. Its concepts of atonement and fellowship with God are at odds with the basic teachings of the Old Testament scriptures. It is doubtful whether, had Israel been faithful to the terms of the covenant and remained living in the land in obedience to the Mosaic law, they would have had many cases where they could not find inspired guidance from the Torah.

However, God had made provisions for when such occasions did arise by granting His Holy Spirit to be possessed by a hierarchy of elders, to whom matters of practical judgment could be referred. These seem to have been replaced by the priests of the tribe of Levi, whose duty it was to live in certain priestly cities and indeed probably in all the cities of Israel. They were to keep the true understanding of the Law, and to actively teach this to Israel (Mal.2:5-7). However, they abused their privilege of being supported materially by the people, and are targeted by the prophets as " false shepherds" , who were largely responsible for Israel's apostasy. Malachi chapters 2 and 3 provide ample evidence for all this. However, it should be noted that the priests had no mandate to claim new revelation from God. Indeed the corrupt priests of Jeremiah's time are condemned for so doing. Their method of teaching the people was to be through drawing their attention to the Mosaic law, rather than through claiming new inspiration: " The law of truth was in his mouth...the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth" (Mal.2:6,7).

To suggest that Christians accept Rabbinic teaching about Jesus presupposes that the spiritual mantle of the priests has fallen upon the Rabbis, and that they are speaking by inspiration rather than voicing their personal opinions. At least two major obstacles stand in the way to accepting this:

- There is much disagreement between Rabbis. Thus the Rabbinic schools of Shammai and Hillel disagreed over the interpretation of divorce and other matters of practical interpretation of the Mosaic Law. There is also a wide divergence of Rabbinic teaching over the person of Messiah; Leo Baeck questions whether there will be a personal Messiah, interpreting 'Messiah' as a personification of various ideals; Hillel claims " Israel shall have no more Messiah: for they had him in the days of Hezekiah" ; whilst other rabbis look for a future coming of Messiah. How can Rabbinic teaching about Jesus of Nazareth be accepted as inspired and reliable, when they are so evidently prone to error, as shown by their contradiction of themselves?

- Members of the priesthood had to prove their genealogy; Ezra 2:62 describes how those who could not do so were barred from the priesthood, and were thereby " polluted" -a Hebrew word meaning 'repudiated, defiled, desecrated'. During the destruction of the second temple in AD70 the records of Jewish genealogy were destroyed, and since then there has been no way in which Jews can prove what tribe they are from. All Rabbis since the time of Jesus have been unable to prove their descent, and therefore their claim to representation of

the priesthood is groundless. It cannot be coincidental that the proof of descent was permanently destroyed in AD70 -at the very time when, according to the exposition of Daniel 9 offered previously, the ministry of Messiah fully replaced that of the Old Covenant system.

The quotation of Deut.17:8-13 is hardly proof that the views of modern Rabbis about Jesus should be accepted. It describes how in difficult cases the opinion of the High Priest and the priests on duty at the temple should be sought and obeyed. Their pronouncement is called " the sentence of the law which they shall teach thee" (v.11) -i.e. all they were doing was reiterating the relevant parts of the Mosaic Law already existing. It must be remembered that most Israelites would not have had personal copies of the Law, nor would they have been able to read for themselves. Regarding this priestly pronouncement they were told: " Thou shalt not decline from the sentence which they shall shew thee (by pointing to it in the relevant scroll?), to the right hand, nor to the left" (v.11). This must definitely connect with the injunction to keep the Mosaic law without " turning aside to the right hand or to the left" (Deut.5:32; 28:14; Josh.1:7; 23:6). Thus the command of the priest was basically a statement from the Mosaic Law, which they had to obey. Above all, there is absolutely no evidence in the law of Moses that the judgments of the priests were to be written down and treated as inspired scripture. Surely God would have legislated concerning this? By contrast, they were explicitly forbidden to add to the commands which God had given them; the terms of their covenant with God were inviolate: " Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you" (Deut.4:2). This implies that any adding to the Law would make the Law itself impossible to obey, which explains exactly the moral and intellectual dilemma of Judaism. The only solution is to accept the new covenant, based as it is on God's merciful action on men's hearts through His word, rather than man having to obey rigid legislation.

i) " Shiloh" , or Messiah, was to come before " the sceptre...depart from Judah" (Gen. 49:10). The last king in the line of Judah reigned at the end of the first temple (2 Kings 24:12; 25:11), so Messiah should have come by then, which was before the time of Jesus.

This is as much a Jewish problem as a Christian one, seeing that many Jews are still looking for a future Messiah. If Shiloh did come before the end of the first temple, then where is the Messianic Kingdom? Jews often argue that Jesus was not the Messiah because he did not establish a Messianic Kingdom on earth. If their objection now being considered is to be accepted, then it follows that there is a person they can identify as Messiah who fulfilled the promises to Abraham and David, who permanently destroyed sin, and who established the Kingdom of worldwide peace and righteousness which the prophets speak of. But this has not happened.

The sceptre was to only temporarily depart from Judah; it was to be removed, the Kingdom was to be overturned " Until he come whose right it is; and I (God) will give it (the sceptre) him" (Ez.21:25-27). Thus the sceptre has not permanently departed. If it has, and Messiah has not come, then the promise to David is broken, seeing he was promised that he would have a son who would reign on his throne for ever.

" The sceptre" cannot mean the existence of a literal monarchy, as the objection interprets it. Jacob was saying that the sceptre would not depart from Judah from then on -which was 800 years before the monarchy began. Yet up until that time the sceptre did not depart from Judah. " The sceptre" must represent the principle of kingship which would ultimately find fulfilment in Messiah; note how Balaam describes him as " the sceptre" (Num.24:17).

Some of the apparent difficulties disappear if the verse is re-translated " The sceptre shall not depart from Judah...until he come to whom it shall be" , which more obviously suggests connection with Ez.21:25-27 " He whose right it is" . Rabbi Ben Uzziel and the Targums of Onkelos and Jerusalem translate it as " Until the time when King Messiah shall come" . Another possible translation is " The sceptre shall not depart...for that (i.e. because) Shiloh (shall) come" ; i.e. because he would be an eternal king and a member of the tribe of Judah, the sceptre of rulership would never depart. This seems the most probable explanation.

j) It took a revelation from Heaven to convince Paul of Jesus' Messiahship (Acts 9:3). This indicates that theological and historical proofs were not powerful enough. Surely without such a revelation there is no reason to accept Jesus?

This objection focuses on the experiences of just one convert to Christianity. But it is also recorded in the New Testament that thousands of Jews were converted by the preaching of the word by Christians without the personal appearance of Jesus. Acts 18:24-28 records how a Jewish Christian named Apollos, " an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures...mightily convinced the Jews...shewing by the Scriptures that Jesus was Christ" , i.e. Messiah. Another example, this time concerning Paul, is found in Acts 17:1-4: " There was a synagogue of the Jews: and Paul, as his manner was (i.e. this is how he normally preached to Jews), went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ. And some of them believed..." . Other records of Paul's entry into a synagogue and preaching the Messiahship of Jesus through reasoning from the Scriptures are to be found in Acts 13:14-43 and 17:10,11. In the latter case we read that many Jews believed because " they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily" . These examples are not of ecstatic response to an emotion-charged message depending on personal experiences, as is seen all too often today, but of a response dependent on " theological and historical proofs" . Paul was a zealot for Jewish tradition. It is an accepted fact that zealots for a cause can ignore the most powerful contrary evidence and need something supernatural to shake them out of their obsessions. Paul was a special case; indeed, if Jews are willing to accept the record of his conversion, then this is evidence in itself of the uncanny conviction of Christianity.

k) God gave the Law in front of all Israel. It can only be abrogated in front of the entire nation.

There is no Biblical evidence for this reasoning. The law was given through Moses at Sinai in front of all Israel, on a certain date in a certain month. It does not follow that the law has to be ended at Sinai on the same day of the year, with Moses present. Therefore it is not necessary for all Israel to be assembled either.

When Israel left Egypt, their relationship with God is described in terms of both parties falling in love with each other. God could later say of Israel " I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness" (Jer.2:2). God's love and compassion for Israel were similar, so that " I sware unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee...and thou becamest mine...I spread my skirt over thee" (Ez.16:8 cp. Ruth 3:9). This refers to the covenant made with Israel at Sinai in the wilderness, which was the law of Moses. Thus the old covenant was the marriage contract between God and Israel. Thus through disobeying the commandments which made up that covenant, Israel were breaking that covenant and thereby effectively committing adultery against God.

The whole of Ezekiel 16 and also 20:1-33 describe all this in quite explicit language. The covenant was therefore broken by Israel, and God confirmed this by breaking the covenant formally (Zech.11:10). Therefore Hosea, representing God, was told to marry a harlot, symbolic of Israel. As a result of the false relationship between Israel and God, He cast them off from being His people. This was represented by the offspring of Hosea and his harlot wife being called Lo-Ammi, meaning 'Not my people'; " For ye are not My people, and I will not be your God" (Hos.1:9). Thus in practice God confirmed Israel's estrangement from Him by effectively divorcing them. The destruction of the second temple was the ultimate proof of this; Dan.9:26 speaks of Messiah being cut off " and the Jews they shall be no more his people" , which would be followed by the destroying of the " sanctuary" . The killing of Jesus was the ultimate breach of the covenant, and from then on God confirmed, even stronger than during the ministry of the prophets, His estrangement from Israel. This connection between Hosea and Dan.9:26 suggests that the relationship can only be restored when Israel's killing of Messiah is repented of; then they will be God's people again. Significantly, Messiah was to confirm " a (new) covenant" from the time of his cutting off to the time of Jerusalem's final cessation from tribulation. This in itself indicates that Messiah's resurrection was able to do this. It also shows that repentant Jews can at any time enter into that new covenant, although nationally the whole nation will not do so until the reappearing of Messiah. This new covenant of forgiveness must be based, as we have reasoned earlier, on the promises of forgiveness and eternal life made to Abraham well before the Mosaic covenant.

The Rabbis of today accept that God and Israel are divorced. This means that the marriage covenant has been broken through Israel's disobedience; it did not need to be formally abrogated before the whole nation, as the objection claims.

In all these prophecies there is definite mention of a day when Israel will be accepted back into relationship with God. Because that old covenant was broken, a new covenant forming the basis of God and Israel's future married relationship will be made (Hos.2:14-20; Ez.16:60; 20:33-44; Jer.2:2;3:1-18). This last passage is parallel to the more familiar new covenant prophecy of Jer.31. This new covenant will enable Israel to obey the basic principle of the Old Covenant, i.e. obedience to God's word. This will be through the forgiveness of their sins which the new covenant, based on the promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, is able to offer. Thus Lev.26:40-42 says that when Israel finally repent, " then will I remember My covenant with Jacob" . This is parallel to the promise of the new covenant being made with them once they return to God as His wife. Yet it will not be the same as that old covenant made through Moses on Sinai. Speaking of that time of the new covenant God said " They shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of the Lord: neither shall it come to mind: neither shall they remember it; neither shall they visit it; neither shall that be done any more (note the emphasis on the change). At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord; and all nations shall be gathered unto it" (Jer.3:16,17). Thus instead of Israel seeking to the ark, under the new covenant Jerusalem and God's throne there with God's name on it will be the centre of God manifestation, and will be attended by all nations, not just Israel. This throne will be the restored throne of David, in fulfilment of the promise to David, that he would have an everlasting throne on which the son of God, his great descendant, would reign. This will be fulfilled at the second coming of Jesus.

l) If Jesus wittingly went to the cross of his own choice, then he committed suicide, which is abhorrent to God.

This objection misses the point that although Jesus was obedient to God and offered no physical resistance to his persecutors, His death was against his own choice (Matt.26:39-42). A man who gave his life to save his friends can hardly be classified as having committed suicide (John 15:13).Suicide is fundamentally selfish and self-centred. Jesus is recorded as giving his life from totally self-less reasons. Jesus did not engineer his own death, as the Talmud's record of his death admits. He was submitting to Roman and Jewish law, which cannot possibly be called suicide. Moses was willing to offer his life -even his place in eternity, it would appear -for the salvation of others (Ex.32:32), setting a superb pattern to be followed by Messiah, the great prophet like unto him (Deut.18:18).

6.1 The Bible's Message for Buddhists

The Bible is divided into two main sections – the New Testament and the Old Testament. To follow this booklet you will need a full Bible with both sections.

Please open your New Testament at its first book, the Gospel of Matthew. Gospel means 'good news'. Matthew was a government official who became a disciple of Jesus and followed him in his travels. The first chapter and the first verse is Matthew 1:1 (when you see pairs of numbers like this the first number tells the chapter, the second number the verse). This is the beginning of Matthew's explanation of the Gospel. We read "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham". It's not quite what we would expect. Matthew says Jesus is the descendant of David and Abraham. David lived 3000 years ago and was a famous king of Israel. Abraham lived 4000 years ago and was the ancestor of both the Jewish people and the Arab people. Matthew tells us that the fact is that Jesus is descended from both David and Abraham.

Paul was another disciple of Jesus. He originally was an enemy of the Christian church and persecuted the believers, but Jesus appeared to him in a vision and converted him to become a Christian. He saw the Gospel the same way as Matthew. Please see Galatians 3:8: "And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the nations by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, 'In you all the nations shall be blessed'." The Gospel is what was promised to Abraham. So, if we can understand what God promised to Abraham, we can understand what the Gospel is. We need to go back to the Old Testament, and see what God told Abraham. In Genesis, the first book of the Bible, 17:8 "Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession and I will be their God." God promised Abraham that he and his children would live forever on this earth. Eternal life is an important idea that comes up in the Old Testament. Note this- because the essential message of the Bible is the same all the way through. How could Abraham live forever? Please see Genesis 22:17,18 "in blessing I will bless you, and in multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blesses, because you have obeyed My voice." God promised Abraham that he was going to have a son who would be the source of blessing for the whole world. The way to understand the Bible is to see how the Bible interprets itself. These words we have just read are quoted in the New Testament- in Acts 3:25,26. Let's go there and find the interpretation "You are sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your descendant all the families of the earth shall be blessed.' To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities." So, who is the descendant of Abraham? The descendant mentioned in Acts 3:25 is Jesus. And what are

the blessings he would bring for men and women of the whole world? The blessings of forgiveness of sins and salvation. Let's go further. To Galatians 3:16 “Now to Abraham and his descendant were the promises made. He does not say, ‘And to descendants,’ as of many, but as of one, ‘And to your descendant,’ who is Christ.” So, the descendant of Abraham was one man, singular, Jesus. But how could that one man become so many, as many as the stars in the sky? Let's read Galatians 3:27-29 “For as many of you as were baptised into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” So, Paul is saying in Galatians 3:29 that only those who have been baptised into Christ have a part in these promises which God made to Abraham. To be baptised is to take part in a ceremony in which someone who believes in Jesus goes under the surface of the water in a river, bath, or swimming pool to act out the burial of Christ. By performing this ceremony the believer is showing that he wants to be like Christ, and when he comes out of the water he has now become a Christian. Only if we are baptised will we be one of those descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky who will receive what God promised - eternal life here on earth. This is why we must be baptised if we are going to be saved. Paul said that his hope was " the hope of Israel" (Acts 28:20). As he faced death, this was his hope- the hope of Israel.

Baptism

What is baptism, then? It isn't sprinkling. The New Testament is written in Greek, and the word translated 'baptism' means really to dip. It was used about a ship sinking, being submerged, or a piece of cloth being dyed from one colour to another by immersing it. Have a look at Matthew 3:13-16 “Then Jesus came from Galilee to John to be baptised by him. And John tried to prevent Him, saying, ‘I have need to be baptised by You, and are You coming to me?’ But Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfil all righteousness.’ Then he allowed Him. Then Jesus, when He had been baptised, came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on Him.” Jesus went down into" the water and came " up out of it" . He was baptised as an adult, not as a baby; by dipping, not sprinkling. That's why it was done in a river. And if He was baptised, so should we be. This dipping and rising up signifies the death and resurrection of Jesus, and that we have decided to make His death and resurrection our own. This is why it has to be by immersion, not by sprinkling. Have a look at Romans 6:3-5 “Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection.” This is why we appeal to you to be baptised- make it your aim in life, to accept Jesus Christ!

By being baptised into Jesus, we become part of Him, and therefore the promises apply to us. Therefore when He returns, we will be resurrected, judged and then, if we have lived faithfully according to God's word, we will be given the eternal life which He now has. Then we will live for ever in God's Kingdom here on earth. If you believe this, then life has a new meaning. Whatever material problems we have, we will realise that they are only temporary, and when Christ returns He will give us a new and eternal life. This is why in the Bible and in Christ there is real HOPE. The hope ahead is so great that our present problems do not seem so great.

Our Representative

But how can it be, that this man Jesus can save us? He was our representative, and this is why we must be baptised into His death and resurrection; because He was just like us. Have a look at Heb. 2:14-18 “Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For indeed He does give aid to the seed of Abraham. Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.” Notice in passing that the devil is not an animal or a dragon. It is used here as a personification for sin. " The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23), but here we read that 'the devil' " has the power of death" . We need to struggle against our own natures, not against an invisible being outside of ourselves. Verse 14 says the same thing several times- He, Himself, likewise, partook, the same nature as us. Yet most 'Christian' groups teach that there are three Gods in a trinity, and one of them was Jesus. But this isn't what the Bible says. And according to Hebrews, it is very important we get our understanding of Jesus right. He was exactly of our nature. The writer stresses it 4 times! He was tempted like us.

And how are we tempted? By our own human nature. Have a look at James 1:13-15 “Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am tempted by God’, for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.” This means
that Jesus had our human nature. God can't be tempted, it says, but Jesus was tempted, Hebrews says. So Jesus wasn't God Himself. He was a man, the Son of God by birth, the descendant of David and Abraham through Mary. Likewise, God can't be born; but Jesus was born. God can't die; but Jesus died. We cannot see God; but men saw and handled Jesus. Jesus didn't exist before His birth, either. He was the son of God through Mary. Have a look at Lk. 1:31-35 “’And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call his name JESUS. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.’ Then Mary said to the angel, ‘How can this be, since I do not know a man?’ And the angel answered and said to her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.’” Notice all those future tenses! He will be the Son of God, Mary will conceive in her womb- this is where Jesus began, although the idea, the logos of Jesus, had always been with God from the beginning. Notice that Mary was just an ordinary woman. Jesus was the descendant of Abraham and David, and this could only have been because his mother was their descendant. If Jesus was God, then Mary is the mother of God, and she wasn't an ordinary woman. If as the Bible teaches Jesus was the Son of God and also " son of man" , the descendant of Abraham and David through Mary, it is evident that Mary was an ordinary woman. So it's all or nothing- a system of true belief, or a system of wrong belief. It is important to believe the right thing, because doctrine affects how we live. Have a look at Heb. 4:15,16 “For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathise with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” Because Jesus was of our nature,

therefore we can pray with confidence through Him to God. We don't need a human priest, church building or pastor to make our prayers acceptable.

So can I just summarise the things we have written about:

1- There is only one God, not a 'trinity'

2- Jesus is the Son of God, not God Himself; He didn't exist before He was born. He had all our temptations and human experiences, but He never sinned. He gave His life for us in a painful death, but then, because He never sinned, God resurrected Him from the dead.

3- Through baptism into Christ by the dipping in water of an adult, we share His death and resurrection

4- so when Jesus Christ returns we will be resurrected, judged and given eternal life in His Kingdom- which will be based here on this earth. This Kingdom will be like the world was in the garden of Eden, when God first created man- and even better. All the problems which are now on earth- war, famine, sadness, even death itself, will be finally ended- for ever.

5- After death we are unconscious- 'hell' means just 'the grave'.

6- The soul is not immortal; we are made of dust and return to the dust. The spirit is the power of life within us, which God takes back when we die. We don't go on existing in any conscious form after death.

7- 'Satan' is a symbol for the evil human desires inside us, against which we must struggle; it is not the name of a dragon or monster that exists. God is 100% powerful; He doesn't share His power with 'satan'. All our problems come from God, not satan, and therefore there is a positive spiritual purpose to them.

8- By reading the Bible for ourselves we can find the true way to God.

I do appeal to you, to study these things, and give yourself no rest until you have come to surely know the true Gospel. I do so hope you will study our free Bible study course; and set yourself the aim, to be baptised one day, by dipping in water. Then you will surely have the hope of eternal life. OK we can't imagine eternal life. I can only suggest we imagine a long, long line, with no end, stretching on into the distance; and we in this life are just a few millimetres at the start of it. This really is our hope, if we are baptised into Jesus and live in Him. I plead with you, to take all this seriously, and not treat it as mere religion, as just something ordinary.

6.2.

Christianity and Buddhism: Similarities

‘Buddhism’ means to be an awakened one, with the implication that humanity is asleep. With this agrees the New Testament: “Awake, you who sleep, and Christ shall give you light” (Eph. 5:14). But is Jesus who gives light, not a stirring up of ones self power.

According to the Third Noble Truth, that of the extinction of suffering, the cure of life's disharmony lies in overcoming selfish craving. The Fourth Noble Truth, that of the Path that leads to the Extinction of Suffering, explains how this cure can be effected. Our release from this bondage can be accomplished by means of the " Eightfold Path," by which a man is totally remade and left a different being, cured of life's crippling disabilities. The first step of the eightfold path is right understanding.

Right understanding is required in Christianity too. Jesus said that He Himself was "the truth" (Jn. 14:6). True Christianity places tremendous emphasis upon faith. But faith comes by hearing the word of God (Rom. 10:17). Faith is, of course, faith in something. Therefore correct understanding of the Bible's message is essential to true faith. Faith isn't just a fuzzy feeling of hopefulness. The Bible also concerns itself with the extinction of suffering- but the solution is the radical transformation of this world and of human nature itself, by God's direct intervention through His Son, Jesus. Paul wrote that he earnestly wished to be different; he could see the life he fain would live, the life he and you and me had always wanted…but whenever he wanted to do good, evil was present with him. He found a law within himself that whenever he wanted to do good, evil was present with him. His answer to this dilemma was in Jesus. "Who shall deliver me?" he asks, having rejected the Buddhist idea of self-improvement as impossible. The answer, he said, was in Jesus Christ, who although He had our nature, overcame its desires. He Himself was therefore raised from death, and became the author of eternal life (Heb. 5:9). Jesus, because He was human [and not God Himself] was thereby our representative [not our substitute, be it noted]. By identifying with His death and resurrection through baptism, we can be counted by God right now as if we are perfect, and then when Jesus returns, we will be made perfect in very nature like He is. I challenge every Buddhist: Has your use of the eightfold path lead you to moral perfection, to the conquest of the sinful tendencies that are within you? To a woman, to a man, you must answer 'No, not yet'. That is, if you are honest. And I would challenge you further, that there is no Buddhist who has ever attained to moral perfection. Human nature cannot be self-improved; it needs God's action to change. His offer of perfection is through our faith in His love- a love that will count us as perfect, just as even human love does not take cognisance of the faults it recognises in the one loved. The whole groaning of the natural creation will be resolved by the revelation of the Son of God, Jesus, to forcibly change the whole of creation, to release it from the curse that came upon it in the garden of Eden (Rom. 8:19-23).

The "fourth step" of Buddhism is right action, or behaviour. We must understand our behaviour, reflect upon what we have done, and improve ourselves in accordance with the five precepts: do not kill, do not steal, do not lie, do not be unchaste, and do not drink intoxicants.

The need for discipline, law and regime is also found in the Bible. But the motive for this human effort is our receipt of grace. We are under the law of grace (Eph. 2:8). The grace of God teaches us that we should, e.g., deny ungodly lusts (Tit. 2:11-12). The grace of God, the fact that for nothing but faith He will accept us and count us as righteous, as perfect as His Son is perfect…this is what motivates us. Not the thought that if we do enough we will be good enough or will become perfect. It is my observation that most religions [including apostate Christianity] stress so much doing acts of obedience to laws. There is no legal code that can save, Paul argues in Romans. There was a legal code in the Old Testament to teach humanity that salvation just isn't possible through a law. And therefore, on our knees, we must accept the pure grace of the salvation that is in this perfect man, Jesus. And associate and identify ourselves with it through baptism into Him. This wondrous concept of grace

which there is in Christianity contrasts sharply with the Buddhist understanding of punna, merit, which results from the practice of certain deeds (dana).

Buddhists commonly liken their idea of karma to a seed, which is planted and develops into a plant. The works of a man in his life are seen to control who he becomes in the next life. But the Bible takes a different angle. What we sow is not actually the plant that comes out of the ground (1 Cor. 15:35-49). It is sown a seed. But Paul goes on to say that for those in Christ, they will rise out of the earth to be given a new body. Yes, what we sow we will reap, our actions now have eternal consequences at judgement day, but the gift of the new body through resurrection is a gift through God's grace.

The final step of Buddhism's " Eightfold Path" is right concentration, or right absorption, which is substantially the same as the series of techniques involved in Hinduism's fourth path, raja yoga, or the way to God through psychological exercises.

Concentration upon Divine principles is of course taught by the Bible too. But because our mind wanders, because our humanity stops and interferes with that concentration, every Buddhist and Christian would have to admit some sort of defeat here. This is why the way to God is not merely through psychological exercises, but through Jesus Christ. He is the only way to the Father (Jn. 14:6). This is why we pray to God through Jesus- because He is our representative, He was a man like us, and yet He never sinned.

6.3 The Difficulties of Buddhism

6.3.1 The Question of Authority In Buddhism

Much of the Buddhist scriptures and sayings attributed to Gautama were written about four hundred y ears after his death. By the time they were written, Buddhism had split into many sects. What do we have then? Even the best scholars are not sure of the accuracy of the Buddhist scriptures. In Christianity, however, we have an accurate historical account written by eyewitnesses to Jesus and the events surrounding His life.

This explains why Buddhism is so divided in its teachings- there is no solid basis for authority, and therefore interpretations are likewise going to vary drastically. They also have evolved over time, away from their evident roots in Hinduism, because of this lack of authority. And this also explains the wide breadth of beliefs within Buddhism. Thus in history we can see that Buddhism split into two divisions, Hinayana and Mahayana. Hinayana, which was propagated by Buddha, was an agnostic religion with no God, while Mahayana evolved with the concept of a divine saviour.

The sheer volume of the Buddhist sacred writings is such that no ordinary Buddhist can sensibly be expected to read them. Initially, the writings were divided into three groups: Vinaya-pitaka, Sutta-pitaka and the Abhidhamma-pitaka. And yet later, this categorisation had to be amended to allow for the inclusion of new writings, even though the Buddha was dead. Buddhism to this day is deeply divided over that is in fact canonical- hence, the whole religion has no basis of authority. Thus the compilers of the Tibetan canon included translations of commentaries produced by Indian Buddhists, even though by Indian Buddhist standards those words are not canonical. The Chinese Buddhist tradition selected items for inclusion in the Canon on a totally different basis to the other Buddhist traditions; and the criteria for selection varied over time. Thus a book could be canonical in one century but not

in another. Various councils were held to debate and decide which writings were to be canonical and which weren't. "Research by modern scholarship has introduced serious reservations about the claims found in the accounts of the councils. It is highly questionable whether the monks who were present as the council had access to all the sermons of the Buddha. The texts themselves speak of disciples who refused to endorse the sermons…preferring instead to adhere to the form in which they had memorised them"[(1)]. The circumstances in which the 'true' gathering of teachings took place are not known. Around the Christian era, the suttas of early Buddhism began to be supplemented by new works. They too claimed the authority of the Buddha, who had lived centuries beforehand, even though their teaching was different to that which they replaced. All these are reflections of the simple fact that Buddhism has no basis for authority. It is clear enough from an historical analysis of the Buddhist canon that the introduction of writing opened up the Buddhist canon to the possibility of continuing revelation, whereby roughly from the 1st century onwards Buddhism experienced a large increase in its Scriptures, all claiming to be the original words of Buddha, even though they were mutually contradictory [(2)].

There is no single, easily accessible document that can be read and interpreted by the lay person for themselves in order to find truth. Indeed, earlier, lay access to the sacred writings was granted for only a few selected texts. It reminds one of how the Catholic church denied lay people access to the Bible texts, and insisted on keeping them in Latin rather than the language of the people. Thus apostate Christianity and Buddhism have the same basic similarities as all false religions- power is kept by the leaders of the religion. Buddhist Monks, Catholic priests- it's the same sad story. A Buddhist's guru (Tibetan- lama) chooses which deity the believer is to relate to. There is no personal relationship between the one God and human beings, those whom He has made in His own image, and with whom He passionately strives for a relationship. The New Testament teaches that Christian believers are all priests (1 Pet. 2:5). We are all to study and respond to and teach God's word. The Buddha himself only gave a limited range of his teachings to lay people. The Lord Jesus spoke His truths before crowds, in language which could be understood and benefited from by both the illiterate and the intellectual. The Buddhist writings are chanted to ward off bad fortune, touched to bring good luck, placed in a temple to make it holy…they are worshipped, but not really studied. The Bible is so different. There we have the words of a personal, living God who reaches out to us through His word. And we can see that word made flesh, the principles all lived out in reality, in the person of His Son (Jn. 1:14). And we can respond to God's word by talking back to Him in prayer, offered in the name of our representative Jesus. God's word is a living word, able to penetrate into the very texture of human personality (Heb. 4:12-14 RV). Yes, it is black print on white paper; but it is so much more than this. It is somehow alive, in the sense that it conveys to us the intentions and desires of the living God.

Buddhism sees karma as only one influence. One can make gifts for the benefit of relatives and friends [which gifts are the way Buddhist priests get an income, strangely enough], and these can influence their fortune in their next life. But again, on what basis? Why believe this? It is an appealing idea, but where is the evidence for this? There is none. There is not even a reliable canon of writings to justify it. When Buddhism tells us that there are 26 forms of heavenly rebirths, and that life in the lowest heaven is 9 million human years, and 84,000 "aeons" in the highest one…well, why not 10 million years? Why not 27 forms of rebirth, etc? How can one take these statements as "truth" when they are supposed sayings of a man who lived almost 2,500 years ago, which were passed down by word of mouth, with much debate as to what he actually said…with no documented evidence? Can one live their life around ideas which are so nebulous?

The Bible, By Contrast…

The Buddhist often simply assumes that his writings are right and the Bible wrong; but this is to start with a presupposition, and then seek evidence to support it. The way Old Testament Bible prophecies were so accurately fulfilled in Jesus is just too much to put down to chance. To say that the Bible has been changed by the Jews hardly seems likely - both Old and New Testaments are full of criticisms of the Jews. The texts of both Testaments have been in the possession of both Jews and Christians, so they would both have had to agree if the texts were indeed to be tampered with. For 200 years before the time of Jesus, the Hebrew Old Testament existed in Greek translation as the Septuagint, and this would have had to be changed along with the Hebrew texts, if indeed the Old Testament was changed by Christians as Christianity's critics requires. Critics of the Bible can give no dates, no places, no names, responsible for the changing of the Bible texts which they assume happened. Their presupposition that the Bible must be wrong because it disproves the Buddhist scared writings therefore drives them to make assumptions and claims which totally lack evidence. The Dead Sea Scrolls reveal how the texts have lost virtually nothing through the generations of recopying - these manuscripts were of the Old Testament, dating from the 2nd century BC. Their correspondence with later manuscripts is exact! The Codex Alexandrinus contains the entire Septuagint and also New Testament, written on vellum dating back to at least the 4th century AD; and the Codex Siniaticus contains the New Testament written in at least the 3rd century. The Codex Vaticanus dates from the 4th century. And yet these three different manuscripts are all in substantial agreement! The first two are housed in the British Museum, London; and the third in the Vatican. So there is no way that it can be said that the text of the New Testament has been changed over at least 17 centuries! It is therefore no argument to say that over time, a manuscript must inevitably change. On this basis, we could expect the Buddhist writings to have changed too. There are at least 24,000 ancient New Testament manuscripts available for analysis - far more than for the Buddhist writings. The next most well supported book, Homer's Iliad, has only 643. And there are original fragments of John dating back to 120 AD, and of Matthew to 65 AD. The few variant readings do not affect in any way the sense of the text; and none of the variant readings contradicts anything written elsewhere in the New Testament. There were many many variant readings in the Buddhist sacred writings- because "for about 300 years after the Buddha's death, all texts were transmitted orally" [(3)] . What the Buddha said was written down by various people, interpreted, and to this day there is a huge debate as to what is canonical Buddhist literature and what isn't. The oldest original Buddhist writings that survive go back only to the 6th century AD- a marked contrast with the Bible texts. One is left wondering whether we did have the original text, and whether it hadn't been tampered with. And this question must afflict every intellectually honest Buddhist.

Notes

(1) Ulrich Pagel, The Sacred Writings Of Buddhism in Peter Harvey, *Buddhism*, p. 32 (London: Continuum, 2001).

(2) For evidence of these statements see E. Conze, *Buddhist Scriptures* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1959) and Conze E., Horner I.B., Snellgrove D. and Waley A., *Buddhist Texts Through The Ages* (New York: Harper and Row, 1954).

(3) Peter Harvey, *Buddhism*, p. 51 (London: Continuum, 2001).

6.3.2 The Concept of Truth In Buddhism

One Buddhist apologist has written: “Christianity is likewise authoritarian and dictatorial -- " you must believe this or you will be condemned" -- whereas Buddhism tends to be more liberal and allows people to believe more or less whatever they like. Christians ban certain teachings as heretical, evil and harmful, but in general terms, Buddhists assert that anyone can believe anything they wish and that there is some merit in any belief system which has some spiritual views and respects the rights of an individual, as long as it does not harm others”.

This idea that one can believe anything is a result of Buddhism actually having no solid basis upon which to believe anything. And one wonders whether believing “whatever they like” includes Fascism and Satanism… again, there seems so little attention paid to the implications of what is being said. If there is right and wrong, then immediately there is thrown up the question of truth and error, and therefore and thereby, the whole question of authority. The sheer range of beliefs within Buddhism indicates how there is no basis for ultimate Truth within the religion. Consider all the different forms of Buddhism: Zen, Theravada, Soka-gakkai; Tibetan Buddhism; Pure Land Buddhism etc.

While in Christianity a person has one and only one chance of being saved, Buddhism's teachings on rebirth mean that a person has an infinite number of opportunities to attain Nirvana. This also implies that everyone will eventually be liberated. The absoluteness of the issues involved in rejecting or accepting Jesus as the Son of God impart a verve and vitality to human life. Buddhism teaches that it is all a matter of time; we may be reincarnated as animals or bad people but in the end, the cycle leads to Nirvana. This means that evil men like Adolf Hitler will eventually reach ‘Nirvana’; there is no responsibility for human action because we are merely reincarnated beings. The Bible and the teaching which is in Jesus radically transforms human life in practice. How we live now is related to how we will be judged. What we sow is what we will reap at judgement day (Gal. 6:8). For those who know God’s ways and are responsible to Him, all that they do will in some sense be judged. This inevitably leads us to watch our behaviour. How we live becomes crucially important. There is no second chance. Now is the today of salvation (2 Cor. 6:2); today, if we will hear God’s voice and not harden our heart (Heb. 3:7-15), we can “work out our salvation” (Phil 2:12). If we are simply passing through a cycle, and will in the ultimate end up in Nirvana, there is little motivation to change now. We will always tend to go for the lowest level; we are satisficers, minimalists, when it comes to spiritual endeavour. Both human experience and the Bible’s view of human nature lead us to these conclusions; and yet Buddhism denies them.

Buddhism seems to me to be a ‘designer religion’- you can believe as you like, and extract from the vast range of Buddhist writings what is convenient for you. Buddhism holds that different types of teaching and guidance are going to be appropriate to different beings, seeing we are all at different stages in the endless cycle of development. This means that there is no such thing as revealed truth. We are left wandering and uncertain. God’s word is truth, Jesus taught (Jn. 17:17). We all balk at the enormity of this claim- that the Bible is the Truth. All I can do is invite you to systematically read it for yourself. It has been observed that “even straightforward teachings in moral matters can be modified, sometimes intensified, sometimes relaxed in the course of teaching and transmission” [(1)]. This means there is no such concept as truth, therefore no understanding of right and wrong, and no concept of sin. The

varying Buddhist views over time and geography regarding meat eating and violence are examples of the intellectual and moral crisis of Buddhism. In passing, note that the Pali Canon reveals that Buddha himself ate meat, but his later disciples saw that his teachings about re-incarnation meant that to eat an animal was to take a human life, and therefore it was outlawed. Who has the right to modify moral standards? If there are no inspired Scriptures, the basis for authority can only be the monks. The lack of uniform morality in Buddhism contrasts strongly with the one universal standard for the Christian- "the law of Christ" (1 Cor 9:21???). By this I understand we are to ask constantly and with relentless, piercing honesty: What would Jesus do or say or feel, in this or that situation which I meet in my life? For He was and is our representative, and His life of suffering, and the fact He had our human nature, enables us to know with confidence that He has been in our shoes, in essence. True Christians are as it were in a personality cult behind this man Jesus. This explains the tremendous unity which is possible amongst true Christians. He was not merely a teacher, an ideas man, as Buddha was. He was the word made flesh (Jn. 1:14), His life was and is the express articulation of all He and His Father have taught in their words.

Notes

(1) Stewart MacFarlane, "Making Moral Decisions" in Peter Harvey, *Buddhism*, p. 183 (London: Continuum, 2001).

6.3.3 Buddha Versus Jesus

Buddha was born a prince, an heir to his father's throne, but when he was born, the fortune tellers told the father that he was an unusual child, destined either to unite all of India into one kingdom, or, if he forsook the world, to become a world redeemer. Because of this, the child was brought up completely sheltered from all forms of misery in the world, and he was given all of the pleasures that the world could offer. He was to be shielded from any contact with sickness, decrepitude, or death.

All this contrasts sharply with the Lord Jesus. He was born in a stable for animals, His parents offered the poor person's offering for Him at birth, He was a working man, a carpenter, and He died the death of a criminal, in the degrading torture of crucifixion, a form of death reserved only for slaves and the lowest of society. Yet because of the lowness of His humiliation, He was therefore so highly exalted (Phil. 2:5-11). Because He was of our nature, therefore He was able to know fully our human experience, and on this basis we can ask God for forgiveness confidently (Heb. 4:15,16). Although Jesus was rich, for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be made rich (2 Cor. 8:9).

Buddha is a `Saviour' only in the sense that he shows men how to save themselves, by actually following to the end the Path trodden and shown by him. According to the Bible, there is none truly just, not one (Rom. 3:10). All have been "concluded under sin" (Rom. 3:22) (Gal 3:22). Mankind therefore cannot save himself. Just consider Paul's passion in Rom. 7:15-25 "For what I am doing I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do

good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God – through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin."

Surely you feel an echo of yourself here? The answer to this cry from the heart is in Jesus Christ- not in human beings saving themselves. 'Jesus' means saviour. Either Buddha or Jesus is our Saviour. Some Buddhists claim that Christianity is compatible with Buddhism. Yet clearly it isn't. Where is Buddha now? Is he saved? What does that salvation mean for him? Is there any evidence that he conquered death? Seeing that sin brings death, how then did Buddha conquer sin and death? Did Buddha ever sin? The Buddhist is always nervous about these questions because he or she chooses not to face up to the real implications of the concept of sin- which scarcely exists in Buddhism.

A positive karma is seen to have the power of purification or punya. But it is surely apparent that the power of self-cleansing is not within us. What is required is the blood of Jesus to purify us (1 Jn 1:7). He, as our representative, with all our pain and our hunger as humans, never sinned, and was resurrected to eternal life. And we have the hope of sharing the salvation He now experiences, as a result of His death purifying us in that God forgives us our sins because of Him.

6.3.4 Buddhism And A Personal God

Buddha denied the existence of a personal God but was monistic in his view of the Absolute as an impersonal force made up of all living things. The Bible teaches of a God who rules the universe, and cares for man in a personal way. Psalm 46:10 states: " Be still and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted among the earth" .

Buddha claimed to be the one who shows the way to Nirvana, to a time of future bliss. Jesus claimed to be the way to God (Jn. 14:6). There is a subtle difference. Jesus pointed us towards a living relationship with the one personal, Almighty God. Buddha offered a philosophy intended to give the follower the highest level of personal happiness. This, surely, is nothing but selfish. Buddhism is all about self power. This effectively leaves God out of it. He has no part to play, no power. We are alone with ourselves, and yet it is surely evident that humanity of itself cannot save itself. The Bible teaches that God is the source of all power, and that this power, or Spirit, created and sustains everything. And it is this Spirit power which through His word, the Bible, can transform human life in practice. There are times when the heart of man becomes so evil that he himself cannot even fathom how evil it is (Jer. 17:9). If we look within, there is simply not enough positive self power within us to transform ourselves. This is why Buddhists, if they are intellectually honest and objective in their self examination, will have to die disappointed men and women. Jesus Christ is described as "the Lord the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:17), to whom all power in Heaven and earth has now been delegated by God (Mat 28:18). God through Him has the power to change lives. It is not in any man who walks on earth to direct his own steps (Jer. 10:23). We can't transform ourselves unaided. And this accords with the honest self-examination of every human being.

The personal God of the Bible, the Father of the Lord Jesus, is seeking to glorify the things of His Name- that is, the principles which make up His own personal attributes. Buddhism is almost obsessed with seeking to alleviate human suffering, just as, say, mistaken Christian

groups like Pentecostals teach false doctrines like ‘name it and claim it’, offering personal material benefit from their religion. This is what makes standard religions all seem so essentially selfish. But the true message of the Bible is that this one true personal God seeks to glorify His Name, His true and righteous characteristics, in a community of eternally redeemed men and women.

6.3.5 Nirvana And The Bible

What happens after we die is a normal question. Buddhism is very weak about this. Even Buddha himself was not certain what lay beyond death. He left no clear teaching on Nirvana or eternity. What he did leave are philosophical speculations. Today the body of Buddha lies in a grave in Kusinara, at the foot of the Himalaya Mountains. The facts of life after death still remain an unsolved mystery in Buddhism.

I believe that Jesus died and resurrected as my representative. Because I have been baptised into Him, on this understanding, I therefore have the hope of resurrection and eternal life with Him, by His Father’s grace, at His return. The Bible does not offer any hope of an ‘immortal soul’ surviving after death. Because the only hope we have is in Christ, and the pattern that we see in Him was of a real man dying and then rising again. Not as a disembodied spirit, not as an abstraction, but as a real, tangible person.

Buddhists claim that Nirvana cannot be concretely expressed as it is inexpressible. There is therefore no concrete understanding of what they are aiming for. There is no clearly defined “hope”. The Bible offers a very definite hope through the work of Jesus- the Kingdom of God, to be established here on earth when Jesus returns.

Buddhism has a very low view of humanity, seeing the human person as a cluster of unsatisfactory forces. The Lord Jesus gave tremendous emphasis to the value and meaning of persons. He told a parable of where He as the good shepherd went and searched for one lost sheep whilst 99 were left to fend for themselves. The individual matters so much to Him. The Bible says that men like Abraham, Isaac and Jacob will be recognisable in the future Kingdom of God (Mat 8:11/Luke 13:28). We, personally, will live for ever in the Kingdom of God. Buddhism claims that the Buddha-nature (Japanese bussho) is sunyata, empty of self. We will be effectively nobody in nirvana. The meaning and value of persons is thus devalued in Buddhism. The Bible teaches a resurrection after the pattern of Jesus. He was resurrected, and the person who came out of the grave was still essentially the same personality who died. And so it will be in the resurrection of all those in Christ. This is an especial comfort at times of death…that the true Christian who has died will be resurrected, and those of us in Christ will see him or her again and live eternally together. The change of nature that will be effected at the judgement seat of Christ is a radical change, unlike the endless cyclical development which characterises Buddhism. In passing I would note that it is important to have a correct understanding of human nature. Stalin, Hitler, the Khmer Rouge etc. all perpetrated the most awful things predicated on faulty understandings of what it is. Buddhists believe that evil arises from ignorance. This is partly true, but the Bible teaches what we surely already know from honest introspection: that wars and fighting’s arise from within the human mind (James 4:1), we are tempted by our own evil desires which are within us (James 1:13-15). In passing, note that the common idea of the devil as a personal being is not taught in the Bible. Satan, the adversary, is basically a personification of the evil desires which reside within our natures. More literature about this is available from the publishers.

The power and possibility of new life is tied closely with the Lord Jesus. Life and immortality are brought to light through the Gospel about Him (2 Tim. 1:10). In Jesus is life, the life of men (Jn. 1: 4). This is because the result of sin is death- real, meaningful death. But Jesus didn't sin. And yet He died, for us. And therefore for all those baptised into His death and resurrection, and living in Him by faith, there is the hope of resurrection as He rose from the dead, to eternal life. Buddhism teaches that when a person dies, their craving for life, impelled by their karma, causes a supposed "stream of consciousness" to go on and live somewhere else. This is pure supposition. From where does a dead body get life? It seems that this is just another wild, desperate, blind hope that humans have come up with to escape from the awful permanence of death.

The Buddhist belief in re-incarnation has led them to suppose that how one is at the point of death is vitally important, and therefore monks chant near a dying person from the 'Book of the dead'. And yet salvation cannot be within man nor monks. One speculation has given birth to another. There is no evidence for reincarnation, nor any grounds even for faith in such a suggestion. And so the error has been compounded by then using other people, i.e. monks, to ensure that the dying person has a god reincarnation. How we live is what God will judge. Truly does the Bible say that no man can by any means redeem his brother (Ps. 49:7). The Ullambana festival, in which sutras are recited in order to enable a better re-birth, imply that human salvation is dependent upon others, upon mere words. Surely you want something more real than this…?

Consider the concrete, real descriptions of the Biblical equivalent to Nirvana- i.e., the Kingdom of God on earth:

Those who follow Christ in this life will be "kings and priests; and we shall reign on the earth" (Rev. 5:10). They will have differing degrees of responsibility (Lk. 19:17). Christ will share his rulership over the earth with them (Rev. 2:27; 2 Tim. 2:12). "A king (Jesus) shall reign in righteousness, and princes (the believers) shall rule in judgement" (Is. 32:1; Ps. 45:16).

Christ is to reign on David's re-established throne (Lk. 1:32,33), i.e. he will have David's place and position of rulership, which was in Jerusalem. As Christ will reign from Jerusalem, this will be the capital of the future kingdom. Nations "will go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles" in Jerusalem (Zech. 14:16).

This annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem is also prophesied in Is. 2:2,3: "In the last days, the mountain (kingdom - Dan. 2:35,44) of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains (i.e. God's kingdom will be exalted above the kingdoms of men)...and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways...for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem". This appears to be a picture of the early days of the kingdom, as people spread the knowledge of Christ's reign to others, and they go up to the "mountain" of God's kingdom, which will be slowly spreading world-wide. Here we have a picture of real enthusiasm in religious worship.

Instead of the confusion and unfairness created by man's legal systems and administration of justice, there will be one universal legal code - "the law, and the word of the Lord", which will be pronounced by Christ from Jerusalem. "All nations shall flow unto" these teaching

sessions, implying that this common desire to find the true knowledge of God will lessen the natural friction between nations, as it does between individuals who dedicate themselves to gaining such knowledge in this life.

This description of all the nations flowing unto Jerusalem is similar to the picture presented in Is. 60:5, where the Jews "flow together" along with the Gentiles (non-Jews) to worship God in Jerusalem. This connects perfectly with the kingdom prophecy of Zech. 8:20-23.

"There shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities; and the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go continually (A.V. mg. - cf. Zech. 14:16 'year by year') to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts: I will go also. Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem...ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you".

This creates the picture of the Jewish people being made "the head, and not the tail" of the nations, due to their repentance and obedience (Deut. 28:13). The Jewish basis of God's plan of salvation will then be appreciated by everyone. The ignorance of this amongst contemporary Christianity will then be abruptly ended. People will then enthusiastically discuss these things, so that they can tell the Jews, "we have heard that God is with you". Conversation will then revolve around spiritual things, rather than the vanity which fill the world's present thinking.

Given this greater commitment to godliness, it is not surprising that Christ "shall judge among the nations...they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Is. 2:4). The absolute authority of Christ and total justice of his arbitration in disputes will result in the nations changing their military hardwareinto agricultural machinery, and abandoning all military training. "In his days shall the righteous flourish" (Ps. 72:7) - spirituality will then be exalted, and respect will be paid to those who reflect God's characteristics of love, mercy, justice etc. Contrast this with the present exaltation of the proud, self-assertive and selfishly ambitious.

The beating of "swords into plowshares" will be part of a much greater agricultural change which will come upon the earth. As a result of Adam's sin, the ground was cursed for his sake (Gen. 3:17-19), with the result that great effort is presently needed to get food from it. In the kingdom "there shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the (once barren) mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like (the crops of) Lebanon" (Ps. 72:16). "The plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine" (Am. 9:13), such will be the improved fertility of the earth, and the reduction of the curse on the ground pronounced in Eden.

Such immense agricultural enterprise will involve many people. The kingdom prophecies give the impression that people will return to a self-sufficient, agricultural lifestyle.

"They shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid" (Mic. 4:4).

This self-sufficiency will overcome the abuses which are inherent in any system of employment of labour for cash. Spending a lifetime working to make others rich will then be a thing of the past.

"They shall build houses, and inhabit them (themselves); and they shall plant vineyards and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat...mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labour in vain..." (Is. 65:21-23).

Isaiah 35:1-7 contains a matchless prophecy of how infertile land will be changed, resulting in an aura of joy and happiness almost oozing from the land, due to the easier and more spiritual way of life of those who work it: "The wilderness...shall be glad...the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall...rejoice even with joy and singing...for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool". Even the natural aggression between the animals will be removed: "the wolf and the lamb shall feed together", and children will be able to play with snakes (Is. 65:25; 11:6-8).

In the same way as the curse which was placed upon the natural creation will be greatly reduced, so that which was placed on mankind will also be lessened. Thus Rev. 20:2,3 speaks in symbolic language of the devil (sin and its effects) being "bound", or restrained, during the Millennium. Life-spans will be increased, so that if someone dies at 100 years old, they will be considered but a child (Is. 65:20). Women will experience less sorrow in childbirth (Is. 65:23). "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing" (Is. 35:5,6). This will be due to the miraculous spirit gifts again being possessed (cf. Heb. 6:5).

It cannot be too strongly emphasised that the Kingdom of God should not be seen as a tropical island paradise, which the righteous will enjoy in a similar way to which men enjoy sunbathing amidst the glories of nature. The fundamental purpose of the Kingdom of God is to give glory to God, until the earth is full of glory to Him "as the waters cover the sea" (Hab. 2:14). This is God's ultimate aim: "As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord" (Num. 14:21). Glory to God means that the inhabitants of the earth will appreciate, praise and copy His righteous attributes; because the world will be in this state, God will allow the physical earth to reflect this, too. Thus "the meek shall inherit the earth (in the kingdom), and shall delight themselves in the abundance of (spiritual) peace" (Ps. 37:11), rather than in enjoying the easy life. Those "which do hunger and thirst after righteousness...shall be filled" with it in the kingdom (Mt. 5:6). In passing, Buddhism seems incredibly centred on humans- not on God. I would submit that Biblical Christianity reveals far more of Divine generosity, and thereby the imperative to a life based around praise and thankfulness to God¸ than any other religion.

Just the thought of possessing eternal life in the kingdom is often used as a 'carrot' to induce people to an interest in Christianity. However, our possession of it then, will almost be incidental to the real reason for our being in the kingdom - which is to glorify God. In what time may remain to us after our baptism, our appreciation of this should continually develop. To the writer, just ten years of living in the joy of absolute perfection and good conscience with God would be worth all the trauma of this life. That this glorious state will last for ever simply blows the mind, taking us beyond the limits of human comprehension.

Even when viewed in slightly more physical terms, being in the Kingdom of God should be our supreme motivation to despise worldly advantages and materialism. Instead of taking excessive thought for the immediate future, Jesus advised: "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Mt. 6:30-34). Everything which we can now imagine and strive for is incomparable to the ultimate fulfilment of being in God's kingdom.

We need to seek "(God's) righteousness", i.e. to try to develop a love of God's character, which means that we want to be in God's kingdom because righteousness will be glorified there, because we want to be completely morally perfect rather than just because we, personally, want to escape death and live an easy life for eternity. And not just because we want to escape present suffering, which seems to be what Buddhism is obsessed with. Buddhism claims that the world is periodically brought into being and then after many millions of years it is destroyed and the cycle begins again. The good news of the coming Kingdom of God on earth is that the earth will not be destroyed (Ecc. 1:4), because it is God's purpose to populate it with immortal beings who lived out brief lives of probation on the planet in this our time of opportunity. There is a tremendous urgency, therefore, to our position. Now is the today of salvation, Paul says (2 Cor. 6:2), today we must hear God's voice, for tomorrow may be too late (Heb. 3:12-13). The physical world is vitally important to the loving God who created it. We can perceive the beauty in it which reflects design and purpose. Only the good news of the coming Kingdom on earth makes sense of what this purpose is. Most people perceive there is some purpose in it, but fail to see what purpose. The world was created "very good" according to the Bible (Gen. 1:31). And any observation of this beautiful creation in which we live would confirm that. It is the Buddhist idea of reincarnation and endless cycles of existence which leads them to insist that the earth is not made "very good" at all. To describe the world as "beginningless" is to really deny creation, to deny design and purpose in creation; it is to deny God. It is really another form of evolution, which is yet another theory of human origin, which lacks any concrete evidence. The coming of the Kingdom of God at the return of Jesus means that the Christian view of history is that time proceeds in a linear way, from beginning to end. We know where we came from, and to where we go. The Buddhist view of time as cyclical means that there is no purpose, no end, no beginning, and therefore no real imperative to live life today with any sense of direction and responsibility towards God. This is why there is so much 'emptiness' in Buddhism. Even in nirvana , we will be sunyata, empty of self; the Buddhist tantras teach that all deities of the pantheon are manifestations of this sunyata , emptiness. And in this sense, they lack ultimate existence. The concept of emptiness has been taken to such an extent that it effectively denies not only the existence of God, but also of any real personal existence in the future. Jesus once was present at the grave of a believer, and the dead man's sister could rejoice that she would see her brother again at the resurrection, in the last day (Jn. 11:23-27). This is the hope that is in Jesus, who is the resurrection and the life (Jn. 11:25). To imply that existence doesn't exist is just playing with words, just as a drunk man may feel existence is suspended for him. Yet reality calls. We are alive, we are real, and so is God and so is Jesus and so is their purpose with this earth.

6.3.6 Predestination And Buddhism

Buddhists believe that human destiny is individually determined by our past personal actions, thoughts and words (karma) which act as causes of our future happiness and misery.

There are many sound Biblical reasons for rejecting this kind of philosophy.

- It makes a nonsense of the whole concept of obedience to God. We are continually told in the Bible that we must keep God's commands, and by doing so we can give Him pleasure or displeasure. This concept of commandments is meaningless if God is forcing us to be obedient. Christ offers salvation "unto all them that obey him" (Heb. 5:9).

- Hebrews 11 shows that God's intervention in our lives and ultimate granting of salvation is related to our faith. The many Biblical examples of praying to God for deliverance in time of trouble are meaningless if everything is totally predestined. Likewise the idea of salvation being the result of our faith in Christ is also made meaningless.

- Baptism is a pre-requisite for salvation (Mk. 16:16; Jn. 3:3- 5). However, salvation was made possible on account of the work of Christ (2 Tim. 1:10), not through the abstract concept of predestination. We must consciously choose to associate ourselves with Him, which we do through baptism. Romans 6:15-17 speaks of us changing masters at baptism, from a life of sin to one of obedience. "To whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are". This language of yielding oneself clearly implies freewill as opposed to unconditional predestination. The yielding is through obeying from the heart the doctrines of the Gospel (Rom. 6:17).

- There is no point in God speaking forth His word, if we are ultimately predestined anyway. There is also no point in preaching; yet the Bible, both in command and by recording examples of this, shows that it is through the preaching of the word that men and women come to salvation. "The word of...salvation" (Acts 13:26) has to go forth to men.

- We will be judged according to our works (Rev. 22:12). Why, if our freewill actions are unimportant in relation to salvation? Paul said that the Jews judged themselves to be unworthy of eternal life by their rejection of the word of God (Acts 13:46). They were judging themselves - God was not preventing them. If we say that God is predestining some people to salvation and others to condemnation, then God is effectively forcing people to be sinners, in the same way as He supposedly forces people to be righteous. Because of Adam's sin, "death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Rom. 5:12). This is why men die, as a punishment for sin (Rom. 6:23), not because God forced them to be sinners at some point in time before Adam's sin.

- 1 Cor. 10 and many other passages hold up the example of those in the past who once had a relationship with God, but then fell away, as being warnings to believers. The fact that it is possible to 'fall from grace' (Gal. 5:4) means that there cannot be a 'once saved always saved' system of salvation, nor can it be that we all eventually mature into nirvana. Only by continuing to hold true doctrine can we be saved (1 Tim. 4:16).

- Jesus clearly taught that understanding God's word is dependent to some degree upon our freewill effort. "Whoso readeth, let him understand" (Mt. 24:15). Thus we let ourselves understand the word - we are not forced to. There is a parallel between this and the oft repeated words of Jesus: "He that hath ears to hear...let him hear", or understand. Having ears to hear therefore equates with reading God's word. Because God's spirit is so supremely manifested through His word to the extent that Jesus could say that His inspired words "are spirit" (Jn. 6:63), it is impossible that God's spirit would work on a man, apart from His word, in order to force the man to be obedient to the word.

- “Whosoever will” can “take of the water of life freely” (Rev. 22:17), through responding to the word of life found in the Gospel. Here surely is freewill rather than predestination irrespective of our personal desire for salvation. Likewise Acts 2:21: “Whosoever shall call on (himself) the name of the Lord shall be saved” through being baptised into that name.

Jesus forgives our sins, but Buddhism says you can never escape the consequences of your karma. The forgiveness that is in Jesus is therefore some radical and something felt by the person receiving it. There is the joy of a good conscience, with all the power this gives to live a graceful and forgiving life of love. Human life at present is somehow pointless if each re-birth is but a samsara, a ‘wandering on’, in the baseless belief [for we have shown that Buddhism has no basis of authority] that one day we will reach Nirvana. And yet according to some Buddhist traditions, Nirvana itself will never be reached, for we must pass through infinite worlds in our development cycle [(1)]. Jesus offered us a one time re-birth through baptism in water and spiritual renewing in Him (Jn. 3:3-5), the result of which will be that we will enter the Kingdom of God on earth when He returns. The rebirth which Jesus offers is a rebirth to life; whereas all Buddhists rebirths end finally in death. Jesus offers a real, tangible, eternal Kingdom of God on this earth. With Jerusalem as its eternal capital. Yes, the Jerusalem we know and can locate today. Ask a Buddhist to define Nirvana, and they have no real idea. The “further shore…island amidst the flood…cave of shelter…beyond the realm of reason”. It is impossible to put meaning into these words, and the result is that Buddhism offers no definable nor understandable hope, nor direction to which we should be heading. The Bible doctrine of the Kingdom of God is so different.

Buddhism's cyclic view of existence means that history has no meaning and this makes Buddhists fatalistic and indifferent. The Bible continually builds upon itself. Historical events in Israel’s history are full of meaning. Let me give an example:

Paul explains in 1 Cor. 10:1,2, that our passing through the waters of baptism is like Israel passing through the waters of the Red Sea. They were baptised “in the cloud and in the sea” - there was water on both sides of them, and above them in the cloud. A kind of parable can be developed from this, with many lessons for us. Israel had been slaves in Egypt, living a pointless life, working hard in their slavery and serving the idols of Egypt. Through their experience of life they cried to God to find some way of escape, although they probably had no idea how He would answer them. In reply God sent Moses to lead them out of Egypt, through the Red Sea and then through the wilderness, to enter the Promised Land. Israel in Egypt were like all who come to baptism; we are led, as it were, to the shores of the Red Sea. Once we pass through the water, we will not immediately be in the Promised Land of the Kingdom, we will join the rest of the believers in walking through the wilderness. God led Israel through the wilderness by an Angel, who was constantly with them by day and night. So, too, each of us has an Angel encamping around us, leading us through our lives towards salvation (Ps. 34:7; Heb. 1:14).

Israel were fed each day with manna, which Jesus interprets in John 6 as both Himself, and God’s Word. If they had not eaten it they would soon have died in that wilderness - there was no other food there to eat. For this reason we cannot commend to you strongly enough the “Bible Companion” reading tables, whereby you read the Bible each day, getting the whole context of passages as you read through, and especially, feeding on Christ, whom you will find “in all the scriptures”. A copy of this plan is available free from the publishers. It is vital to make space in our daily routine, preferably at the same time each day, to read those chapters and reflect on them.

Notes
(1) Williams, P. *Mahayana Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul), 1989.

6.3. 7 The Problem of Sin In Buddhism

We have earlier commented how Buddhism fails to address the problem of sin. It denies that human wilfulness is the root problem of wrong behaviour, and by doing so takes the focus away from what every honest human being knows is our essential problem. Buddhism discounts the whole issue of origins, dismissing the Biblical record of creation: "The aim of Buddhism is to develop wisdom and compassion and thereby attain Nirvana. Knowing how the universe began can contribute nothing to this task". This means that the focus is only upon the present. Yet take a read through the Bible. It starts with the record of creation, and the entire Bible is filled with allusion back to the early chapters. There is a far greater internal harmony within the Bible than within Buddhist writings. The fact that God is and was creator was what inspired the faith and prayers of men like David and Jeremiah. The New Testament speaks of a new creation being worked out in men and women, after the pattern of the physical creation, in order to make men and women into the image of Jesus Christ, the one we are to follow. Buddhism claims to focus upon understanding; and yet by discounting origins, understanding can never be reached. And because origins are overlooked, the whole problem of sin has been ignored- even though this is the essential reason for suffering. Buddhism sees all existence as cyclic- no beginning, no end. Therefore the question of origins is ignored, with the result that God is not seen as creator. Yet if there was no personal designer and creator, we are left to believe in evolution, as many Buddhists do. It cannot be, even within the paradigm of human science, that matter came from nothing. There had to be a beginning. Theories of evolution only throw the questions one stage further back- where did the beginning and the evident design within creation come from? Existence isn't just cyclical- it began, some place, some time. And was begun by some being. The very concepts of good and evil must have begun somewhere. Concepts have not just always existed. The Buddhist has to shut her or his mind to these difficulties. Yet in the Bible there is real and credible explanation. And there is in the Bible the clear teaching that Jesus is the "author" of eternal life (Acts 3:15), just as God was the beginner of natural life.

6.3.8 The Problem of Suffering In Buddhism

Buddhism has so focused on getting relief from suffering that it has ended up assuming that if God exists then He created suffering, and therefore their 'Great Brahma' was very limited in understanding to have created such a mess. And therefore Buddha's teachings, which are the way out of suffering ultimately, are far superior than those of the 'god' who created suffering. Can Buddhists not see what is going on here? A man, Buddha, is setting himself up above God. Effectively, Buddhism has reduced God to an ignorant force, merely because they lack the faith to accept that suffering is used by Him in ways which we are too limited to fully understand. In short, Buddhism lacks any dimension of faith . It seems to be yet another humanly designed religion which, as it were, is placed on the shop shelf in the hope desperate, hurt people may buy it. Faith is belief in what you cannot see, and according to Jesus and the Bible, faith is the essential quality our currently invisible creator seeks for in us (Heb. 11:1). For Buddhists, devotion to buddhas and bodhisattvas is channelled by the use of artefacts like images and temples. Why? Simply because Buddhism offers humanity a short cut around what is essential for a true relationship with God, namely, faith. In this Buddhism has many similarities with Catholicism- Catholic rosary beads are in principle similar to the

mani religion wheels of Buddhism. The question arises as to whether you want mere religion, or… a real and dynamic relationship with your creator, the one, personal, Almighty God who seeks above all else a relationship with you, and to eternally save you into His Kingdom. Likewise the way in Sri Lanka, Buddhist kings have always protected the relic of Buddha's tooth is similar to the way in which supposed nails from the cross are venerated by Roman Catholics. The practice of Buddhist pilgrimages to places where Buddha is known to have been, or to some object connected with him, is akin to Catgolic pilgrimages to Lourdes and other supposedly holy places. Stupas believed to contain relics of the Buddha are found all over Asia, just as the Catholic church has established shrines throughout Europe and the Middle East. My friends, this is all just mere religion. It isn't for me, and I plead with you to rise up to something more real and true.

Buddhism has correctly diagnosed the problem of humanity. "Subject to decay, disease, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair, the desire comes to them: `O, that we were not subject to these things!' `O, that these things were not before us!' But this cannot be got by mere desiring; and not to get what one desires, is suffering". But Buddhism looks to humanity itself for a solution, when the problem is humanity itself. We of ourselves just can't solve it. The Bible offers the answer through Jesus Christ, a man like us, whose conception and being God intervened in, with the result that in Him we see a perfect man, who has opened up the way to escape all the problems of our humanity in that He conquered the power of sin. And sin according to the Bible is the root source of all our sufferings. Buddhism seems to say that we suffer because we suffer, we are as we are because that's how we are. No explanation is given of why this all is, and therefore I submit that the answers Buddhism gives are also irrelevant. For it seeks to tackle a problem which it doesn't understand. And worse than this, Buddhism's inability to define where suffering comes from has led it to concluding that the creation was created out of some kind of ignorance of perfection. The Bible describes God as creating everything "very good"- but it was humanity, through Adam and Eve, which spoilt it. And yet God's intention is to bring the earth back to this "very good" state through the descendant of Eve, the Lord Jesus Christ. Surely nobody can reflect upon the wonder of creation and seriously conclude that this is the work of an ignorant force? Surely the goodness of the creator is seen in His creation? Admittedly, the problem of a marred creation occurs, but the Biblical account of the fall and of earth's redemption through Christ makes perfect sense of this. Buddhism criticises creation because it is so obsessed with the suffering human condition as the ultimate evil; and it offers no concrete explanation of how this state of suffering came into being. Yet Buddhism has to conclude that creation or existence itself is the cause of our problems, not us: "Buddhists believe in a universe of continuous creation and destruction (flux, impermanence) which is the root cause of pain, loss and separation". Yet to blame creation is meaningless. It's like blaming the problem on the problem. It's a circular argument- which springs out of an inability to face up to human sinfulness as the root cause of problems. Indeed, Buddhism has so devalued the concept of sin that there is little room for any drawing of a clear line between right and wrong. The ordinary Buddhist faces no externally imposed sanctions for transgression of Buddhist precepts- because there is no real sense of right and wrong. Response to e.g. adultery is that a man will die young in his next life, or be reborn with a small penis. Yet we must ask who makes these decisions, and from where does the power derive that causes all this to happen? If there is no Almighty, personal God, then this question remains unanswered by Buddhism. Many offences are merely an inattention to deportment and decorum, and acknowledgement of them is all that is required. Yet the Bible teaches that sin is a real and felt offence against God, and the forgiveness it requires is only realisable through the death and resurrection of Jesus. The feeling of grace, of being forgiven, is what

binds a man back in grateful and humble devotion to his God and his Lord, Jesus. This isn't possible in Buddhism.

The Buddhist obsession with escaping suffering and getting a good life has led them to think that any person born deformed is suffering the result of past evil actions in a previous life. But when confronted with a man born blind, Jesus said that this man was not in that position because he had sinned (Jn. 9:2-3). This is a direct contradiction between Christianity and Buddhism. For some Buddhists to imply that all religions led to the same end is ridiculous. There are crucial differences between Christianity and Buddhism.

Rebirth being possible as a man or an animal, Buddhism sees man as merely an animal. Whilst the Bible says that man is mortal as animals are mortal (Ecc. 3:25-27; 9:5,6), it clearly teaches that we are made in the image of the real and corporeal God who created us. Because we are in God's image, we must respect each other (James 3:9-10), and give to God whatever has God's image (Mark 12:16-17), i.e., our very own bodies. If animals and plants are the incarnations of people, and murder is wrong, then it follows that Buddhists should never kill animals nor plants. And yet they do. And they have never given a satisfactory explanation of this massive contradiction in their belief system. It makes so much more sense to believe what the Bible says, that God has created animals and plants to be eaten and received by us with thanksgiving (1 Tim. 4:3-4).

6.3.9 "The spirits in prison"

1 Pet. 3:18-21 is sometimes used to 'prove' that we can exist in the form of disembodied spirits, and thus the essential differences between true Christianity and Buddhism are minimized:

"Because Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God; being put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; in which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison, that aforetime were disobedient, when the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water: which also after a true likeness doth now save you, even baptism, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the interrogation of a good conscience toward God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (ASV).

"He went"

Firstly, we need to remove any misunderstanding which arises from the phrase "he went". Contemporary Greek literature often used such expressions in a redundant sense. Eph. 2:17 speaks of the Lord Jesus 'coming' and preaching peace to us. But this doesn't mean that He Himself in person came up to us and preached. Indeed, the language of going, coming or moving is often used in relation to the preaching of a person- e.g. Mt. 9:13: "*but go* and learn what that meaneth". The Lord didn't intend that they literally went away somewhere. Likewise Dan. 12:4 and Hab. 2:2 bid those who understand God's word to "run"- not literally, but in response to the word preached. God Himself is spoken of as coming, descending etc. when He 'preaches' to humanity (e.g. Gen. 11:5; Ex. 19:20; Num. 11:25; 2 Sam. 22:10). In Jer. 39:16, the imprisoned Jeremiah is told to "go, tell Ebed-melech..." a word from the Lord about him. Jeremiah couldn't have literally left prison to do so- but the idea is that a person encountering the Lord's word has as it were experienced the Lord 'going'

to him or her. And in this sense the message of the Lord Jesus (in its essence) could 'go' to persons without Him physically going anywhere or even existing consciously at the time.

Preaching In The Spirit

We seek to understand how Christ could preach in his spirit. He was "put to death in the flesh but made alive in [Gk. 'through, on account of'] the spirit". The Lord was raised "according to the spirit of holiness" (Rom. 1:4). Why was Christ resurrected? Because of His sinless life and character, i.e. His "spirit" of a holy life. In this lies the connection between the Father, Son, Holy Spirit and the resurrection of Jesus. He was raised by the Father because of His spirit of holiness, his holy spirit of life. We too will be raised to eternal life on account of our spirit of life which we are now developing: "If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwelleth in you, he that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall give life also to your mortal bodies through his Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Rom. 8:11). This passage shows that the spirit of Christ is the same spirit that is to dwell in us. This doesn't mean we are disembodied spirits, but rather that our way / spirit of life must be that of Jesus. 1 Pet. 4:1 makes the same point- we are to arm ourselves with the same mind / spirit that was in Christ as He suffered on the cross. If our Spirit and that of Christ coincide and are one, then we have the witness that we are truly God's children (Rom. 8:16). It was through *this* same spirit that Christ witnessed to imprisoned humanity, especially at the time of Noah, as Peter shows. The spirit of Christ was in all the prophets, and this was the essence of their witness. "The testimony [preaching] of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" in the sense that the preaching of the prophets was in essence the preaching of Jesus insofar as they had His Spirit in their message.

There is an undoubted theme throughout 1 Peter 3 and 4 of the opposition between the "flesh" (that which is external, the appearance of things) and the "spirit", that which is internal, which is of God.

Being dead to sins	Should live unto righteousness (1 Pet. 2:24)
Not the outward adorning	But the hidden man…a quiet spirit (1 Pet. 3:3,4)
Put to death in the flesh	But quickened by the spirit (1 Pet. 3:18)
Baptism is not a washing of the flesh	But the answer of a good conscience / spirit (1 Pet. 3:21)
Don't live in the flesh	But to the will of God (1 Pet. 4:2)
Judged by men in the flesh [outwardly]	Live to God in the spirit (1 Pet. 4:6)

The spirit by which Jesus was quickened is thus paralleled with our spirit of living to God, a quiet spirit, a life of righteousness, of good conscience etc. His Spirit is to be our spirit- we are to be of the "same mind / spirit" with Him, sharing the mind which He had especially during His time of dying (1 Pet. 4:1). And this is exactly the point of Phil. 2:5: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" at the time of His death. Notice that the Spirit of Jesus is epitomized by the mindset which He displayed during His death. It is this very mind / spirit which is to be in us. It is therefore in this sense that *through His death* the Lord Jesus preached 'in spirit' to those whom He had never met.

In this sense, it was the spiritually minded lifestyle of Noah which was his witness to the world of his day. Peter says in 1 Pet. 3:19 that Christ through His Spirit preached to the

people of Noah's day. In 2 Pet. 2:5 he says that Noah was a preacher of, or [Gk.] 'by' righteousness to the people around him. Yet in 1 Pet. 3:19 Peter says that Christ preached to those same people through His Spirit. The resolution surely is that although Noah had never met the Lord Jesus, he lived according to the same Godly spirit as did Jesus; and this was his witness to his world. There is ultimately only one Spirit (Eph. 4:4). The same spirit of holiness which was in Jesus was likewise thus in Noah. "The Spirit", the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ are all equated in Rom. 8:9.

"The spirits in prison"

Biblically, a man or woman is identified with their spirit in the sense of their mind or way of life. Heb. 12:23 speaks of the spirits of just men, with whom the believer ought to associate. This means that we ought to identify ourselves with the way of life, the spirit of life, of "just men" of the past. God is "the God of the spirits of all flesh" (Num. 16:22; 27:16) in the sense that He is the God of all humanity. So "spirits in prison" can refer to people who, in their spiritual lives, are imprisoned. Immediately the mind goes to Is. 42:2,7, which in speaking of the preaching of Jesus, prophecies that He would release the spiritually imprisoned- not so much by direct didactic teaching, but by the spirit of His personality and example. So the "prison" is simply the prison of the human mind, which the mental example of Jesus can open up.

We obviously ask *why* ordinary people should be described in this passage as "spirits". The context is speaking of the witness of Jesus to people through His Spirit or way of life as manifested in His people. The *spirit* within His people appeals to the imprisoned *spirit* or heart / mind of their audience. We appeal to the *heart*, the spirit, by our witness- not merely to the intellect. The spirit of Christ within us appeals to the imprisoned spirit within others.

The "spirits in prison" were once ["aforetime"] disobedient (1 Pet. 3:20). The same two Greek words translated "aforetime" and "disobedient" occur in Rom. 11:30 about all of us, who "in times past [s.w. "aforetime"] have not believed [s.w. "disobedient"]. This is surely one of the many times when Peter's phrasing is so similar to Paul's that he is surely alluding to him; and thus Peter is making the point that although the witness of the spirit of Christ was, in his context, specifically to Noah's generation, it is also the witness which we all receive from those with the spirit of Christ at any time. Peter has just spoken of how disobedient [s.w.] people are converted by the witness of a spiritual, Christ-centred way of life (1 Pet. 3:1). Peter is writing against a background of "the last days", of which Noah's generation is a clear type. Just as they were witnessed to by the spirit of Christ in Noah, so will the generation of the last days have a like witness. God's patience "waited" in Noah's time; the Greek implies to wait *for* something. It is also translated "expect". God was waiting for and expecting a response from Noah's witness; and in this we see the essential hopefulness of God. He hoped against hope for response; and none came. The Spirit of Christ and of God has always been His witness to all generations. The question arises as to why Peter chose to especially focus upon the example of Noah out of all the generations. Perhaps this was because Noah's generation is a type of the last days, in which Peter believed he was living. And therefore this entire study has a great relevance to our day; for the crucial witness of the last days is through the spirit of Christ in us witnessing to an increasingly self-imprisoned world.

6.4. Conclusion: What Buddhism Lacks

Buddhism lacks the power to transform. The purpose of Jesus Christ and the doctrines about Him which are found in the Bible was to radically transform human life in practice. There is a real basis for authority in Christianity- the Bible. Buddhism lacks this. All you can do is to read the Bible for yourself. Pray to the one true God for guidance, that He will bring you closer to Himself. Consider the real possibility that you could be baptised into the death and resurrection of the Son of God, Jesus Christ. I urge you to give yourself no rest about these matters. Apply to us for free literature and a free Bible study manual, which will enable you to systematically study the Bible in your own home at your own place. May God bless you.

7.1 The Question Of Authority In Hinduism

Here, I submit, lies the fundamental problem for Hinduism. It has been written of the Vedas, the most authoritative Hindu Scriptures: "No historical records can give us the certainty to know the ancient authors and the dates of their works…Veda means wit or wisdom. It was a "Book of knowledge" or the divine unwritten wisdom, because it was transmitted, not by writing, but by oral repetition through a succession of teachers who claimed to have received the divine wisdom and were thence called Brahmans" (Lit-Sen Chang, *Asia's Religions* , Vancouver: Horizon, 1999 p. 181). It would seem that these 'Scriptures' are merely the traditions of men. By contrast, the Bible was written down and carefully transmitted by copying. Amazingly, the manuscripts recently discovered (especially the Dead Sea scrolls) reveal that there has been no essential change to them over millennia of copying. This is to me nothing short of a miracle, and a proof that God has preserved His word- the Bible. There are at least 24,000 ancient New Testament manuscripts available for analysis - far more than for the Hindu scriptures. The next most well supported book, Homer's *Iliad*, has only 643. And there are original fragments of John dating back to 120 AD, and of Matthew to 65 AD- i.e., almost at the time they were originally written . The few variant readings do not affect in any way the sense of the text; and none of the variant readings contradicts anything written elsewhere in the New Testament.

The Brahmans wrote their own *Brahmanas* some centuries after the Vedas were written. These changed the Vedas' demand for blood sacrifice by teaching that horses, cows and other gifts could compensate for actual animal sacrifice; and they clearly used their writings to get power over the people, and to their own economic benefit. The corruption of the Brahmans, whom Hinduism accepts as inspired messengers from God, lead to the production of the Upanishads- which criticize the Brahmans for being corrupt and claiming things as Scripture which were merely written for their own personal benefit. Thus within the documents accepted as 'Hindu scriptures' there are amazing inconsistencies, with some Scriptures claiming that others are not valid. Personal prejudices of the writers continually come out in the writings. Thus the Bhagavad-Gita, written after the time of Jesus, claims that Krishna was the incarnation of Vishnu in the East whilst Jesus was the incarnation of Vishnu in the West, but the "Eastern Christ is superior to the Western Christ". This text has often been used by Hindus to criticize Western colonialization of India and its effects. But Christianity is of Asian / Middle Eastern origin, in that Jesus was Jewish as were the founders of Christianity. It wasn't 'Western' in that sense. Hindu Prime Minister Nehru even claimed that Christianity would impede India's progress. Hindu nationalists have often claimed that Indians are all born Hindus- using their theology of karma and inevitable predestination to bully and shame their countrymen into accepting their religion.

If a Hindu asks *why* he or she believes as they do, the answer can only really be 'Because I accepted the traditions of my fathers'. The issue of truth doesn't come into it- for there is

nowhere to appeal to for ultimate Truth. Jesus said that His word was Truth (Jn. 17:17), that "the truth" makes us free (Jn. 8:32), that we will be guided into all truth (Jn. 16:13); because "I am the truth" (Jn. 14:6). And the Bible itself boldly claims on every page to be the words of the one true God. By contrast, the Hindu writings appear nothing more than the recollections of various philosophers, passed on with varying degrees of accuracy, and added to over time according to the whim and local needs of the various priests who produced them. Because it has no real concept of truth, Hinduism is very syncretistic, allowing for truth in every religion. It includes even Buddha among the true manifestations of God [i.e. the *avatars*], despite the fact that Buddha rejected the basic tenets of Hinduism. On the other hand, Christianity is very exclusive, insisting as Jesus did that He was *the* way to God- not just "a" way. You can surely appreciate why this was, and why it is- for the Bible, epitomized as it was and is in the person of Jesus, claims to be the ultimate Truth.

The Scriptures are not given any real weight in defining a person's knowledge and relationship with God:

"The knowledge which is gained from inference and the study of scriptures is knowledge of one kind. But the knowledge which is gained from samadhi is of a much higher order. It goes beyond inferences and scriptures"

Patanjali I:49

Meditation and looking inwards for enlightenment supposes that we humans do in fact have light within. But there is no actual evidence for this. Biblical Christianity achieves a remarkable thing: Whilst explaining our own need to look outside of ourselves to God and His word the Bible and His Son Jesus for true light, we are also taught not to despise ourselves. For the Bible repeatedly teaches the value of the human conscience within our relationship with God.

People who attempt meditation and other spiritual disciplines experience varying degrees of progress and success, and all seem to come to slightly different conclusions. This is surely because whatever 'light within' which they access is in fact the subconscious reflection of what they have already heard or been taught by others. And if it is different for each person, then there is no such thing as truth. We end up saying that our feelings are the ultimate truth, that we are in fact God. And this is where Hinduism leads people, through its idea that we seek for God within ourselves. Yet the awesome reality is that out there, above the steely brightness of the night sky, there is ultimately Heaven itself, and God Himself located there. And He is reaching out to each of us, earnestly wishing us to consider and *believe* His self-revelation as it is contained in His word the Bible, and seen lived out in flesh in the person of His dear Son, the Lord Jesus.

The huge numbers of Hindu scriptures means that Hinduism is very hard to define- and it is therefore hard to believe, if not impossible. This contrasts with the way the New Testament speaks of a definite "form of teaching" which was to be believed before baptism, and how those who were converted gave a brief confession of their faith in Jesus before their baptisms. The way the records speak of "*the* faith" and "the one faith" enables us to infer that there was a body of Christian doctrine that made up "the faith". This simply cannot exist in Hinduism- which means that people are Hindus because that is how they were born, but for no other reason. Because there is no real authority and no sense of Truth, there is therefore tremendous

contradiction within the Hindu Scriptures and their interpreters. I want to give the well known examples:

Teachings about caste

Teaching about widows

Teaching about the personality of God

7.1.1 Hindu Teachings About Caste

The classic issue is that of caste. Some claim caste is purely hereditary, whereas others suggest it is a result of human behaviour. The Laws of Manu insist that the lowest castes, the untouchables, have no right to read the Vedas [Scriptures]. This to me is just as bad as the Roman Catholic church forbidding its members to read the Bible in earlier times, or insisting it be produced only in Latin so that common people couldn't read it. We will see time and again that Hinduism shares many features in common with other misguided 'religions'. Yet other Hindu writings seem to suggest that the untouchables *can* read them and thereby rise above their caste. Again, the vexed question of mobility between castes has sorely vexed Indian society- because there are contradictory statements about it in the Hindu Scriptures.

This passage from the Laws of Manu gives the punishments of those who stray from the duties of each of the four castes: priest, ruler (or warrior), commoner, and servant.

"But those classes who slip away from their own innate activities when they are not in extremity pass through evil transmigrations and then become the menial servants of aliens. A priest who has slipped from his own duty becomes a " comet-mouth" ghost who eats vomit; a ruler becomes a " false-stinking" ghost who eats impure things and corpses. A commoner who has slipped from his duty becomes a ghost " who sees by an eye in his anus" , eating pus; a servant becomes a " moth-eater" ghost".

— The Laws of Manu, 12:70-72.

As we shall comment later, the meaning and value of persons is utterly debased by this kind of theology. Threats are held over poor people to insist that they remain in poverty; they are shamed into remaining within their social and low spiritual position by the most awesome threats. It's akin to the way the Catholic church devised and uses the threat of a fiery, eternal hell fire of punishment to shame and scare their simpler members into blind, unquestioning loyalty. In passing, we note that the Bible speaks of "hell" as merely the grave; the punishment for sin is the eternal unconsciousness of death, not eternal torture. A God of love would never entertain such a human, revenge-based notion. Yet more progressive Hindu priests have seen the debilitating effect of the caste system on Indian society, and have insisted that Hinduism ought to elevate people rather than tie them into the caste system. Mahatma Gandhi, the most famous Hindu, was of this persuasion.

7.1.2 Hindu Teaching About Widows

Many passages in the Hindu Scriptures teach that a widow must never remarry, on pain of the most awful punishments:

“A virtuous wife should never do anything displeasing to the husband who took her hand in marriage, when he is alive or dead, if she longs for her husband's world (after death) . . . She should be long-suffering until death, self-restrained, and chaste, striving (to fulfil) the unsurpassed duty of women who have one husband . . . But a woman who violates her (vow to her dead) husband because she is greedy for progeny is the object of reproach here on earth and loses the world beyond”.

The Laws of Manu, 5:156,158,161

So unfortunate was the fate of widows considered to be that we find the following cited as a benefit of chanting the Guru Gita:

“It averts women's widowhood... If a widow repeats it without desire, she attains salvation. (If she repeats it) with desire, she will not become a widow in her next lifetime”.

(Guru Gita, v. 145-147).

In passing, note the Hindu attitude to Scripture. It is to be chanted, not deeply thought about as a source of truth. In essence the same mistake is made by many rank and file Roman Catholics and Orthodox Christians, who treat the book called the Bible as some kind of icon or talisman- instead of opening it and reading for themselves daily the words of the living, loving God who so desperately seeks a two way, direct relationship with them.

And yet there are other Hindu Scriptures which more than imply that a widow *can* remarry.

The following verse is cited by P. V. Kane, in his *History of Dharmashastra*:

“Another man is ordained for women in five calamities: a) When the husband is missing and is unheard of; b) The husband dies; c) When the husband is impotent; d) When the husband has become an ascetic; e) The husband has become depraved”.

—Agnipurana 154.5-5; Parashara Smriti IV.30; and Narada Smriti V.97.

Atharva Veda IX.5.27-29 includes a verse that translates as

“Whatever woman, having first married one husband, marries another, she and the other new husband will not be separated if they offer a goat and five rice dishes illumined with religious fees”. J

Further, the remarriage of widows is advocated in the Vashista Dharmasutra of the Rigvedins.

These issues impact the most personal and intimate aspects of human life. And yet the Hindu Scriptures are totally contradictory in these areas. Is it really right that human life experience is played around with in this way, all for the sake of baseless traditions?

The Poorva Meemamsa rules for the interpretation of scripture clearly state that if two smritis clash, the two conflicting viewpoints indicate alternative practices, both being equally valid. Even according to this rule, widow remarriage is offered as an alternative to the lifelong celibacy of widows in the Smritis. This acknowledgment that the Hindu Scriptures can

contradict each other indicates that there really is no basis of authority in Hinduism. It all depends on the teaching of those who interpret those Scriptures. The individual has no direct access to the teaching of God Almighty. Yet the Christian can read their Bible and find for themselves the way to God.

7.1.3 Hindu Teaching About God

If we look at the history of Hinduism, the early period stressed the vision of God as personal. The 33 Vedic devas, led by Indra, the King of Heaven, are all personal in nature. It was not until later that the idea of a supreme transpersonal cosmic spiritual reality was celebrated in the Upanishads [later Hindu Scriptures]. A well-known Hindu group that stresses God as personal is ISKCON, the International Society of Krishna Consciousness, popularly known as "Hare Krishna."

The six different 'insights' [*Sad dasanas*] of Hinduism into God are mutually contradictory. Vedanta is pantheistic [teaching many nature gods]; Mimamsa says God has no authority and the Vedas [Scriptures] are not divine revelation; and Vaisheshika claims that matter formed from the difference between atoms, not God or His creation.

If there is such fundamental contradiction within the Hindu writings about who God is, then we are left with a most searching question: If 'religion' is essentially about the 'rebinding' [as the word means] of God with mankind, how valid can Hinduism be, if it is self-admittedly confused about the most elemental issues relating to God Himself?

7.1.4 Problems In The Hindu Scriptures

The belief in reincarnation is based on trust in others who are thought to have superior access to spiritual knowledge- not on personal reading of God's word, as occurs in true Christianity. The question becomes one of: Why should I trust the assertions made by these gurus?

Any seeker for truth would surely agree that consistency is something which we would look for in analysing the gurus' claims. And yet as we have shown above, there is a great inconsistency within the Hindu Scriptures themselves, let alone in the views of the gurus who interpret them.

There are also evident factual errors in the Hindu Scriptures. Incredibly the Bible contains no such scientific errors despite being written over a period when wrong understandings of the physical world abounded. And there is concrete evidence from the Dead Sea Scrolls and the discovery of early Greek texts of the New Testament that the Bible text has not been tampered with in the light of later scientific discoveries. Consider the following observations from another writer:

Geography

The Puranic description of the geography of Earth is full of fabulous elements. For example,

"Earth, composed of seven continents, together with the oceans extends 500,000,000 leagues across. Holy Jambudvipa lies in the middle of all the continents; in its centre is said to be lofty Mt. Meru, bright as gold. Its height is 84,000 leagues, and it extends 16,000 leagues

below the earth; its width at the top is 32,000 leagues, and its diameter at the base is 16,000 leagues".

Kurma Purana, in Classical Hindu Mythology, p. 52.

In this quote, " league" is presumably a translation of a Sanskrit term at least loosely approximating the usual English meaning of " league" (about three miles). At this rate, Mt. Meru is something like 252,000 miles high. The tallest actual mountain on Earth is Mt. Everest, at about 29,000 ft, or less than six miles.

In the next quote we see that the impossibly high Mt. Meru is held to be the source of really existing rivers in India such as the Sita:

"Ganga, the heavenly river flowing from the feet of Visnu and inundating the orb of the moon, falls all around the city of Brahma. Falling on the four regions, O twice-born ones, she subdivides into four rivers, namely Sita, Alakananda, Sucaksus and Bhadra. The river Sita flows from the atmosphere east of Mt. Meru and then through the eastern range called Bhadrasva to the sea. And each of the others does likewise: Alakananda to the South enters Bharatavarsa; Sucaksus to the West falls on Ketumala, and Bhadra to the North falls through Uttarakuru..."

Kurma Purana, in *Classical Hindu Mythology*, p. 54

The scripture then describes nine different subcontinents, of which one (Bharatavarsa) includes or is the same as India. Eight of the subcontinents are populated by people who live paradisial lives.

Astronomy

"Bhurloka, Bhuvarloka, Svarloka, Maharloka, Janaloka, Taparloka and Satyaloka are the worlds thought to have their origin in the egg. In the old stories Bhurloka is said to stretch out as far as sun and moon radiate their beams of light, O bulls of the twice-born. As far as Bhurloka extends in width and circumference, so does Bhuvarloka spread out from the sphere of the sun, from which sphere the firmament extends upward as far as Dhruva is located. This region is called Svarloka... The sphere of the sun lies 100,000 leagues from earth. The orb of the moon is also said to be 100,000 leagues from the sun. The whole circle of naksatras appears the same distance from the moon. Twice this distance beyond the naksatras, O wise ones, is the planet Budha (Mercury), and Usanas (Venus) dwells the same distance from Budha. Angaraka (Mars) too is the same distance from Sukra (Venus). The priest of the gods (Brhaspati/Jupiter) resides 200,000 leagues from Bhauma (Mars), while Sauri (Saturn) is the same distance from the guru (Jupiter). This is the sphere of the planets. The sphere of the Seven Seers shines 100,000 leagues' distance from that. Dhruva dwells the same number of leagues above the sphere of the seers. Dhruva is the central point of this entire wheel of luminaries in which resides the lord Dharma, Visnu Narayana".

Kurma Purana, in *Classical Hindu Mythology*, pp. 46-47.

The notion that the distance from the earth to the sun is the same as the distance from the sun to the moon. Actually, the distance between earth and sun is vastly greater than the distance from the sun to the moon.

The stars in the naksatras (lunar constellations) are said to be closer to us than are several of the planets; but actually, all stars are vastly more distant from us than all planets. The listed distances between the planets are neither accurate nor even proportional to their actual distances. The stars in the Little Dipper are said to be proportionally only slightly further from us than Saturn, whereas actually they are vastly more distant.

In addition to the inaccuracies, there is the strange omission of all mention of the outer planets (Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto). This omission is easy to understand if you suppose the Hindu astronomy was based on naked-eye observations; much more difficult if you suppose that such knowledge come from the infallible psychic insight of great rishis".

7. 2 God

7.2.1 "The Absolute" In Hinduism

Hinduism has many deities, ranging from 1,000 to 33 million gods, all somehow related to the "Absolute". The Bible teaches there is only one God. The trinity is an idea not taught in the Bible, although accepted by many misguided Christians. Indeed, the idea of a triune God is essentially paganic. Hindus believe in a 'Trimurti', where there are three gods: Brahma, Vishnu and Siva. Yet the Bible by contrast insists that there is only *one* God, God the Father. The practical implications of this are fundamental.

Implications Of There Being One God

If there is only one God, He therefore demands our all. Because He is the One God, He demands all our worship; and because He is One, He therefore treats all His people the same, regardless, e.g., of their nationality (Rom. 3:30). All true worshippers of the one God, whether Jew or Gentile, are united in that the one God offers salvation to them on the same basis. The fact there is only one Lord Jesus implies the same for Him (Rom. 10:12). Paul saw these implications in the doctrine of the unity of God. But that doctrine needs reflecting on before we come to grasp these conclusions. Christ taught that the command that God was one and therefore we must love God included the second command: to love our neighbour as ourselves. The first and second commands were in fact one command; they were inseparably part of the first commandment (Mk. 12:29-31). This is why the 'two' commandments, to love God and neighbour, are spoken of in the singular in Lk. 10:27,28: "this do…". If God is one, then our brother bears the one Name of God, and so to love God is to love our brother (cp. 1 Jn. 4:21). And because there is only one God, this demands all our spiritual energy. There is only one, the one God, who seeks glory for men and judges them (Jn. 8:50)- therefore the unity of God should mean we do not seek glory of men, neither do we judge our brother.

That God is one is a command, an imperative to action (Mk. 12:28,29). It underlies the whole law and prophets (Mt. 22:40)- it's that fundamental. If there were two Gods, Yahweh would only demand half our energies. Nothing can be given to anything else; for there is nothing else to give to. There's only one God. There can be no idolatry in our lives, because there is only one God (2 Kings 19:18,19). Because "there is none else, thou shalt keep therefore his statutes" (Dt. 4:39,40). The Hebrew text of Dt. 6:4 suggests: "The Lord is our God, the Lord is one", thereby linking Yahweh's unity with His being our God, the sole Lord and unrivalled Master of His people. It also links the first principle of the unity of God with that of the covenant to Abraham; for "I will be their God" was one of the features of the covenant. The

one God has only one people; not all religious systems can lead to the one Hope of Israel. " The absolute" of Hinduism cannot be divided into parts.

Consider the context of Dt. 6:4. Moses has set the people up to expect him to deliver them a long list of detailed commands; he has told them that God told him to declare unto them “all the commandments…that they may do them…ye shall observe to do therefore as the Lord your God hath commanded you…ye shall walk in all the ways which the Lord your God hath commanded you…now these are the commandments…that ye might do them…hear therefore O Israel and observe to do it [singular]…”. Now we expect him to reel off a long list of commands. But Moses mirrors that last phrase with simply: “Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one” (Dt. 5:31-6:4). And in this context he gives no other commandments. “Observe to do it “ is matched with “The Lord our God is one”. This is the quintessence of all the commands of God. And he goes straight on to say: “And these words…shall be in thine heart” and they were to talk of them to their children in the house and by the way, bind them upon their hands and on the posts of their homes. Some Jewish traditions, perhaps correctly, place the shema, “Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one” in their phylacteries. And this is indeed the context. It was the unity of God and the imperative from it to love Him with all the heart which is what was to be programmatic for their daily living. This is why it was Jewish practice to recite the shema several times a day, and also on their deathbed. Dt. 6:1 RV reads: “Now this is the commandment [singular], the statutes and the judgments…the Lord our God is one”. And then they are told to write the statutes on their door posts etc. It would have been hard to literally write all 613 of them there. Yet the whole way of life for Israel was epitomized in the single command…that God is one. It was and is a command; not a mere statement.

No Idolatry

There is a religious impulse within all men, a desire to serve someone or something. " The absolute" of Hinduism doesn't stop idolatry. Generally, men and women sink this in the worship of the many idols of this materialistic age. But for us, there is to be one God, one channel alone for our devotion. When Israel rejected the fountain of Yahweh, they hewed out many other fountains, in the form of idols (Jer. 2:13). The urge to worship is there within all men and women. We are asked to concentrate and consecrate that passion solely for the one God- not to share it between the many things that demand it. Romans 1 goes so far as to condemn men because they worshipped the created things besides (Gk.) the creator. All their adoration should have gone to the one God Himself. And there will come a day when all the world realizes that God is one (Is. 37:20 Heb.)- in that they will realize that He alone is God and all else is pure vanity. Because He alone is holy, only He will be worshipped then (Rev. 15:4). “The Lord alone shall be exalted in that day” (Is. 2:11,17).

We are just as much at risk from idolatry as were Israel, and as our Hindus today. Our worlds, our lives and hearts, are full of potential idols. And what, in the most fundamental essence, is wrong with idolatry? It seems to me that idolatry trivializes this wonderful God of whom we have spoken. It makes the Almighty Jehovah of Israel into a piece of wood or stone, or into a smart career or new house. And so anything that reduces the majesty, the surprise, the passion, the vitality in our relationship with God is an idol. Time and again in our lives, God is edged out by petty distractions- a car that needs repair, a leaking gutter, a broken window. One could almost weep for the frequency and the way in which all this occurs, so tragically often.

Even under the Law, "Ye shall have one manner of law, as well for the stranger as for one of your own country: for I am Yahweh your God" (Lev. 24:22). The inclusiveness of Yahweh of His people, the nature of who His Name reveals Him to be, should of itself have led Israel to not discriminate against other races. Because Yahweh is who He is, therefore we must be like Him; His very existence and being demands it of us (Lev. 20:7 cp. 19:2, 10). If we really know the characteristics implicit in His Name, we will put our trust in Him (Ps. 9:10; 124:8). If we see / know God in the experiential sense, we will do no evil (3 Jn. 11). To have the true knowledge of Jesus Christ means we will not be barren [Gk. 'idle'] nor unfruitful (2 Pet. 1:8). When Zacharias wanted to have grounds for faith, he was simply told: "I am Gabriel...", the man like God (Lk. 1:19). The declaration of God's Name in Ex. 34:6,7 doesn't include statements like 'Trust in God! He'll help you!'. Instead we read of the grace, mercy, justice and inevitable judgment of God. Knowing and experiencing these more abstract things will lead us to a practical faith in God. Because David remembered God's Name, therefore He kept His law (Ps. 119:55 RSV). This is why the Bible uses the idea of 'knowing' God in the sense of knowing Him by experience, not just 'knowing' the right theory. Likewise John uses 'the truth' in the sense of not just correct knowledge but the way of life it brings forth. All this sharply contrasts with the way Hinduism claims it is impossible to 'know' God.

Other Implications

The idea of truth is often linked with the fact there is only one God (Is. 45:5,6,14,18,21,22). Hindus believe there is no such thing as truth, partly because they fail to worship the one true God. This means that all He says is the total Truth; for there is no other God. Thus one God has given us only one faith, hope etc (Eph. 4:4-6). Other belief systems can't be acceptable with us. We deny Hinduism's attitude that all religions have some truth in them. And it also follows that as James points out, faction amongst true believers is a lie against "the Truth". Such was the crucial importance of the unity of God; and likewise it should influence our lives, hourly. It is thereby so so evident that those who do not believe in one God are far from God not only in their intellectual understanding but also in their living.

David had to remind himself: "My soul, wait thou only upon God [one-ly upon the one God]; for my expectation is from him [i.e. Him alone]" (Ps. 62:5). There is only one God, one source of help and power- and thus the unity of God inspires our faith in Him. This motivated Asa to cry unto Yahweh in faith: "LORD, there is none beside thee to help…help us , O LORD…for we rely on thee, and in thy name" (2 Chron. 14:11 RV). Summing up, James 2:14-18 speaks of the connection between faith (believing) and works (doing). It is no co-incidence that 2:19 then says in this context: "Thou believest that God is one; thou doest well" (RV). To have faith in the unity of God will lead to works, 'doing well'.

7.2.2 The Personality Of God And Hinduism

The Bible very clearly teaches that God is a personal being. We have outlined this in some detail in *Bible Basics* chapter 1. His ways are morally very far above ours. And yet we are made physically in His image. We seek to adopt His moral image, displayed as it was in its glorious fullness in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ. When Jesus returns, our bodies will be changed into a body and nature similar to that of God Himself. Thus His plan to manifest Himself in His many children will be complete. His memorial Name, Yahweh Elohim- He who will be [revealed in] many, speaks eloquently of this, His essential intention.

Yet the average Hindu considers that God is impersonal, because any other view of Him is too limiting. This has stopped them perceiving the wonder of the fact that God is personally righteous, and above all that "God is love", and that God so loved this world that He gave His only begotten Son (Jn. 3:16). The true Christian response is that it is wrong to consider "personhood" a limitation on God. This contention is based on the more general premise that it is a misconception to consider any attribute when applied to God as a limitation. No right-thinking person should deny that God in His essence is beyond human conception and language. Of course, He is; God is infinite. But that realization does not make God property-less. It means that whatever properties God has, He has in an unlimited capacity.

The Hindu devaluing of God's personality has lead them to devalue human personality, as we will comment later. To be a person means to have greater dignity than to be person-less. There is a particular trait that is perhaps the most powerful expression of personhood, namely the willingness to forego one's own advantage for the sake of someone else. When someone sacrifices his own wealth, health, or even his life, we see that he has reached the highest level of what it means to be a real person, distinguishing himself categorically from the lower orders of being. It is therefore in the person and self-sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, that we see full and ultimate, real, personhood.

7.2.3 Vishnu And Incarnation

The Vaishnava branch of Hinduism teaches that it is the incarnation of God [Vishnu] in earthly things that enables some sort of human 'salvation'. However, the Hindu writings are confused as to how many times and in what forms God [Vishnu] has had a manifestation [avatar]. The Garuda Purana lists 19 avatars of Vishnu, while the Bhagavata Purana lists 22 in one place and 23 in another. Clearly the Hindu writings as a whole cannot be the source of truth when they are so unreliable and mutually contradictory. If there is no real basis of authority, then one has to conclude as many Hindus do- that one is a Hindu merely because they were born one. There is no concept of being converted to true religion, because religion is merely cultural, something inherited and into which one is born.

The avatar of God [Vishnu] in the fish [one of the defined avatars] is an example of how bizarre are the explanations behind the concept: "The Vedas were stolen from Brahma by a demon, so the gods sent a flood on the earth to drown him and thus recover the holy scriptures. Vishnu took the form of a fish, predicted the coming deluge to the saint Manu and saved him together with his family by leading his ship to safety". Brahma doesn't sound like the Almighty God of the Bible if he can have books stolen from him. The whole story sounds like mere fairytale, just as do the other supposed avatars of God.

There are many contradictory aspects of the Hindu avatars / theories of God's incarnation on earth. For example, in the Parasurama and Ramachandra avatars, two incarnations of the same god wrestle with one another. Yet each avatar is supposedly under divine control.

According to the Bible, the one, personal God was manifested in His Son. This was His ultimate avatar. Jesus was not God Himself, as many Christians wrongly teach. He was prophesied in the early chapters of the Bible as the descendant of Eve, and also that of men like Abraham and David. He therefore didn't exist as a person before His birth [even though many Christians mistakenly think He did]. He was conceived in the womb of Mary, and *therefore and thereby* He became the Son of God. His mother was an ordinary woman, who had other children apart from Jesus. She had to be an ordinary woman, to fulfil the promises

that Jesus would be the descendant of men like Abraham and David. Yet He had no human father- God was His father, in that He made Mary pregnant.

All this means that we see what God would have been like, were He a human being. Jesus could say that in understanding Him, we understand His Father. So there was a practical and moral implication behind Jesus being God manifested in flesh. It saved us in that Jesus gave us a real, concrete example of how to live and be as the ideal, perfect human. But more than this, Jesus was our representative- He was one of us, and yet also the Son of God. And this is why He can gain forgiveness for us. His death and resurrection was therefore representative of that of each of us who chose to identify with Him. We do this by baptism, by dipping under water, into His death and resurrection. We sin, and therefore die. But Jesus, although like us and tempted like us, never sinned. Therefore He rose from the dead and was given eternal life. By baptism into Him, accepting Him as our representative, identifying ourselves with Him, we can have the same eternal life which He now has. You can see, surely, the difference in the type of avatar / manifestation which God achieved in Jesus, compared to the folklore stories of how God became manifested in a fish etc.

Due to considering the physical body a mere garment that is put on and off (according to Bhagavad Gita 2,22), there cannot be any real association of God with a physical body. Christ came to redeem the physical body as well, therefore His association with it was real. For the same reason there is so much accent laid on His physical resurrection, which for a Hindu would be completely absurd. True Christians therefore have a real, bodily hope. We will live again, because He literally died and lived again. The Hindu has no concrete hope as he attends the funeral of his loved one. For the Christian who has been baptized and lived in Christ, there is every reason to believe that the body which now dies and decomposes will be literally resurrected / recomposed at the return of Jesus. This was and is the wonder of the resurrection of Jesus, who is the “firstfruits from the dead”, the one who has gone before us. The Jesus who went into the grave was essentially the same Jesus who came out. No wonder His friends held Him by the feet and handled Him in such wonder and joy.

7.3 The Meaning Of Persons And Hinduism

The Hindu view of humanity seems to me to devalue the human person. By contrast the Biblical record of the one God and the attitude of His Son Jesus shows a tremendous value placed on the importance of the individual. Our bodies are not in themselves wicked- our body can be the temple of the Spirit of God (1 Cor. 6:19), and they are made in God’s image. The Son of God Himself had a normal body like we do. And we are promised “the redemption of the body” through being given a body like that which Jesus now has (1 Cor. 15:52,53; Phil. 3:20,21). Our passions, failures, strengths and personalities are all used by an all wise Father in His plan to develop each of His children to manifest Him eternally. By contrast the Hindu Scriptures claim:

“The gods consider him a Brahmana (a knower of Brahman) who has no desires, who undertakes no work, who does not salute or praise anybody, whose work has been exhausted by who himself is unchanged”.
— Mahabharata, XII.269.34

True Christianity places a remarkable value on the worth of the individual person. If we perceive this, we will not consider anyone as merely an " ordinary" person. There is no such thing, no such person. In my own search for a partner, and probably in yours too, I have

observed the sense that it has to be someone *special*, not just one of the crowd, someone *different* from all those normal ones. This attitude has some wrong implications. If we perceive the *meaning* of persons, their *value*, we won't consider those near and dear to us as somehow unique when compared to the mass of others. Everyone is special, nobody is like anyone else. This is how God sees His children, and we should reflect this perspective. It is this which will make us arrestingly different from the people with whom we daily walk.

The Lord's parables all feature an element of unreality, which flags attention to His essential point. The shepherd who left the 99 and went after the lost one was an unusual shepherd. Common sense tells us that one should think of the good of the majority, not max out on the minority. We invest effort and resources in ways which will benefit the maximum number of people. But the Lord turned all that on its head. The Christ-like heart cannot disregard the minority, however small or stupid or irritating it or they may be. For people matter, and the heart of Christ will bleed for every single one.

The goal in Hinduism is to bring the individual person to the realization that indeed he is not a separate being, but rather a partaker of the great Self. So the saying is "Atman (self, soul) is Brahman." The goal of the individual through yoga and spiritual exercise is to realize and know that he is Brahman. This is to me an effective atheism, replacing the one true God by self-ism. And this is what the majority of human beings do, whatever religion they claim to adhere to. All Hinduism has done is to make it intellectually respectable. Hinduism teaches that we should lose ourselves, in that the individual human being should not speak or think of being an individual self. The goal in Hinduism is to attain detachment from self desires and wants, and to become one with the universal Self. In the teaching of Jesus Christ, the concept of "losing self" is very different. Jesus affirms the individual self as a real and true creature. This individual self is never lost or dissipated into some greater Self, but is a created being with definite personal existence. It is "us" who are to be saved by the work of Jesus. We identify personally with His death and resurrection through water baptism, and then we live a life based upon copying and manifesting His character. This is why Jesus could promise that we will "see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of God". Then He will wipe away all tears from our faces. You and me, personally, really can be there in the eternity of God's very real and literal Kingdom which is to come on this earth, with Jerusalem as its capital, and the places that are now barren deserts changed… At judgment day, with the prospect of that Kingdom clearly before everyone who appears there, the Lord will discuss our lives with us, commending the faithful for their good deeds, and criticizing the wicked for their selfishness. This is all something very real and personal.

The concept that Jesus taught of selflessness was to forsake the desires of a real, independent self that are in rebellion to God's ways. Jesus taught that man has lived in sin and separation from God ever since the fall or rebellion of Adam and Eve (the first man and woman God created). To live for the self, according to Jesus, is to live in sin. Jesus said, " If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me" (Luke 9:23). This means to abandon the sinful self desires that are a part of human nature. This means to choose as an individual to live for others and for God. In this sense, the selflessness of Jesus' teaching is the virtue of abandoning the sinful and destructive desires of the sinful self and pursue instead God and the good of your neighbour. The virtue of self-denial according to Jesus then is not merely something abstract, achieved within the meditating mind. It is not an enlightenment or realization of being universal Self. It is the individual, in real, hard human life, choosing to deny his real personal desires and to live instead for what God has said is good.

“This is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the sacrifice for our sins”. Love is an issue of awareness, not a denial of individual self for a great cosmic Self. Love is a sacrificial act, a personal act of laying down one’s life for others, just as Jesus has done for us. True Christianity enables us to live lives that are real, to experience present life as a great and thrilling reality. According to their doctrine of *maya* [illusion], Hinduism seems to consider this life to be an illusion, an annihilation of the human personality. Sin is merely ritual disobedience or infringement of the caste system, not a real, felt, hurtful act against a loving Heavenly Father. Thus Hinduism has lost sight of telling right from wrong in real life. Sin can be got round by paying money to a priest [as, effectively, in Catholic and Orthodox churches]. Yet the offence of sin is against God, and the way to attain forgiveness is only through the sacrifice of His Son and our association with it. Of course, most human beings are the same- they have no real sense of offending God, no sharp sense of right and wrong, seeing everything as an effective illusion, and deciding between good and bad behaviour merely on the basis of expediency. And yet, again, Hinduism has turned this basic human condition into a religion. It offers no real salvation from it. In the real Christ there is ample, real and relevant salvation from sin and all negative effects upon us, from wherever they may come.

7.3.1 Karma In Hinduism

This is the Hindu name for the idea that our actions influence the fate and actions of others in their future lives on earth- as well as affecting who we are, in our future reincarnations. And yet there are many major problems in this view:

The Hindu Scriptures are again contradictory in their teachings about karma. Thus, the Upanisads state that we are not reborn on Earth until our karmas are exhausted in the heavens and hells. Yet other Hindu writings claim that there is some kind of leftover karma to determine our worldly existence.

There is the question of whose karma causes a recompense to occur -my own, or that of the person whose action repays me. This is left unresolved by Hinduism.

Likewise the question of how karmic causes coexist and interact with physical causes.

There is also no meaningful explanation of how the vast complexities of the system are coordinated.

Ideally, a theory should be simpler than the phenomena it seeks to explain. It is not clear that the theory of karma really achieves this goal.

Hindus use the idea of karma to explain how they were born Hindus, and thus don’t need to search for truth nor have any conversion experience. Yet we as mixed up sinners clearly need to repent of our sins, stop looking within our corrupted selves, and look outwards towards the God of love and salvation revealed in the Bible. Sadly some professing Christians make the same essential mistake when they reasons that " God awakened me and made me to believe; I had no choice but to obey" . This is another example of where Hinduism, apostate Christianity and most other religions share the same basic false assumptions.

Karma And Predestination

The Hindu idea of karma is actually very similar to the idea of total predestination which is pushed by some Calvinist Christians. There are many sound Biblical reasons for rejecting this kind of philosophy.

§ It makes a nonsense of the whole concept of obedience to God. We are continually told in the Bible that we must keep God's commands, and by doing so we can give Him pleasure or displeasure. This concept of commandments is meaningless if God is forcing us to be obedient. Christ offers salvation "unto all them that obey him" (Heb. 5:9).

§ Hebrews 11 shows that God's intervention in our lives and ultimate granting of salvation is related to our faith. The many Biblical examples of praying to God for deliverance in time of trouble are meaningless if everything is totally predestined. Likewise the idea of salvation being the result of our faith in Christ is also made meaningless.

§ Baptism is a pre-requisite for salvation (Mk. 16:16; Jn. 3:3- 5). However, salvation was made possible on account of the work of Christ (2 Tim. 1:10), not through the abstract concept of predestination. We must consciously choose to associate ourselves with Him, which we do through baptism. Romans 6:15-17 speaks of us changing masters at baptism, from a life of sin to one of obedience. "To whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are". This language of yielding oneself clearly implies freewill as opposed to unconditional predestination. The yielding is through obeying from the heart the doctrines of the Gospel (Rom. 6:17).

§ There is no point in God speaking forth His word, if we are ultimately predestined anyway. There is also no point in preaching; yet the Bible, both in command and by recording examples of this, shows that it is through the preaching of the word that men and women come to salvation. "The word of...salvation" (Acts 13:26) has to go forth to men.

§ We will be judged according to our works (Rev. 22:12). Why, if our freewill actions are unimportant in relation to salvation? Paul said that the Jews judged themselves to be unworthy of eternal life by their rejection of the word of God (Acts 13:46). They were judging themselves - God was not preventing them. If we say that God is predestinating some people to salvation and others to condemnation, then God is effectively forcing people to be sinners, in the same way as He supposedly forces people to be righteous. Because of Adam's sin, "death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Rom. 5:12). This is why men die, as a punishment for sin (Rom. 6:23), not because God forced them to be sinners at some point in time before Adam's sin.

§ 1 Cor. 10 and many other passages hold up the example of those in the past who once had a relationship with God, but then fell away, as being warnings to believers. The fact that it is possible to 'fall from grace' (Gal. 5:4) means that there cannot be a 'once saved always saved' system of salvation. Only by continuing to hold and live true doctrine can we be saved (1 Tim. 4:16).

§ Jesus clearly taught that understanding God's word is dependent to some degree upon our freewill effort. "Whoso readeth, let him understand" (Mt. 24:15). Thus we let ourselves understand the word - we are not forced to. There is a parallel between this and the oft repeated words of Jesus: "He that hath ears to hear...let him hear", or understand. Having ears to hear therefore equates with reading God's word. Because God's spirit is so supremely manifested through His word to the extent that Jesus could say that His inspired words "are

spirit" (Jn. 6:63), it is impossible that God's spirit would work on a man, apart from His word, in order to force the man to be obedient to the word.

§ "Whosoever will" can "take of the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17), through responding to the word of life found in the Gospel. Here surely is freewill rather than predestination irrespective of our personal desire for salvation. Likewise Acts 2:21: "Whosoever shall call on (himself) the name of the Lord shall be saved" through being baptised into that name.

7. 4 Salvation In Hinduism

Death is real. Many Bible passages stress the unconsciousness of the grave. There is a real pain in the loss of loved ones, which Hinduism seeks to obscure. But death and loss are real and they can be deeply painful; this pain is real and not foolish illusion, as Hinduism bids us think. Death and loss are not to be ignored, and they teach fundamental lessons for mankind. Jesus Christ came not only to provide forgiveness on the cross, but has broken the power of death to those who trust Him, through His resurrection. As we have said, through baptism into His death and resurrection, we have the personal hope of a resurrection like His (Rom. 6:3-5). He could say in sober truth: "Because I live, you will live also". Hinduism claims that the power of sacrifice depends not upon moral fitness but upon the correct ritual of sacrifice. Yet the whole purpose of the death of Jesus was that here was a perfect man, who never sinned, who overcame every aspect of our humanity, who died for us. And we can identify with that sacrifice and be counted as if we too have died to sin, and thus we will share in the inevitable corollary of His perfect sacrifice, i.e. His resurrection to eternal life.

According to the Bible, the first lie was 'You will not really die'. Hinduism and many other false religions, including those who believe in an 'immortal soul' within Christendom, are merely repeating that essential lie.

The Biblical message concerns the establishment of the Kingdom of God on this earth, to be inhabited eternally by those who in this life have accepted His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and lived His life. They will thus share the eternity of that life at His return. This is in sharp contrast to the Hindu idea that "You are the world. When you transform yourself, the world you live in will also be transformed."

"Vaishnava Hinduism states in its major writings, the Puranas, that the god Vishnu causes a cyclic manifestation and dissolution of the world. Each cosmic cycle (mahayuga) has four ages (Krita Yuga – 1,728,000 years, Treta Yuga – 1,296,000 years, Dvapara Yuga – 864,000 years and Kali Yuga – 432,000 years) followed by the dissolution (pralaya) of the physical world. The whole cycle is repeated 994 times, which is a period called kalpa, and then a dissolution (pralaya) of both the physical and subtle world follows. 36,000 kalpas and pralayas make the lifespan of Brahma, the creator god, which is followed by a total dissolution (mahapralaya) of the physical, subtle and causal world. Then all worlds, time and space return into Brahman, and the whole cycle starts again in an endless process of manifestation and dissolution".

All these figures appear to be quite arbitrary. There is no actual evidence that this is true at all. I would argue that Hinduism is merely seeking to make intellectually acceptable the essential nihilism and hopelessness which there is in all those outside of Christ. Churchill admitted: "Our problems are beyond us". Jean-Paul Sartre likewise: "There is no exit from the human dilemma". And Hinduism effectively says the same, wrapped up in religious

terms. The Bible teaches something far more hopeful- that God created this world out of love, in order to give Him pleasure, in order to give His people the highest possible level of joyful existence. Creation was not therefore a mere necessity, due to its cyclical nature. It was a consciously achieved act of love, a decision was made by God and acted upon. The cycle of Hinduism is most depressing- there is no ultimate plan nor progression, and everything comes to nothing in the end. Biblical Christianity offers the wonderful prospect of eternal life in a real, concrete, definable Kingdom to be established on earth. The effort which we put into character development now will be eternally reflected in the persons we will eternally be. This adds a zest and urgency to human life and character development. It's why true Christians read their Bibles daily in order to fervently know the mind of God and to be changed by His Spirit. This is based on the teaching of the Bible, rather than the confused and variant oral traditions of Indian philosophers handed down through human traditions. There is absolutely no evidence of the length of the four ages- if, e.g., a priest somewhere taught that the Kali Yuga age lasts 420,000 years rather than 432,000, who could prove him wrong? The whole thing is so lacking in meaningful doctrine. In the Bible, each doctrine has meaning in practice, and each one connects into other doctrines within the framework of the Christian faith. What practical, logical or moral difference would it make, for example, if the lifespan of Brahma is 6,000 kalpas and not 36,000? Or 360,000? These figures are purely arbitrary.

The Bible promises clearly that this planet will not be destroyed. God is a saviour God, not a destructive, vengeful being. He has a purpose which He will execute and towards which all things are related and purposeful. Consider these Bible verses:

"The earth which he hath established for ever" (Ps. 78:69).

"The earth abideth for ever" (Ecc. 1:4).

"Sun and moon...stars...heavens...he hath also established them for ever and ever: he hath made a decree which shall not pass" (Ps. 148:3-6).

"The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea" (Is. 11:9; Num. 14:21) - difficult, if God lets the earth destroy itself. This promise has not yet been fulfilled.

"God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it; he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited" (Is. 45:18). If God made earth only to see it destroyed, then His work was in vain. And yet the Hindu view of endless cyclical destruction implies that everything *was* created in vain. One can't believe both the Bible and the Hindu writings.

Right back in Genesis God had promised all this to Noah. As he began to live again in the new world created by the flood, perhaps Noah feared that there could be another wholesale destruction. Whenever it started raining after the flood, this thought must have come to his mind. And so God made a covenant (a series of promises) that this would never happen again.

"I, behold, I establish my covenant with you...I will establish my covenant with you (notice the emphasis on "I" - the *wonder* of God choosing to make promises to mortal man!); neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth" (Gen. 9:9- 12).

This covenant was confirmed by the rainbow. “When I bring a cloud (of rain) over the earth, the bow shall be seen in the cloud: and I will remember my covenant...between me and you...the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth...This (rainbow) is the token of the covenant” (Gen. 9:13-17).

You can see rainbows today. The Bible has meaning for human life in practice. The rainbow is an eternal covenant between God and the people and animals of the earth, it follows that the earth must have people and animals living on it forever. This in itself is proof that God’s Kingdom will be on earth rather than in heaven. God has an eternal purpose with man upon this earth; He would not destroy the planet which He had promised to Abraham’s children as their eternal inheritance. And this is the promise which Paul says is at the heart of the Christian Gospel (Gal. 3:8). We find therefore that the Bible is full of literal descriptions of the literal kingdom which is to come upon the earth.

7.5 Hinduism And Christianity: The Practical Difference

The hope for transformation is not within us, but without us in the person of God. The inner man has been corrupted and we need the saving hand of God. It is through His undeserved mercies and grace that He first works. As we walk with Him, He teaches us His ways and transforms us through His word to be more and more like His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Hinduism tends towards passivity; Hindu prayer is overridden by a sense of being at the mercy of the fated will of gods and goddesses. And this sense of resignation leads to passivity. The true Christian approach to prayer is different; Biblical examples of prayer are of tears and passion. This arises from the knowledge that we personally are in a one-to-one relationship with the one true God, our Father, who is passionately willing to change things for the sake of our prayers, and who is willing to consider our life position and feelings; a God with whom we can wrestle in prayer, as the difficult children we are, as He leads us towards a real and tangible salvation in His Kingdom.

8.1 The Principles Of The Atonement

Transcript of a Debate With Ruth Sisson

1992

As debated in:

Christadelphian Tidings and

Megiddo Message magazines

Motion for discussion: “The Bible conditions our salvation and eternal rewards upon our individual obedience and virtue, and not upon any merits deriving from the literal death or blood of Jesus Christ.”

Speakers:

For the above motion: Pastor Ruth Sisson (Megiddo Mission)

Against the above motion: Mr. Duncan Heaster

8-1-1 The Conditions Of Salvation

Motion for discussion: *"The Bible conditions our salvation and eternal rewards upon our individual obedience and virtue, and not upon any merits deriving from the literal death or blood of Jesus Christ."*

Opening Statement By Duncan Heaster

General Objections

If our own righteousness and human endeavor will save us, then why is there the need for salvation through Jesus? Why was Jesus the Son of God, and not just an ordinary man who lived without sinning? The flesh (body) and blood of Jesus are associated in John 6:53; Heb. 10:19,20; 1 Cor. 10:16; 11:27. To say that the blood of Jesus is not a precondition for our salvation is to say that his body and person was also unnecessary: i.e. Jesus was not essential; we can do it all ourselves, we don't need him. By saying this, we are not suggesting that Christ's example is unimportant; this debate is about the significance of his death.

" There is none righteous, not one" (Rom. 3:10). " It is not in man that walketh to (spiritually) direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23). " All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). Paul had a sinful tendency within his life which in practice stopped him being totally obedient to God; when he would do good, this " evil" was present with him (Rom. 7:15-25).

The Megiddo Church correctly understands that the " devil" refers to this principle of evil within us. But their understanding remains at an abstract, academic level. In reality, this principle means that it is impossible by our own endeavor and virtue to completely conquer the flesh.

It should be evident from these passages, as well as from our own experience, that we cannot achieve salvation by ourselves. We cry with Paul: " O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ" (Rom. 7:25). Although we cannot save ourselves, God will not do it all for us. We must come to the correct balance between these two extremes.

The Need For Imputation Of Righteousness

" God imputeth righteousness...the righteousness of God" (Rom. 4:6; 2 Cor. 5:21). We can only be reckoned righteous by being in Christ, not having our own righteousness, but that which is imputed to us by God's system of justification (Phil. 3:9). Trying to establish our own righteousness is effectively rebelling against God's righteousness (Rom. 10:3 cp. Job 35:2; Ezk. 33:13; Deut. 9:4,5).

Our righteousness in God's sight is by reason of our association with Christ, " the Lord our righteousness" (Jer. 23:6; 1 Cor. 1:30).

Imputation means that God looks on us as if we are perfect, even though we are not of ourselves. Why is there such Biblical emphasis upon this idea of justification and imputed righteousness, if our salvation depends upon our own virtue/righteousness? (See Romans. 2-4; 3:21; 4:3-6; Heb. 11:7; Deut. 24:13; Psa. 24:5). It is because of the imputation of righteousness that Jesus could say, " Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father...is perfect" (Matt. 5:48). We are surely being presumptuous to think that we have ever lived on God's level of moral perfection even for a day.

The believer will be presented " faultless" before the judgment seat (Jude 24), " without blame before him" because " he hath made us accepted (by being) in the beloved" (Eph. 1:4,6)- by baptism into him. Christ cleanses us, that he might present us to himself (he does it, not us) " a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing" (Eph. 5:26,27), as Jesus was " without spot" (Heb. 9:14). All these statements become meaningful within the context of righteousness being imputed.

The Place Of Forgiveness

Megiddo members must admit that they are not faultless. Yet they say that only the faultless will be accepted. No matter how hard we try from now on to be faultless, we still need forgiveness. Megiddo must have a strange concept of forgiveness, if salvation is by human effort, with no reference to the sacrifice of Jesus. Surely Megiddo members try hard not to sin. But when they do, they must have a terrible conscience, because they know no way to put themselves straight with God afterwards (cp. Heb. 9:14). Am I correct?

We need something more than our own " obedience and virtue;" forgiveness and the imputation of righteousness is made possible by the death of Christ.

The Need For Christ's Death

The wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23). Because of this, God has ordained a life must be poured out (i.e. death) as a basis for the forgiveness of sins. Seeing that " the life is in the blood," it follows that blood must be poured out for sins to be forgiven. Just " trying harder next time" isn't the means for forgiveness. " Without shedding of blood is no remission" (Heb. 9:22; 10:11-12).

The consistent teaching of scripture is that we cannot atone for our own sins. The pouring out of our blood (or life) to the death would not get us forgiveness. Because we have sinned, and therefore deserve to die, it would be our receiving the wages due our sins, i.e. death. This is where the unique place of Jesus is so vital. He was of our nature, of our " flesh and blood," a suitable representative of us (Heb. 2:14-18). That blood was shed, a perfect life was poured out, with which we can be associated, and then finally share in the immortality which

followed.

These ideas of shedding or pouring out of blood are concepts based on priestly acts, of killing the sacrifice. With regard to Christ, they speak of his literal death: " thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood" (Rev. 5:9). The shedding of his blood (his death) is the basis of remission of sins. One of the values of his death is in providing a suitable basis for our forgiveness. Without this basis no forgiveness is possible, " if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves..." (1 John 1:8).

The Need For Christ's Blood

In contrast with Megiddo's rejection of the importance of Christ's blood, scripture emphasizes that our reconciliation with God is on account of Christ's blood: " The Father...having made peace through the blood of (Christ's) cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself" (Col. 1:19,20). We were " redeemed...with the precious blood of Christ' (1 Pet. 1:19; Rev. 5:9). Those " in" Jesus " have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins" (Col. 1:14; Eph. 1:7). Our redemption is paralleled here with our forgiveness. In Christ, and only in him, our sins are not held against us; we will not receive eternal death as the wages of sin; in God's grace, we can be given immortal nature, salvation from our sin-stricken condition.

" Christ died for us...being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him" (Rom. 5:8,9). Thus Jesus " washed us from our sins in his own blood" (Rev. 1:5; notice how Jesus does this to us, rather than we achieving it for ourselves). " The blood of Christ (can) purge your conscience" (Heb. 9:14). In this way, Christ " purchased (us) with his own blood" (Acts 20:28).

" His own blood" highlights the very personal relationship which we have to Jesus, once his blood covers us. We cannot have this if we seek reconciliation by our own virtue. We are " justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood" (Rom. 3:24,25). If the blood of Jesus is irrelevant to our salvation, how are we justified through faith in his blood? Surely these passages invite us to focus our mind upon the blood (i.e. literal death) of Jesus?

If the blood of Jesus is not one of the preconditions for salvation, then it must mean that the life and death of Jesus are not necessary for it either. If we were to analyze the literal blood of Christ with no regard for the saving work which he did for us, then it would not be meaningful. It is not some kind of talisman in itself, as Catholicism teaches. But we cannot analyze Christ's sacrifice by supposing that, for the sake of argument, he did not die for us. The fact is that he was born and he died, " for us." This was his very reason of being. We cannot analyze his work apart from the purpose for which it was done: i.e. our salvation. It is as a result of such separation of Christ from his work that the conclusion has

been reached that the literal blood of Christ is insignificant.

The Teaching Of The Mosaic Law

Under the Mosaic Law, the Israelite found atonement with God by placing his hand on the head of an animal, which then represented him. This animal was killed, and the blood poured out. This was because " the blood...I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul" (Lev. 17:11). But we must compare this with Hebrews 10:1-10: " it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins," and therefore the sacrifice of the body of Jesus was needed.

But according to Leviticus 17:11, the animal blood did make atonement for sin. It was not the literal blood which did so on its own; that blood made atonement because it pointed forward to " the blood" of Jesus. With this blood as well as that of Jesus, it is not the blood as literal blood that is effective, but its relation to something of which the blood-shedding points forward.

Megiddo must have difficulty accepting that the blood of the animal sacrifices points forward to that of Jesus. If his blood is irrelevant, then why did the Mosaic system of reconciliation with God achieve this through blood, which pointed forward to that of Jesus? We must remember that the body and blood of Jesus was the actual fulfillment of the Mosaic types. Those types did not just point forward to Jesus as our example. The New Testament says that Jesus was typified by the altar, the high priest, the mercy seat and the blood on it; all the elements of the Mosaic Law pointed forward to him (Heb. 9).

Furthermore, Jesus was the equivalent of the Passover lamb. " Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us...(Jesus) the lamb of God that taketh (" beareth") away the sin of the world...sprinkling of the blood of Jesus...the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Cor. 5:7; John 1:29; 1 Peter 1:2,19). These are all obvious allusions to the Passover lamb as that lamb had to be without spot, having its blood sprinkled around the lintels of the door. Did the blood of the Passover lamb point forward to that of Jesus or not? If the answer is " No," then why do Megiddo still keep a " Passover" feast on 14th of Nisan? But if " Yes," then as the lamb's blood brought salvation for Israel, so must the blood of Jesus bring salvation for the new Israel (1 Cor. 10:1,2).

Our Association With Christ's Death And Blood By Baptism

By associating ourselves with his death, God looks on us as if we are sinless. Jesus died for us (1 Cor. 15:1,2), so that we too might share his death and therefore his resurrection. The divinely appointed means for making this association is immersion (water baptism) (Rom. 6:3-6; Phil. 3:21; 2 Cor. 4:10). Because Megiddo fails to understand the need to associate ourselves personally with Christ's death and resurrection in this way, they have rejected the doctrine of water baptism.

Many verses in the Bible speak of baptism as a one-time act. Why is this so, if baptism is only symbolic of some inner spiritual process? How can we be baptized into the death and body of Jesus by this? (Rom. 6:3-5; 1 Cor. 12:13). Water baptism beautifully symbolizes dying with Jesus, and then rising to new life with him.

By The Breaking Of Bread

Because forgiveness and the hope of salvation is only available through Christ's own death, we need to associate ourselves with him. " Except ye eat the flesh of the son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you" (John 6:53); we must intensely associate ourselves with the sacrifice of Jesus. Without regularly breaking bread, are we really associating ourselves with Christ's saving work? The early church broke bread very often (Acts. 20:7; 2:42,46). Megiddo's failure to frequently do this is explicable by their lack of appreciation of the value of Christ's sacrifice. One mistake has led to another.

Jesus: Our Sin-Bearer

Jesus " his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree" (1 Pet. 2:24). How can Jesus be a sin bearer if salvation is just conditioned on our own virtue? How do Megiddo understand Christ being our sin bearer (Isa. 53)? " We are sanctified by the offering of the body of Jesus" (Heb. 10:10); we are " reconciled in the body of his flesh through death" (Col. 1:21,22).

Also note that Jesus has brought about our salvation " because he hath poured out his soul unto death" (Isa. 53:12). Our salvation is obtainable because of the fact that Jesus offered himself - his life, his blood, his body, his very soul. The parallel between Christ's body and blood and himself is because the giving of Christ's life involved the giving of his complete self; including his literal blood. Separating the body and blood from the whole self of Christ is not a valid biblical distinction. Accordingly, if the blood and body of Jesus are not necessary conditions for our salvation, then neither was Jesus.

If Jesus was only our example, then he was useful but not essential. Megiddo must assume that the Bible records of many other men, e.g. Joseph and other types of Christ, could be our ideal example. Yet the Bible stresses that salvation is through the literal death, not just the example of Christ.

Jesus Redeemed By His Sacrifice

As one of the human race, Jesus' sacrifice was partly for his own benefit, seeing He was one of us; he was redeemed by his own blood in that he totally represents us, who are also redeemed by his blood (Heb. 5:3; 7:27; 9:7,12; 13:20). It was “for himself that it might be for us”. Because Jesus was of our nature, he destroyed " the devil...(and) abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (Heb. 2:14; 2 Tim. 1:10). Megiddo teaches that Jesus benefited from his own sacrifice; if he benefited by his own

blood, and he was of our nature (which Megiddo also believe), then surely we too must benefit from his blood?

Baptism Into The Body Of Christ

By being truly baptized into the death and resurrection of Jesus, we are counted by God as being part of Jesus, and therefore our bodies will also be glorified at Christ's return. The reconciliation made available through the offering of Christ's body is only available to those who continue faithful in him (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14). By baptism into Jesus, we are baptized into the body of Jesus, we become part of his body (Eph. 1:23; 4:16; Col. 1:18; 1 Cor. 12:13,27). At Christ's return, he will " change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body" (Phil. 3:21). " The life also of Jesus (i.e. the eternal life given through his resurrection) (will) be made manifest in our mortal flesh" (2 Cor. 4:10).

Jesus was perfect by character; yet in order to represent us who have to die, he " died for us." Because he had done no sin, he was raised again to immortal life. By being baptized into Jesus, he represents us, and therefore if we faithfully remain " in him," we will also share in his immortalization. Thus our salvation is on account of Christ's death.

Megiddo teaches that a person must develop perfection to be saved. Until they reach that point, they are without hope. The scripture position is that we are considered part of the eternal grace of God now, unless we fall away from it: " Even when we were dead in sins, (God) hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:5-6).

Although this salvation will not be physically manifested until the return of Christ, we are spoken of as having received it in prospect. Having received this great gift, our works should be motivated by gratitude for God's " unspeakable gift," rather than provoked by a feeling that our obedience will bring our salvation. In prospect, we have been saved.

The Place Of Good Works

Our ultimate acceptance will be on account of our living faith in God's grace, not our works: " For by grace are ye saved through faith...not of works, lest any man should boast...And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise works is no more work" (Eph. 2:8,9; Rom. 11:6). If we really believe that we are acceptable to God, then we will show our faith by " works" of obedience (James 2:14-26).

" Works" do not just refer to the actions prescribed by the Mosaic Law, as Megiddo have claimed. James 2:14-26 says " works" include giving food and clothing to needy Christians. Romans 4:2-5 speaks of " works" being done before the Mosaic Law was given. The argument of Romans 2-7 which negates relying on the works of the Mosaic Law for salvation, also negates relying on

obedience to any legal code as a means of justifying ourselves before God. The real work of God is to believe in the work of Christ (John 6:69).

Christ's cleansing our conscience by his sacrifice means that therefore with works we " serve the living God" (Heb. 9:14; Tit. 2:14). We can never have this kind of clear conscience if our relationship with God depends solely upon our own obedience.

Summary

While the Lord Jesus set an example of perfect obedience, his literal death, the shedding of his blood, is critical to our salvation. We all need forgiveness of sins which God only grants upon our association with the death of Christ. The necessity of death as the basis of the forgiveness of sins is set forth in the Mosaic Law, the vocabulary of which is applied to Jesus Christ. By association with Christ through baptism, God imputes righteousness to us; He counts our faith for righteousness. Our good works must spring out of our rejection of sin which is implicit in our faith in and association with the death and resurrection of Christ.

Duncan Heaster, July, 1992

8-1-2 The Basis Of Salvation

Opening Statement By Ruth Sisson

The Bible conditions our salvation and eternal rewards upon our individual obedience and virtue, and not upon any merits deriving from the literal death or blood of Jesus Christ.

Megiddo Church statement in support of the above proposition.

General Support

We take the positive side of this discussion because we want to believe only what is clearly taught in the Bible. Of what benefit is any belief in salvation, if God is not its author? For we cannot give ourselves eternal life; we cannot save ourselves from pain, sickness and death. Only God can bestow salvation.

Our whole premise, then, must be, what does the Bible teach?

While the subject of the inspiration and authority of the Bible lies outside the scope of this discussion, for purposes of this discussion we must establish that the Bible is the work of an all-wise God, and as such presents on plan of salvation. Whether the writer be David, or Isaiah, or Peter, or Paul, all taught one gospel, all " spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (II Pet. 1:21).

On the negative side of this discussion are a number of texts which, upon surface reading, seem to indicate that Christ's literal death and blood are the means of our salvation. But what about the other side of the question, where many more texts state just as clearly that God

demands righteousness, holiness, purity as a precondition for salvation? Either we must conclude that the Bible is contradictory, or that it presents more than one plan of salvation--or that the problem lies in our understanding of the passages on one side or the other.

All of us recognize God as the creator of life. Accordingly, He has set laws in motion by which the human race is perpetuated and sustained. To each is given a limited span, which each is free to use as he pleases. At the same time God has, through His written Word (the Bible) revealed His larger plan, offering a superior life - an eternal life, salvation. To whom does He offer this? What are the conditions God has placed upon the salvation He offers? Is it for all who are " reckoned righteous" because of the shed blood of Christ? Or does it depend on our individual obedience and virtue?

Jesus' Teaching About Salvation

What did Jesus teach? What did He say in the Sermon on the Mount? Is the state of eternal blessedness for the one who trusts in His blood or His righteousness to save them? Read the entire sermon (Matthew, chapters 5 to 7), and you will find not a single statement about the need for Christ's literal death or blood. Each blessing is linked directly to the need for obedience and virtue. The blessings include comfort...the earth for an inheritance...complete satisfaction of every want...heavenly mercy...seeing the face of the eternal Creator Himself...a place in the kingdom of heaven. And what are the preconditions for all these? " Blessed are the poor in spirit...Blessed are they that mourn...Blessed are the meek...Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness...Blessed are the merciful...Blessed are the pure in heart" and so on. According to Jesus, there must be virtue and obedience before there can be blessing.

And the obedience Jesus taught is not a mere outward formality. It is a heart obedience. Referring to the law of Moses Jesus said, " Ye have heard that it was said...But I say...." Where the old law demanded mere outward conformity, Jesus' law demanded inner purity. For example, the old law forbade adultery, but Jesus said " that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matt. 5:27-28).

Through the remainder of chapter 5 Jesus spells out more commands, then at the end of the chapter He makes this summary statement: " Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matt. 5:48). He is saying, in other words, This is the sum total of all that I have been saying: " Be ye therefore perfect..." In other words, if you do all that I have been saying, you will be morally perfect.

Shall we say that He was not capable of saying what He meant, or that His words do not mean what they say? Or was He requiring something we cannot do?

If this were the only such statement in Scripture, we might wonder if we are understanding it correctly.

And when we read elsewhere that we must become pure even as Christ is pure (I John 3:3); that we must come to the measure of the stature of Christ (Eph. 4:13); that we must be holy in our manner of living as God is holy (I Pet. 1:15-16), why not accept Jesus' command that we must become perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect? Unless we reject the plain teaching of Scripture that God will judge and reward each according to his works, whether good or bad

(Eccl. 12:13-14; II Cor. 5:10; Rev. 22:12; Rom. 2:6; Jer. 17:10), that we reap exactly as we have sown (Gal. 6:7-8), we have no alternative but to believe that the basis of our salvation is indeed our own life of obedience and virtue before God. If we sow " to the flesh," live to please our natural instincts, we shall reap " corruption." If we sow " to the Spirit" we shall reap " life everlasting."

The remainder of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount spells out more commands to virtue and obedience. Comparing believers to fruit trees He says, " Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit" is saved by the righteousness of Christ? No, it must be " hewn down, and cast into the fire." And if there has been any question about the need for obedience as a precondition of salvation, Jesus says clearly, " Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21).

Jesus follows this with a miniparable about two builders. One builds on the rock, the other on the sand; one's structure stands, the other's falls. What is the difference between the two? Only this: that one hears Jesus' sayings and obeys them, the other hears and does not obey (Matt. 7:24-27).

Notice again that there is no suggestion of any efficacy to be derived from Christ's literal death.

The Old Testament Teaching On Salvation

Centuries earlier the Psalmist was teaching the same standard of obedience as a requirement for salvation. " Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord....They also do no iniquity: they walk in his ways" (Ps. 119:1-3). They " do no iniquity" --here is the source of their righteousness, not in Christ's attainment but in their own strict adherence to the law of God, to the extent that they " do no iniquity."

Moses foretold the coming of Christ, that He would be a prophet, and that all would have to hearken to Him, and that " whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him" (Deut. 18:18-19) . What did Christ preach as He traveled from village to village? Did He teach that He was going to die and shed His blood for the salvation of mankind, that this was the purpose of His life? No, " He went throughout every city and village, preaching and showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God" (Luke 8:1). In fact, so little did He have to say about His approaching death that the disciples, when it actually happened, could not comprehend it, even though He had told them.

Repentance, Then Forgiveness

What did Jesus, as He was parting from His disciples, commission them to teach? He told them clearly: " That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47). If His death had been the key to their salvation, would this not have been a likely time to have said so? But no, even after He had died and been resurrected, it was still necessary for them to repent so that their sins could be forgiven.

If our ultimate acceptance before God depends upon the righteousness of Christ imputed to us through His death and not upon our own obedience or virtue, why does the Bible define so

precisely the type of life God requires? When we see a sign posted along the highway announcing the speed limit or giving us directions to stop or to go, we conclude that the sign was set up to be obeyed. Similarly, when we read in the Bible, " Be ye holy in all manner of conversation" or " Let patience have her perfect work" or " Cease from anger, and forsake wrath" or " Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth," is it not wise to conclude that these commands are to be obeyed? Why are there literally hundreds of admonitions to holiness, virtue and obedience if we are saved by the righteousness of Christ?

Not only does the Bible spell out the virtues God requires, but it also establishes clearly the link between our obedience and our salvation. The law of God is as straightforward as " Obey and live, disobey and die."

What can the fact that Christ shed His blood on Calvary do to make anyone morally pure and upright? Suppose a driver has been consistently violating the rules of the highway. What must he do to become a law-abiding driver? He must stop violating the rules.

Suppose a man is making his living by robbing banks. Now suppose this man accepts Christ and His righteousness, yet goes right on robbing banks. Is he immediately counted righteous, pure and holy because of Christ's death for him, even though he continues his same sinful habits? To be cleansed and forgiven, must he not change his manner of life? He must stop robbing banks and earn his living honorably. The blood of Christ can do nothing to change his record; he himself must reform.

The basis of salvation God prescribes is a simple, practical summons to personal reformation: stop doing wrong and do right. " Cease to do evil, learn to do well" (Isa. 1:16-17). The " wicked" must " turn from his transgressions...and do that which is lawful and right." Then, once we turn from our sin and do right, no guilt from our former sins remains. " None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him: he hath done that which is lawful and right; he shall surely live" (Ezek. 33:14-16). Where is any need for the sacrifice of Christ?

Isaiah stated the same fact: " Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (Isa. 55:6-7). When God has abundantly pardoned, what more can we need?

We are forgiven our sins as we forsake them. " He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy" (Prov. 28:13). We " purify" our souls by " obeying the truth" (I Pet. 1:22). If our weakness has been to steal, Paul has the simple formula: " Let him that stole steal no more" (Eph. 4:28). If we have been telling lies, we must stop lying and tell only what is true (Col. 3:9). If we have been using profanity, we must stop it (Eph. 5:1-5). If we have been getting angry, we must be patient and kind (Eph. 4:31-32). When we stop disobeying any law of God, we become clean on that point--not because Christ shed His blood for us but because we stopped committing the sin, just as the bank robber must stop robbing banks and take an honorable job to earn his living. As long as he continues to rob banks, the blood of a thousand Christs could do nothing to make his record clean. He must actually stop committing the sin before He can even consider being forgiven.

Just as we can become clean on one point, so we can become clean on another, and another, until our whole life and character reaches the standard God requires and we are " holy and acceptable unto God" (Rom. 12:1).

Salvation Conditional

The Bible does not offer salvation on a free-for-all basis, nor does God impart or impute the righteousness He requires. Each aspirant must purify his own heart and character (I John 3:3), his own initiative, with the help of God, before God will bestow salvation. We must not overlook the help of God, because God provides the knowledge of what we must do, along with the mental and physical powers we need. But it is our responsibility to use all these to develop the character He requires. We cannot expect Him to change our character. This is our part of the agreement.

Every promise of God has two sides, a human side and a divine side. God says, You do this (indicating obedience and virtue on the human side)...and I will do this (indicating God's bestowment of eternal blessings). God says, " IF" you do thus and thus, " THEN" I will do thus and thus.

Jesus promised to save those who would endure unto the end (Matt. 24:13). The Psalmist promised God's deliverance to those who pay their vows to God (Ps. 50:14-15). Isaiah said that God will recognize " him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at [His] word" (Isa. 66:2). He promises salvation " to him that ordereth his conversation (conduct) aright" (Ps. 50:23). He will " render to every man according to his deeds: To them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life" (Rom. 2:6-7). The promise is based on the expressly stated condition that the believer patiently continue in well doing, not that he accept any righteousness imputed to him by Christ.

Jesus' last message emphasizes the same point: " Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city" (Rev. 22:14).

If Jesus' literal death and blood was the key to salvation and forgiveness, why did Jesus in His parable commend the obedient servant for what he had done: " Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things" (Matt. 25:21). If the servant had not been good and faithful, could Jesus have said this?

Paul himself says clearly that there is an " if" condition in the matter of salvation. Writing to the Corinthians he spoke of the gospel he had preached to them, " By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain" (I Cor. 15:1-2). They had heard the gospel, and they might or might not be saved - there was still an " if" in the picture.

Hebrews is likewise specific, that salvation depends on our individual obedience. " Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14).

James is equally direct, that only the " doers of the word" will merit eternal rewards. " Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves....Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed" (James 1:22-25). Notice that one must continue in the law, and be a " doer of the work," and then " this man shall be blessed in his deed." James says again, " Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him" (James 1:12). " The crown of life" is to the one who endures under trial.

The apostle John concurs, making this plain statement: that the world passes away, and the lust thereof, and only " he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (I John 2:17).

Three Steps To Salvation

Briefly, the Bible outlines three steps to salvation. These three steps are summarized in Rev. 1:3: " Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand."
The first step in the process of salvation is learning what God requires of us. Knowledge comes first. This is the normal pattern of life. The newborn child must spend years in learning before he is able to live as a responsible adult. And if he wishes to pursue a profession, he must acquire even more knowledge. This knowledge is not automatically transplanted into his mind. He must apply himself and learn.
The same is true for the aspirant to eternal salvation. He must first learn what God requires. And the source of that knowledge is the Book God has provided for our instruction, the Bible.
The second step to salvation is to apply the knowledge one has acquired, to live according to the law of God, to develop in one's life the standard of virtue God requires.
The third step is the physical change from mortality to immortality. We are now mortal, subject to death. We must depend upon God for this third step, because we cannot save ourselves. Only God's power can " change our vile body and fashion it like unto his glorious body" (Phil. 3:21). Only He can make us like unto the angels, so that we will not die (Luke 20:35-36).
We are responsible for taking the first two steps during this present life, given the tools and the help which God provides. Then Christ when He returns will accomplish for each worthy one the third step, the physical change to immortality. " When the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory" (I Pet. 5:4). This reward will be brought " at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (I Pet. 1:13). Jesus Himself said that He was coming to bring His reward with Him (Rev. 22:12).

Summary

The Bible is contradictory if it teaches that salvation is the reward for an upright and holy life and also teaches that our salvation depends upon the death and shed blood of Christ. However, upon careful study we find that the problem is not with the Bible but with the false and misleading doctrines which have for centuries been taught in its name. God has one plan and one basis for salvation. And when we take the statements about Jesus' death and blood as a symbolic representation of the complete sacrifice we ourselves must make (Rom. 12:1) - and which Jesus Himself made--we have harmony.
We, too, would prefer to trust in Christ's sacrifice to atone for our sins, if only we could be sure it was God's way. But how tragic to go to judgment depending upon the righteousness of Jesus, only to learn - when too late - that we are to be judged and rewarded according to what we ourselves have done!

Ruth Sisson

8-1-3 The Megiddo Mission

While debates can clarify issues, they can also confuse them. When one of the protagonists does not have a clear answer for a point, they will often seek to distract the audience from seeing the power of a good argument. We often call this " throwing dust in the air." Accordingly, the rebuttals will be more useful if one keeps in sharp focus the following pertinent facts.

1. Megiddo Mission's foundation - this debate concerns the doctrine that led to the formation of Megiddo Mission as a separate denomination. The teaching was first promulgated by their

founder, L.T. Nichols in 1880.
Following is the pertinent section of a biography of Mr. Nichols. Prior to 1880, Mr. Nichols " preached, practiced and enforced a religion of doing, so that the standard of conduct in his ecclesia was always in marked contrast with the more lax behavior [in Megiddo's opinion] of other groups. Yet there was [in Nichols' teaching up to this point the idea that] there was some efficacy in water baptism to wash away past sins; some vague, mysterious [according to Megiddo Mission] virtue in the sacrifice of Calvary, some loophole in the wall of salvation to let in the well intentioned but imperfect believer. If a man believed and was baptized, should Christ come the next day or he die that night, he would be ready, regardless of his past life."
In 1880, Mr. Nichols faced his followers " with a confession of past error and the most stupendous proposition offered to men since the Seventh Century..When Jesus said, 'Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect,' (Nichols) told them, He meant just that and no less: the perfect ordering of every aspect of one's moral life and conduct...No man could be saved apart from knowing and keeping every commandment of God...
" With the great foundation stone laid bare and swept clean, the temple could now grow in an orderly manner. The Reformation had begun!"
This fundamental view came through clearly in Megiddo Mission's opening statement in such phrases as: " the basis of our salvation is indeed our own life of obedience and virtue before God...there is no suggestion of any efficacy to be derived from Christ's literal death...where is any need for the sacrifice of Christ?"

2. Megiddo believes baptism is unnecessary - " we take the position that water baptism is not necessary or commanded for today" is the Megiddo statement in their correspondence course, " Understanding the Bible."

3. We believe a person can fall away from the grace of God through denial of the faith or flagrant misbehavior. This is a prominent element of our first principle teaching and of our exhortations.

4. Figures of speech are founded on reality. That is certainly true in the Bible and is consistently the case in everyday speech. For example, a steamship is spoken of as " sailing" because ships once used sails. A wooden wall will be spoken of as " paper thin" because paper is very thin.
In the Bible, deliverance from the fatal control of sin is spoken of as " redemption," because the Israelitish slaves were redeemed from the fatal control of Egyptian bondage. And sharing in the benefits of Christ's sacrifice is spoken of as " eating his flesh" because the flesh of animal sacrifices was eaten. The existence of figures of speech, therefore, does not negate the fact of an underlying reality.

Don Styles

8-2-1 Obedience And Salvation

Duncan Heaster Rebuttal

Summary Of The Duncan Heaster Position And Rebuttal To Megiddo Statement

Many of the points raised in the Megiddo opening statement are covered by the reasoning presented in the initial statement.

Man is of sin-prone nature both before and after conversion (Rom. 3:10,23; 7:12-25; Jer. 10:23). Except for Jesus Christ, who is the only begotten son of God, it has not been possible in practice for any of us to attain God's perfection through our own righteous acts. For this reason, salvation is conditioned on faith in the sacrifice (the blood, the death) of Christ (Rom. 3:25 cp. Heb. 11:28) and is through grace, i.e. unmerited favor. " (God) hath saved us...not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus" (II Tim. 1:9 cp. Acts 15:11; Eph. 2:5,8).
Faith is developed by a response and appreciation of God's word (Rom. 10:17), and its existence is shown by works which are motivated by our response to the great salvation which was accomplished through Jesus Christ. I do not suggest that works are irrelevant in God's scheme of justification; but while we will not be saved without works, we are not saved because of them. We are saved by God's grace as He provides the gift of redemption in Christ.
Our faith is in the gospel concerning Christ - that he was our representative, sharing our nature, yet he never sinned personally. Therefore his body was raised from the dead, and glorified with immortal life. By being baptized into Christ's death and resurrection and by continuing in his way, our faith is counted for righteousness. In other words, we are treated by God as if we are as righteous as Christ. Because of this, those " in Christ" have the sure hope of " the redemption of the body" at Christ's return, to be given a glorified body like he now has (Phil. 3:19-21). It is for this reason that we presented so many passages which link salvation with the body and blood of Christ, which were offered for the forgiveness of our sins.

The Authorship Of Salvation

We both agree that God is the author of our salvation. But Megiddo fail to analyze on what basis He achieves this. Hebrews 5:4-10 explains how God called Christ to the priesthood, and perfected him on account of his death on the cross: " And being made perfect, he (Christ) became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." God became the author of salvation through the death of Christ. It is for us to show that we really believe this by living in obedience to Christ.

The Gift Of Righteousness

The fact that salvation is a gift from God (Rom. 6:23) on account of His grace, contradicts the Megiddo statement that " The law of God is as straightforward as 'Obey and live.'" If our obedience merits salvation, there is no place for God's unmerited favor, or " grace." Furthermore, righteousness itself is a gift: " They which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by...Jesus" (Rom. 5:17). Megiddo makes clear their view that developing a righteous character is our responsibility. They do not view righteousness as a gift. In contrast to Megiddo, scripture speaks of righteousness as a gift because we do not have to reach a point of full obedience to be considered righteous by God. Rather, our faith in Him is counted for righteousness: Abraham " did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. This is why 'it was credited to him as righteousness.' The words 'it was credited to him' were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness - for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead" (Rom. 4:20-24 NIV).
Our obedience, however, is not irrelevant to God's system of salvation. The balance between faith and works is to be found in appreciating that God's gift of salvation is offered in

response to faith, not works; but real faith will produce works as an intrinsic by-product (James 2:18-26).

Megiddo's Mistake

Megiddo does not reconcile two great Bible themes:
1) That salvation is by grace through faith in Christ's sacrifice, " not according to works of righteousness which we have done" (Titus 3:4-7).
2) That works are also necessary in God's scheme of redemption, " that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works" (Titus 3:8).
Their position is that these two themes are contradictory. They contend that one or the other must be explained away.
The fact is that the two themes beautifully complement one another. Belief in the sacrifice of Christ elicits from us the need for self-sacrificial love and dedicated obedience in our own lives. Attempting to live an obedient life teaches us the need for the grace of God to forgive us for Christ's sake.
The concept of justification by a vibrant faith makes perfect sense of both these themes. Note that in Titus 3:8 belief comes first; first we must believe in the work of Christ and then we show this belief by our works.

Both Themes In The Same Scripture

While Megiddo may feel these themes are contradictory, the Bible obviously does not. They are found together throughout scripture, even in the places Megiddo uses to prove their points.

In The Old Testament

Isaiah 1:16,17 is quoted by Megiddo as proof that repentance, not the blood of Christ, is the basis of salvation. But it is only one of the preconditions for it. That passage goes on to say that God will make our scarlet-red sins " as white as snow...as wool." It is Christ who is " white like wool, as white as snow" (Rev. 1:14; Mk. 9:3). By being in Christ, we are counted by God to be as righteous (as white) as he (Christ) is. This same figure of speech is used in Revelation 7:14, which speaks of believers washing the redness of their sins in the blood of Christ, so that their clothing is white. It is therefore in Christ that our sins are forgiven and we are presented holy and without blame before God.
Later in his prophecy, Isaiah makes clear that God offers forgiveness on the basis of the literal death of the Messiah: " The chastisement of our peace was upon him (Jesus); and with his stripes we are healed...the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all...thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin...by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities" (Isa. 53:5,6,10,11).
Ezekiel speaks of repentance resulting in forgiveness. But the repentant Israelite at that time was under the Mosaic law. If he repented, he would have to offer a sacrifice: " it is the blood that maketh atonement" (Lev. 17:11), and " without the shedding of blood is no remission" of sins (Heb. 9:22). Repentance was not, therefore, the only necessity for forgiveness under the Old Covenant.

In The Gospels

Megiddo claims that Jesus did not teach that he was going to die and shed his blood for the salvation of mankind. That is not true.
At the last supper, he referred to the symbolic significance of the wine: " This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matt. 26:28). Earlier in his ministry, he told his disciples, " the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Mk. 10:45). Jesus taught Nicodemus about the efficacy of his literal crucifixion: " As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:14-15). After his baptism, he was introduced as " the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). While the Lord stressed the need for obedience, his teaching about the need for us to share in the benefits of his sacrificial death was perfectly clear.
In the gospels, the language of the rituals of the Law is consistently applied to the sacrificial death of Christ: blood of the testament...life a ransom...serpent on a pole...lamb of God. His sacrifice was superior to and replaced these rituals with the true sacrificial death to which they had pointed forward. Sharing in the merits of his death is thus essential; it is the only way to eternal life. " Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:53,54). The eating and drinking speaks of sharing in the benefits of his literal death. We do this when we believe and are baptized into Christ: " He that believeth on me hath everlasting life...he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst" (vs.47,35).
Yes, Jesus may refer to the need for obedience more than he refers to his sacrificial death. Both, however, are an integral part of his message and neither should be denied.

In The Acts

Megiddo claim that the gospel which the apostles preached focuses on the need for repentance rather than faith in the blood and death of Christ. But Jesus told them to preach " remission of sins...in his name" (Lk. 24:47). Remission is through Christ, not just through our personal repentance and obedience. This is why we preach the gospel of salvation through Christ, not of human effort.
Acts shows how the early preaching stressed the death and resurrection of Christ, repentance and then water baptism: " Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...by him all that believe are justified from all things" (Acts 2:38; 13:39).
Furthermore, Jesus Christ is presented as unique: " Neither is there salvation in any other...through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 4:12; 13:38-39).
His teaching was not unique. All that he taught is found in the Old Testament including the need to love God with all the heart and to love our neighbor as ourselves (cp. Deut. 6:5; Lev. 19:18).
Jesus was not unique in providing an example of right conduct. Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, David, Daniel and many others provided examples of the conduct of which God approves. But right teaching and right example were not enough to provide deliverance from sin. What was needed was the Savior: " To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts 10:43).

In The Epistles And The Revelation

The passages which speak of salvation through obedience also include our need for the sacrifice of Christ. Some of these passages consciously allude to this need. Revelation 22:14 is an example: " Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." Yet Christ is the way to the tree of life, he is the door through which a man may enter salvation (John 14:6; 10:9). It was through his sacrificed body and poured-out blood that we have this way to God (Eph. 2:16-18). Likewise, " He that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (I John 2:17); but an integral aspect of the will of God is that we should believe on Christ as the sacrifice provided by God (John 6:33-40).

Megiddo say, " Walk in the light and that's all you need." This contradicts I John 1:7: " If we walk in the light...the blood of Jesus cleanseth us from all sin." The Biblical position is that we must forsake our sins believing that the blood of Christ cleanses us from both our old sins and the new ones we commit.

Obedience and the sprinkling of Christ's blood are needed for salvation: " elect...unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ" (I Pet. 1:2). " Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things...but with the precious blood of Christ [his sacrifice]...unto unfeigned love of the brethren [obedience]" (I Pet. 1:18-22). The blood of Christ purges our conscience, resulting in our doing the " works" of continued obedience (Heb. 9:14). This was prefigured in the cleansing of the leper (representing our need for cleansing from sin). The blood of the lamb (representing Jesus) was placed on the ear, thumb and toe of the leper, to show how the blood of his redemption should affect his every action; the blood enabled him to enter the congregation of God's people, and then he could do acceptable works of virtue (Lev. 14:25). Obedience must be on account of the redemption which has been made possible through Christ's blood.

Obedience And The Blood Of Christ

Obedience is likened to a man building on a rock (Mt. 7:24-27). But " that rock was Christ," the rock smitten on the cross (1 Cor. 10:4); the rock refers to faith in Christ as God's Son (Mt. 16:16-18). It is upon the rock of our faith that we build our house of obedience. Faith in Christ's sacrifice comes first, for it is Christ's blood which purifies us (Rev. 15:6; Heb. 1:3; 9;14,22) and makes it possible for us to offer acceptable obedience to God. As Jesus says, if we are not in the Christ-vine (through baptism into him), we cannot produce good fruit before God (John 15:5).

It is our faith in Christ rather than our works which will save us (Rom. 3:27; 9:11; Gal. 2:16). Because salvation is by grace, it is not by works, but on account of Christ's sacrifice (Rom. 11:6; 2 Tim. 1:9; Titus 3:5; Heb. 4:10). Righteousness is imputed by faith to us " without works" (Rom. 4:2). There is the need for works, but works cannot save us; yet we will be judged for our works. There is no conflict in this. The resolution of this is that salvation is conditioned upon our faith in Christ's sacrifice; but if that faith is real, it will inevitably show itself in works.

Acceptable faith will not exist without works. Works alone cannot bring salvation and acceptable works cannot exist without our being cleansed by the redeeming blood of Christ. These two scriptural themes do not contradict one another; they complement each other.

The Forgiveness Of Sins

The Bible does not teach that repentance alone can bring forgiveness. In the case of the bank robber, each time he robbed a bank, he committed a sin. If he stops robbing, each of these sins has still been committed. The punishment for sin is death. It's not enough just being sorry

and saying " I won't do it again." Adam sinned, therefore he had to die. Every sinner needs some other intervention to bring about his salvation in addition to forsaking his sins. Galatians 3:10 shows that everyone who didn't always obey every one of God's commands was condemned. That situation has been changed by Christ's sacrifice (Gal. 3:13). If Megiddo do not accept the benefits of that sacrifice, then they are in the same position as Israel under the Law -- condemned because they have not all their lives always obeyed God's laws.

Christ Over The Law

If forgiveness is conditioned only upon obedience, then there is no difference between the Old and New covenants. Megiddo's legalistic attitude to the Sermon on the Mount seems identical to Israel's relationship to the statutes of the Mosaic law. Hebrews 9:9 and 10:1 reasons that the priesthood of Christ can make us " perfect," in contrast to the previous system which could not do so. " Perfection" is not attainable, therefore, by our own obedience alone. If it was, then Christ's work would not have made " perfection" any more possible than it was before.
The Law denied blessings to those who broke it in any way (Gal. 3:10; Ex. 24:7). Yet we know that men who did break that law will be saved and were called " perfect" (e.g. David). It follows that they found justification with God in a way other than perfect obedience, i.e., through faith in Christ's perfect sacrifice. David knew that " with the LORD there is mercy and...plenteous redemption (because) he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities" (Psa. 130:7,8). These words are quoted about Jesus, " He [Jesus] shall save his people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21).

Secret Faults

David was forgiven for his " secret faults," those which he did not even recognize. Megiddo addresses only major flaws in our conduct which will be exposed upon reading the Bible. However, we often sin without realizing it. For example, we may be discourteous, irritable or slothful and never realize our sinful acts. Like David (Psa. 19:12), we ask for God's mercy regarding this. In this sense, we receive forgiveness without specific repentance, through recognizing our frequent sinfulness.

Duncan Heaster, September, 1992

8-2-2 Spiritual Blood

Megiddo Mission Rebuttal

The Bible conditions our salvation and eternal rewards upon our individual obedience and virtue, and not upon any merits deriving from the literal death or blood of Jesus Christ.

Megiddo rebuttal to Duncan Heaster statement in opposition to the above proposition.

General Rebuttal

In a limited discussion it is physically impossible to answer completely every aspect of a topic of this magnitude. We will try, however, to reply to the basic areas addressed by Mr. Heaster in his opening statement and at the same time to focus upon the general teaching of Scripture on the subject of salvation.

Our primary concern is to avoid building our confidence on a false premise; i.e., a premise drawn from any school of human philosophy and not from the Bible, the Bible being our only source of inspired knowledge today. What possible value can there be in relying upon the shed blood and righteousness of Christ for our salvation, unless we are absolutely sure this is the God-designed arrangement for us? The matter is of supreme importance because it concerns our eternal salvation; upon it we are staking our entire hope of future life. If we err, we will have lost all, for we have but one life, and it is soon over.

Picture a narrow bridge-walk across a wide, deep canyon. When you walk out upon that bridge, you want to know that it is structurally sound. If its supports are half rotten, you want to know it. You really do not care if everyone in the community thinks the bridge is safe; you want to know the facts. For when you walk out upon that bridge, you are trusting your life to it. In the same way, when we accept a teaching about salvation, we want to be sure that it has a solid foundation, because we are staking our life upon it. If the foundation proves to be rotten - even if everyone around us believes it is solid--we will not trust it.

We are convinced that the teaching of the Christadelphians upon the subject of salvation is largely the same as that held almost universally throughout Christendom. And that doctrine has its foundation not in the Scriptures but in the time-honored creeds formulated by Ireneus, Tertullian, Origen, Augustine, Ambrose and the other Church fathers during the early centuries of our era, who were, in turn, influenced by the ideas of Plato, Aristotle, and other pagan philosophers. The thinking of many of the Church fathers was a syncretism of Christian and pagan ideas, which they packaged under the name of " Christian," but which was wholly foreign to the teachings of Jesus Christ. The inspired writings of the prophets, apostles and Jesus were not their sole source of knowledge.

Widespread among the pagans was the belief that the suffering of a god was of greater efficacy than the suffering of a human or animal victim. Thus the early believers were able to see in the death of Christ a supreme instance of a Deity sacrificing Himself for the sins of the human family to secure their forgiveness and salvation; hence the doctrine of the Atonement, which in time became the central dogma of the Christian Church.

The strangest fact is that Jesus Himself never said that forgiveness of sin and reconciliation to God were to be consequences of His death. Nor did He ever say that the purpose of His life (or death) was to be a sacrificial atonement for sin. On the contrary, Jesus taught the absolute necessity of an upright, pure and holy character, and repentance as the sole basis for forgiveness (see Luke 24:47).

We readily agree that certain passages in the New Testament seem to say that the literal death of Christ is instrumental in our salvation. This has several causes:

1) translators who believed the doctrine of the Atonement taught by the Christian Church;

2) the firmly established preconception of the doctrine of the Atonement in the minds of most Christian believers today;

3) a general misunderstanding of Biblical terms as literal which the writers intended to be symbolic and figurative, which are, by Peter's description, " hard to be understood" (II Pet. 3:16).

Numerically, the passages in the above category are relatively few, compared with the many hundreds of texts which describe clearly the standard of character which God requires, loves, or commends. Either we must say that the Bible teaches two (contradictory) plans of salvation, or we must find a way to reconcile one group of passages with the other.

Because of the widespread acceptance of the Atonement doctrine throughout Christendom, it is all but impossible today to set prejudice aside and read the Bible with an open mind.

Hence our next question: How often is the idea of the atoning death of Christ read into rather than out of the Bible? How many texts would unprejudiced readers find to " prove" that Christ died to atone for our sins - if they could read the Bible without this thought already in mind?

Take, for example, a few of the passages quoted by the Christadelphians in this debate, and the conclusions they have drawn: Heb. 10:4, " It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins," and their comment: " Therefore the sacrifice of the body of Jesus was needed." Could any reading Hebrews 10:4 draw such a conclusion if the theory were not already firm in their minds? The passage says nothing whatever about " the sacrifice of the body of Jesus." Or John 6:53, " Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you" and their comment: " We must intensely associate ourselves with the sacrifice of Jesus." John 6:53 says nothing about Jesus' death or sacrifice.

Or take John 1:29: " Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," and their conclusion that reference is being made to Jesus' death for all mankind - when the passage contains no mention whatever of Christ's death. Or take their citing of I Cor. 10:1-2, that " [Israel] were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea," and their conclusion that this means that " the blood of Jesus brings salvation for the new Israel." Such conclusions, if drawn from these texts, must be read into the passages, for they cannot be read out of them - they are not there.

We must also be careful not to make statements which cannot be supported. For example, the Christadelphian statement that " The Bible stresses that salvation is through the sacrifice, not the example, of Christ." We ask, Where does the Bible even make such a statement, with or without any " stress" ? Or the Christadelphian statement that " Our salvation is obtainable because of the fact that Jesus offered Himself - His life, His blood, His very soul." Here is another statement wholly without Bible support.

If Our Salvation Depends Upon The Merits Of Jesus Christ...

Then why was Paul so concerned about qualifying himself for the crown? He had been serving Christ many years when he wrote, " I therefore so run,...so fight I,...lest that by any means when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (I Cor. 9:26-27). If Christ's blood had effect on anyone's salvation, it surely should have had on Paul himself

- Or why did Paul write, " I have not yet reached perfection, but I press on, hoping to take hold of that for which Christ once took hold of me....I press towards the goal to win the prize" - was not such effort needless, if Christ's righteousness was imputed to him by God's system of justification? (Phil. 3:12-14, NEB). If perfection was Paul's through Christ automatically, or if his own virtue and obedience did not matter to his salvation, why was he so concerned to achieve it?

- Or why did Paul write, " If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead" ? (Phil. 3:11). Would this not be a meaningless statement if his salvation was sure because of the merits of Christ?

- Or why did Jesus in His letters to the seven churches warn each that they must " repent," " hold fast," or " be faithful unto death," - or lose their crown? (Rev. 2:5, 16, 25, 10). What need for the warning, " I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love" (Rev. 2:4), if they were saved by the righteousness of Christ?

- Or why was every blessing in those letters prefaced with the condition: " To him that overcometh" ? (See Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21.) And why this admonition: " Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God" (Rev. 3:2) - if being " perfect before God" was not required for salvation?

- Or why did Jesus say, " Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able" (Luke 13:24) - if entering were as simple a matter as accepting Christ's imputed righteousness?

- Or why are we commanded to " walk worthy" of our high calling in Christ (Eph. 4:1-2) if our salvation is already won for us? Or why is the eternal reward, of being made " equal unto the angels," reserved for those who shall " be accounted worthy" (Luke 20:35-36), if our individual effort is not a direct condition in our salvation?

- Or why should we " fear" lest we come short of obtaining the promises of God (Heb. 4:1), if we can claim those promises through the righteousness of Christ?

- Or why did Paul write to his brethren who were believers that he was enduring " for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory" ? (II Tim. 2:10). They were elect, they were believers, they were in Christ, but their salvation was not yet sure.

- Or why should there be any " if" in the context of salvation if it is as simple as being baptized into Christ and receiving His merits? Why did Paul write to the Colossians that Christ had reconciled them " in the body of his flesh through death" and then go on to say " If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled" ? Why was there any if - if by what he had just said he meant that their salvation was secured by Christ's literal death? (Col. 1:22-23).

- Or why is it written of the faithful bride of Christ, " his wife hath made herself ready," or that she is arrayed in " fine linen, clean and white" which is " the righteousness of saints" (Rev. 19:7-8) - if the credit rightfully belongs to Christ, and the righteousness is His, not hers?

- Or why does the Bible repeatedly state God's method of rewarding " every man according as his work shall be" (Rev. 22:12) if our salvation does not depend wholly upon what we do, i.e., our own virtue and obedience? This principle is repeated in Scripture not once or twice but more than fifty times. What right have we to disallow it?

Much as we would like to think otherwise, we have to conclude that there is more - much more - to obtaining salvation than the simple formula of being baptized into the righteousness of Christ, or receiving merits He won for us.

The Use Of Figurative Language In Scripture

Figurative or symbolic language is common in everyday speech. Suppose we hear that " the door closed suddenly on a promising career." A picture is created in our minds which we relate to the situation described. Or if we hear that a man " lost his shirt" in a business venture, we readily understand the meaning.

The Bible writers also used symbolic or figurative language, which can be readily understood if studied in the context of the overall teaching of the Bible.
The Apostles, having witnessed firsthand the dramatic life, death and resurrection of their Lord, were so deeply impressed by it all that in writing and teaching they drew heavily from His experience. His " life," His " death," His " crucifixion," His " blood," His " resurrection" - all were terms which they used freely and with deep significance to describe every believer's commitment. Were we to take these terms literally we would destroy their meaning. For example, they wrote of " our old nature" being " crucified with him (Jesus Christ), that the body of sin might be destroyed" (Rom. 6:6). No one understood from this that every believer must be literally " crucified."
Or when describing how new is the believer's life in Christ, they called it a " resurrection" or " life from the dead," so complete was the change from the old life to the new (Rom. 6:2-5). Again, they spoke of the new way of life as being newly begotten by the Word of truth (see I Pet. 1:3; I Cor. 4:15; James 1:18). So drastic was the change from the old way of life that being " in Christ" was like being a whole " new creature" (II Cor. 5:17).
In the same way, the term " death" was a fitting description of the old life completely given up, sacrificed, what Paul called a " living sacrifice" (Rom. 12:1). Paul, describing his daily battle with his own nature, said of himself, " I die daily" (I Cor. 15:31). No one thought he was literally dying every day. Rather, he was describing how completely he was giving up himself and his natural desires, instincts and affections. Again he wrote of himself, " I am crucified with Christ" (Gal. 2:20), and again no one pictured him on Golgotha with Christ. Using the same terminology he commanded his brethren to " put to death" their earthly tendencies (Col. 3:3-5, RSV).
Jesus Himself used figurative language when He said: " Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you" (John 6:53). If we take these words literally, as alluding to His physical flesh and blood, we accuse Jesus of advocating cannibalism - and also must conclude that He was talking to people who were literally dead because He said " Ye have no life in you."
But no, Jesus was not speaking of things physical. Rather, His hearers were not spiritually alive because they were not partaking of the spiritual flesh and blood which He was offering them.
What was the spiritual flesh and blood that could produce and support spiritual life? Jesus Himself answered when He said, " It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63). His " flesh and blood" were His words, His teachings - these support spiritual life, just as physical flesh and blood support physical life.
In the same message, Jesus explained His point even more clearly: " As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me" (John 6:57). We live by eating of Jesus in the same way that Jesus lived by eating of His Father.
" The life of the flesh is in the blood" (Lev. 17:11) - so the life of the spiritual flesh is in spiritual blood. How appropriate, then, that the Apostle should use the term " blood" with a symbolic meaning of life (spiritual life), also of that which supports or imparts spiritual life, i.e. the words of Jesus, His wisdom, His teachings. The heavenly wisdom, as spiritual blood, performs the functions that support and maintain spiritual life just as physical blood does for physical life. For example: The spiritual blood, or word of God, is the sanctifying medium. We read in Revelation that the saints " washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Rev. 7:14). Either we must have literal robes made literally white in literal blood (impossible!) or we must have spiritual robes made spiritually white (clean) in spiritual blood. What performs the functions of blood in a spiritual sense? Jesus explained it when He said, " Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. And for their sakes I sanctify

myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth" (John 17:17, 19). " The truth," His word, was the sanctifying medium. Paul said the same when speaking of Christ's relation to the Church, " That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word" (Eph. 5:26). He sanctifies and cleanses His church (His people) by the word.

- The spiritual blood, or word, cleanses from sin. The apostle John wrote in I John 1:7, " the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." Jesus said the same in these words: " Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you" (John 15:3). Peter said the same when he wrote, " Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth" (I Pet. 1:22). Obeying the truth was the means of cleansing.

- The spiritual blood, or word, gives life. Jesus said, using blood as a symbol for His words: " Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you" (John 6:53). The Psalmist said the same when he wrote, in plain language, " Thy word hath quickened me" (Ps. 119:50).

- The spiritual blood, or word, saves. The gospel is " the power of God unto salvation" (Rom. 1:16). " By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you" (I Cor. 15:1-2). Likewise spiritual blood, or the word, saves (redeems). " In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins" (Eph. 1:7).

Pastor Ruth Sisson

8-3-1 The Problem of Human Nature

Duncan Heaster Reply

What God Requires

In His Word, God reveals only two ways to gain eternal life: the first is to be completely obedient (only Christ did this), the second is to be saved by grace through true faith in the sacrifice of Christ. Megiddo acknowledges the first, denies the second and asserts another way to salvation which is based on reaching the " moral stature of Christ" at some point in our lives.
The problem is that the moral stature of Christ is unattainable once we have sinned, which we all have done. Christ did no sin. We see the " glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (II Cor. 4:6), God's glory referring to His moral attributes, the virtue of His character (Ex. 33:18; 34:5-7). Of everyone else it is said, " All have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). Once we sin, thus failing to reach the standard of moral perfection exhibited in Christ, our only hope is to be " justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus [not our own works]: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood [the blood which Megiddo claim to be irrelevant to our salvation], to declare His [God's] righteousness for the remission of sins that are past...that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Rom. 3:23-26).
The idea of being saved because we reach a stage in our lives where we act, think and speak perfectly is foreign to scripture.

Acceptable Believers Still Sin

John describes some who received his first epistle in favorable terms. " Your sins are forgiven you...ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one" (I John 2:12,14). If Megiddo is correct, such Christians would no longer sin. They would have reached a stage where they had become pure even as Christ is pure. Yet John writes, " If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us" (I John 1:8-10). These people still sinned and needed forgiveness.
Elsewhere we read, " There is not a just man upon earth, that...sinneth not...there is no man that sinneth not" (Eccl. 7:20; Prov. 20:9; 1 Kgs 8:46). Megiddo would say there are some people on earth who have reached the stage where they do not sin. In contrast, the Bible reveals that those justified in God's sight (justified by their faith in His imputed righteousness, Hab. 2:4), still sin. This is exactly as taught in 1 John 1.
Furthermore, if by the end of our days we have achieved moral perfection, then why do we receive " mercy" at the judgment (see II Tim. 1:18; Jude 21)? Why are the faithful portrayed as being unaware of the good works which they did in their lives (Matt. 25:37)? As Paul said, he desired to " be found in [Christ], not having mine own righteousness...but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith" (Phil. 3:9). We must not trust in our own works of obedience but in God's gracious gift of righteousness.

What God Means By " Perfect"

Biblically, the words translated " perfect" do not necessarily imply moral perfection, i.e. sinlessness. Rather do they carry the idea of completeness and fullness: " Perfect and entire, wanting nothing" (Jam. 1:4). Mary and Joseph " fulfilled (same word translated " perfect") the days" of the Passover (Lk. 2:43); " the scripture was fulfilled" (John 19:28). Christ is " a more perfect tabernacle" (Heb. 9:11). " More perfect" indicates a relative sense of completion, for one cannot be " more" perfect in the absolute sense. The Hebrew translated " perfect" is also rendered " sincere" (Jud. 9:16; Josh. 24:14). Again, there is no implication of sinlessness.
The scriptures teach that both individuals and the church as a whole must develop toward some point of " perfection" (Lk. 8:14; Heb. 6:1). However, this is a point of completion of spiritual development in certain aspects, not moral sinlessness. David, Asa and others are said to be perfect of heart all their days yet they still sinned in their hearts (I Kgs. 15:3; II Chron. 15:17; 16:10,12). Therefore, " perfection" is not total sinlessness; it is a condition of true faith in God and of trying to obey Him.
There is a way that we can be considered " perfect" before God, but it is a way that Megiddo rejects. It is the blood of Christ which perfects: " By one offering [Christ] hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Heb. 10:1,14).

A Way Of Life Of Obedience

Malicious people will not be saved. Merciful people will be. But malicious people do some righteous acts; they may be merciful to their families and loyal to their employers. Scripture says, " every one that doeth righteousness is born of him" (I John 2:29). That obviously does not mean that every malicious person who does a few good things is considered a child of God. Therefore, " doeth righteousness" cannot refer to isolated right acts but to a way of life. On the other hand, merciful people will occasionally be inconsiderate or unkind. A few verses later, scripture says, " whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God" (I John 3:10). Does this mean that every merciful person is excluded from eternal life because he commits

an occasional unkind act? In no way; scripture is speaking about a pattern of obedience or of sin just as it does in regard to David, Asa and others.
Megiddo says that to be saved we must become exactly like Christ. God does not say that. We are saved in prospect at baptism. We are not begotten of God as was Jesus; and the reality is that we can improve to a high level of obedience but we will never be free from the moral results of our past sinful actions. We can walk in a pattern of obedience and that is what God sets as our goal. We will, however, be considered " perfect" if we sincerely believe in the work of Christ, for He will count our faith as righteousness.

The Problem Of Human Nature

Megiddo's view of salvation implies a misconception of man's nature. The analogy about the repentant bank robber implies that it is only our personal sins, of which we can repent, which separate us from God. This overlooks the fact that we partake in the effect of Adam's sin: " Therefore as by the offence of one [Adam] judgment came upon all men to condemnation..." (Rom. 5:18). Being freed from the guilt of our own committed sins is not the only factor in our salvation.
The point is further reinforced by the statement " The wages of sin is death." This is why we all die. If obedience alone is all that is required to obtain redemption, and we can reach a state of total obedience at some point in our lives, then why do we still die? We are not condemned for our past sins, they are forgiven. The answer must be that we are born dying creatures as a result of the judgment passed on Adam's sin. Megiddo do not deal with this problem at all. The sacrifice of Christ does.
From all this it follows that we need access to something more than our own effort if we are to be given immortality (II Pet. 1:4). In our condemned condition, we need a God-provided savior. Consider:
1. Under the law of Moses, a mother was defiled by childbirth and was to bring an offering to the priest " who shall offer it before the LORD, and make an atonement for her" (Lev. 12:7). No personal sins were involved but an atonement was still required. Why? Because the woman was defiled by the child who had come from within her. She had not brought forth sin, nor committed sin by the act of conception; but there was the need for atonement.
2. There are clear references to " the body of sin," " sinful flesh," etc. Our whole humanity , not just some of our individual actions, are associated with sin. While we must separate our thinking from our natural tendencies and develop a new mind based on that of Christ, our mortal condition cannot be changed in this life. For this reason, mortal man cannot approach God's personal presence (Ex. 33:20; II Tim. 6:16). Thus our separation from God is not due solely to our specific sins. We need a change of nature, to that which Jesus now has.
3. Romans 7 describes how Paul struggled with " sin that dwelleth in me," " in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing" which stopped him from performing the righteousness he wished to. He finally exalts in the solution: " Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ." Christ is, therefore, the means of deliverance from this sin-prone nature we have, which we all too easily give in to. Just being our example is not a deliverance from this. God provided a way for us to break our captivity to that which Paul described by " sending his son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin" : in that Jesus destroyed the power of sin through sharing our very nature (cp. Heb. 2:14-18).
Without Christ's destruction of the power of the sin-principle, we would be doomed to the results of continual sin, i.e. condemnation. We must become " in Christ" so that God will treat us as if we, too, have overcome as our Lord did. If Christ is just our example, why is there the language of being in Christ? Biblically, the point of entry into Christ is water immersion into him; remaining in him is dependent upon living a life of faith “in him”.

4. We are all under the Adamic curse of death. By Adam, sin entered into the world, and death by sin (Rom. 5:12). The way of escape from this curse is not by obedience alone. Genesis 3:15 promised that Christ as " the seed of the woman" would overcome the power of sin. We must, therefore, associate ourselves with his death, through which he destroyed the power of sin (Heb. 2:14-16).

Steps To Salvation

In setting forth their ideas, Megiddo totally omits immersion as being necessary to salvation. This is in sharp contrast to the emphasis of Christ and the apostles. When asked what one should do to be saved, Peter replied, " Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38). This parallels Jesus' instruction: " Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:15-16).
The Megiddo emphasis on obedience fails to appreciate that we enter a blessed relationship through Christ at baptism. We who were dead in our sins are made alive with Christ, for he " hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus...for by grace ye are saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:5-10).
This blessed condition is conditional upon our continuing in a faith that works by love. If we do not, we can fall from grace: " Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace" (Gal. 5:4). But unless we fall from the Truth, we stand in grace and thereby rejoice in the forgiveness of sins. We must continue believing in the work of Christ which we show by our " patient continuance in well-doing."

God Takes The Initiative

Megiddo's idea is that if we do something then God will respond. But God has taken the initiative. Rather than our obedience leading to His response, " He first loved us...[by sending] His son to be the propitiation for our sins" (I John 4:10,19). It is this which motivates our love of God.
What is Megiddo's motivation for belief in the doctrine of perfect obedience? Do they want salvation as part of a legalistic arrangement which is linked solely to their own actions? This leads to human-centered thinking, an approach which is wholly overthrown by the right balance of reliance on God's grace in the sacrifice of Christ and our works springing from our response to that grace.

The Problem Of Pride

" That no flesh should glory in his presence…of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (I Cor. 1:29-31). " For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8-9). The spirit of God's plan of salvation is perfectly clear -- the glory is not to man but to Him because of His gift to us in Christ Jesus.
In contrast, Megiddo speaks of how we must " merit eternal rewards." They say " God provides the knowledge of what we must do, along with the mental and physical powers we need. But it is our responsibility to use all these to develop the character He requires." Their only mention of depending upon God is that we depend on Him to change us from mortal to immortal.

Under the Megiddo scheme of salvation, those who think they are righteous cannot help but have an inner sense of self-satisfaction. It is not Christ who is made to them righteousness but their own effort and self-discipline. Salvation is not a gift but something that they merit, and which God owes to them as a wage (Rom. 6:22,23).
The frame of mind that would inevitably be developed is very similar to the person who prayed with himself before God, saying, " I thank thee that I am not as other men are..." He stood in contrast to the man who " smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner." The man who confessed he was a sinner and relied upon the grace of God " went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Lk. 18:9-14).
The right approach to salvation does not result in personal exaltation but humble thankfulness before God. With a right conviction, we rejoice that He cleanses us through the blood of His only begotten Son and counts our faith in this for righteousness. With a wrong approach, we are in danger of being grouped with those who " trusted in themselves that they were righteous."

Megiddo 4,000 Years Wrong

If the primary purpose of Christ was to be an example and not the God-provided savior, there is no reason for God to delay his birth for 4,000 years. Everyone, right from Adam, needed to know how to live an upright life. If Megiddo is correct, for 4,000 years people were deprived of a right example and right teaching.
Realizing Christ is our savior, however, fits perfectly with the delay in his begettal. As each generation lived, they would see that there was no perfect person. " There is none righteous, no not one...all have sinned..." (Rom. 3:10,23). Even though God called out one nation, the Jews, and worked with them, openly showing His power and sending them His word through special prophets, there was no one who could reconcile man to God: " And he [God] saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore his arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him" (Isa. 59:16).
All men, every single one of them, were alienated from God by their wicked works (Col. 1:21). " And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me...and I found none" (Ezk. 22:30). Ezekiel, Jeremiah and Daniel were all alive when these words were written but they had all sinned and come short of the glory of God. Each person thus has every reason to be convinced he cannot save himself. We need God to save us. This He has done in providing His Son that through him salvation might be offered to all who believe: " But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us...through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3:4-7).
True, it is humbling to be saved by the righteousness of another and not by our own perfect walk. Looking at the history of mankind, however, we are convinced we cannot save ourselves and should respond with grateful hearts to the fact we can be reconciled " in the body of his [Christ's] flesh" if we truly believe in him and are baptized into the Lord Jesus.

Summary

The Bible sets forth the necessity of a sanctified life and the need for sharing in the merits of the sacrificial death of Christ. Megiddo sees this as an unresolveable conflict of ideas. In fact, the two themes complement each other as is evidenced by their appearing side by side throughout the Bible. The life of grateful conformity to Jesus issues from a belief in His death

for us, and the redemption by grace which this has achieved.
Furthermore, when applied to God's requirements for us, the words for " perfect" are seen to refer to a pattern of obedience and not to absolute perfection. Even though we strive to do God's will, we all sin and likely will always commit some categories of sins.
We need deliverance not only from our specific transgressions but also from our human condition. We need a savior and God has provided one in our Lord Jesus.
The forgiveness of sins is based upon repentance and upon our faith in the sacrifice of Christ. Obedience to the commands of the Old Covenant brought about rewards on account of the blood which ratified that covenant. This pointed forward to the blood of Christ under the New Covenant, for it was " shed for...the remission of sins." " Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." This the crucial importance of association with the blood of Christ.
Symptomatic of Megiddo's mistake is their leaving baptism out of the steps to salvation. They do so in contrast to Christ and the apostles.
The importance of the issue is highlighted at the very beginning of scripture in the incident of Cain and Abel. Cain was rejected because he brought God the works of his hands rather than accepting the importance of shedding literal blood. Doubtless he reasoned, like Megiddo, that seeing he was being obedient, he was fulfilling the symbol of outpoured lifeblood. But he failed to appreciate his need for forgiveness through sacrifice, his own inadequacy; and that the symbolic must have a basis in the literal.

Duncan Heaster, September, 1992

8-3-2 Sacrifice In The Law Of Moses

MegiddoMission Reply

The Teaching Of The Mosaic Law Regarding Sacrifice

We agree that the Mosaic law was built upon the principle of sacrifice, but the common idea that " the animal sacrifices under the law pointed forward to the sacrifice of Jesus" is built upon a serious misreading of the Mosaic law.
To understand the pattern of sacrifice under the Mosaic law, a few basic facts should be noted:
1) The majority of sacrifices under the Mosaic system had nothing to do with sin or atonement. The sin offering and the trespass offering were offerings for the removal of sin. The peace offerings, thank offerings, burnt offerings, whole burnt offerings, free will offerings, meal offerings, meat offerings, drink offerings, offerings for the first-born--all these were occasions of rejoicing and even feasting.
2) Sin offerings and trespass offerings were only allowed in certain cases, i.e., when a transgression was not punishable by death (see Lev. 2, 3). When the law said that a transgression was punishable by death (murder, sabbath-breaking, adultery, etc.), no sacrifice was accepted.
3) Under Moses' law neither credit for right conduct nor guilt for transgression was transferable. There was no provision for imputed iniquity or imputed righteousness. Each individual was accountable for his own conduct, good or bad. This was a long-standing policy with God: " The fathers shall not be put to

death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin" (Deut. 24:16). When Israel strayed from this clear thinking, God's prophets brought them back with the reprimand, " What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge? As I live, saith the Lord God, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel....The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezek. 18:2-4).

4) The sacrifices for sin under the Mosaic law are not parallel with the theory that Jesus provided the sacrifice for our sins, because under the Mosaic arrangement any sacrifice for sin or transgression had to be provided by the transgressor himself. Whether he was a priest, a ruler, or a commoner, the rule was the same (See Lev. 4:3, 13, 27; 5:6-13, 14-17.) (The idea that we can sin and someone in better standing may make an offering for us is not Biblical and not parallel with any God-designed arrangement.) Under the law, the offender himself had to bring the animal, present it to the priest, lay his hand upon the animal's head, and kill it. And he could not bring the poorest, weakest animal in his flock. The sacrifice was intended to be felt. The offender had to bring an animal " without blemish...for a sin offering unto the Lord." Here was the whole purpose of the law as a teaching mechanism. If our law today required a payment of penalty from someone other than the offender, where would there be any restraint of evil?

5) The Mosaic system was a type, a foreshadowing of " good things" to come (Heb. 10:1). It was a " pattern," a " figure," teaching deeper spiritual truths. But one rule must be consistently followed: literal in the type, spiritual in the antitype. Literal sacrifices were offered under the law of Moses; spiritual sacrifices are their counterpart in the antitype. Literal blood was shed under the Mosaic system (the blood of a literal animal); spiritual blood must be shed in the antitype (the life of the flesh nature - Eph. 4:22-24; Col. 3:2-4).

If we say Christ's literal death is the appropriate antitype of the sacrifices under the law, we have an immediate incongruity, because His literal death cannot be the antitype of the literal sacrifices offered under the law. To have a fulfillment of the literal sacrifices under the Mosaic system (a type) we must have a spiritual sacrifice in the antitype, and this is what Paul called the offering of our bodies " a living sacrifice" (Rom. 12:1), a complete commitment of our total life to God. This is the shedding of blood (spiritual blood) required for forgiveness, without which " is no remission" (Heb. 9:22).

The Christadelphians state also: " The New Testament says that Jesus was typified by the altar, the High Priest, the mercy seat and the blood on it; all the elements of the Mosaic law pointed forward to Him - Hebrews 9." We ask, where? Where does the New Testament say even once in a comparison of type and antitype that Jesus was typified by anything other than the High Priest? Always He is the priest officiating, not the animal being slain upon the altar (see Heb. 2:17-18; 3:1-2; 4:14-16; 5:5-10; 7:14-28; 9:11-14; 10:19-22). The High Priest was never the sacrifice.

Passover And The Sacrifice Of Christ

The Christadelphians infer that the Passover lamb was sacrificed, as though it

were an offering for sin and in this way a type of Christ's sacrifice. Read carefully the account of the first Passover, recorded in Exodus, chapters 12 and 13, and you will see not one reference to any atonement for sin, or offering for sin, or even any seeking of forgiveness. The Paschal lamb was not a sacrifice for sin; it was killed to be eaten as part of a memorial feast.

Was the fact that Jesus was as " a lamb without blemish and spot" a suggestion that the Passover feast pointed forward to the sacrifice of Christ?

This conclusion is also based upon an insufficient knowledge of the Mosaic system. Every lamb brought to the priest under the law had to be a lamb " without blemish and without spot." Whether it was for a peace offering, a thank offering, a free will offering, a burnt offering, or a sin offering, every offering had to be perfect. And such is a perfect parallel with the offering God requires of every believer. This is why Paul said that we must offer our bodies " a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is [our] reasonable service" (Rom. 12:1). For this reason Paul preached, " warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom," that he might " present every man perfect in Christ Jesus" (Col. 1:28). Jesus wanted His Church without " spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing" (Eph. 5:26-27). Paul prayed that his brethren might be " sincere and without offence till the day of Christ" (Phil. 1:10). He also charged his son-in-the-faith Timothy: " That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Tim. 6:14). The obligation was incumbent upon Timothy, not Christ.

What about the Passover observance pointed forward to the death of Christ? Certainly not the lamb that was killed, because the lamb was not offered to God; it was killed and eaten, as part of a ceremony memorializing the Israelites' departure from Egypt. Even the blood sprinkled upon the door posts had no connection with a sacrifice for sin. It was a visual demonstration of one's obedience or compliance, and every obedient one was " passed over." There was no offering for sin, or plea for forgiveness in the whole ceremony. Passover memorialized Israel's miraculous deliverance from Egypt, and at the same time re-dedicated them to God - because God had delivered them they belonged to God and were obligated to conduct themselves as people of God.

Jesus, as a loyal Jew, observed the Passover according to the law, but added to it a new significance - His own; for at this moment He was facing the final and supreme test of His life, the completing of His own lifelong self-sacrifice to God, for He " became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:8). Concerning the Lord's Supper observance the apostle Paul explained that " the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me." And of the cup He said, " This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come" (I Cor. 11:23-26).

By commemorating the Passover we are memorializing not Jesus' physical death on the cross but His complete submission to His Father, the complete sacrifice of Himself to God, which is the death that we must " show" until He returns. We would have no way to show forth His physical death; God does not require that we be physically crucified. But we must make the same complete consecration

Jesus made by partaking of the same cup of which He drank, that cup which is " the new testament" - or new covenant, an agreement between the one partaking and God. Loyalty to this covenant is the means to all forgiveness and all remission of sins. This is why Jesus said, " This [cup] is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matt. 26:28) - not that it imparts Christ's righteousness to us but it removes sins that we confess and forsake, according to the terms of the covenant. It was an agreement Christ ratified by His physical death, and which we ratify by our complete sacrifice of ourselves to God.

A Death To Share

The apostle spoke frequently of the death of Jesus as a death in which every believer must share, and how can we think they refer to His literal death? Would God ask what we cannot do? Try inserting the words " on Calvary" after each mention of Christ's death in these passages, to see if Christ's literal death on Calvary conveys the intended meaning. For example, " We are buried with him by baptism into death [on Calvary]" (Rom. 6:4). Or, " If we be dead [on Calvary] with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him" (Rom. 6:8). Or II Tim. 2:11, " It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead [on Calvary] with him, we shall also live with him." Or take this personal statement by Paul himself: " I am crucified with Christ [on Calvary]: nevertheless I live" (Gal. 2:20). Or Paul's statement, that " being made conformable unto his death [on Calvary]" (Phil. 3:10). Or Paul's statement in II Cor. 4:10, " Always bearing about in the body the dying [on Calvary] of the Lord Jesus" - how do any of these texts have any meaning when they are applied to the literal death of Jesus?
But when we apply them to the death of which Paul spoke in Romans 6, Jesus' death of His own will, His " death to sin" (Rom. 6:10), each one is meaningful. Christ died not to spare us the trouble of dying (self-sacrifice). He died to His own will to show us how we must die - to our own will - and so make a complete surrender of ourselves to God, as He did. This is how Peter could challenge his brethren to rejoice in being " partakers of Christ's sufferings" (I Pet. 4:13) - not His physical sufferings on Calvary but His life of complete self-surrender, of which His physical death was the completion and crowning act.
Peter described it precisely when he said that " Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps" (I Pet. 2:21), and he immediately continued to show the moral qualities of that death, showing that it was not His physical crucifixion but His supreme nobility of character. " Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not" (vs. 22-23).

No Imputed Righteousness

Picture a court scene. A man is on trial for abusing and killing his child. Everyone in the court knows the man is guilty. They have all seen him abuse the child numerous times, and the man himself admits that he is guilty. But when the judge gives the verdict, he pronounces the man " not guilty" because his next door neighbor is extremely kind to his children, and he wishes to credit the guilty

man with the good conduct of his neighbor.
Or take the reverse situation. The good neighbor is on trial for abusing his child. Everyone knows he is not guilty, and everyone knows also who the guilty man is. But the judge pronounces the good neighbor " guilty" and subject to punishment because of the misconduct of the first man.
Now this is imputed righteousness, and imputed iniquity. And where is the justice? Is this the way God operates? Is this the way He treats His human family? It is, if the Christadelphians' theory of " imputed righteousness" is true. If God can impute righteousness, what is to keep Him from imputing iniquity? But praise God! No such unfairness blots the record of the Almighty. His principle is clear: " His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins" (Prov. 5:22). Also, " The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezek. 18:20) - it, not some other.
The prophets even went so far as to state precisely that all the righteousness of the most righteous man would not be able to save the evildoer. " Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, where in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord God" (Ezek. 14:14). If they could deliver " but their own souls by their righteousness," how can God make an exception of Christ's righteousness and be true to His own principles?
The word " impute" is used 15 times in Scripture, and of these, 7 refer to imputing sin or iniquity, 2 are irrelevant, 4 speak of imputing righteousness to the righteous individual himself, and 2 others refer to imputing righteousness to those who believe. There is no passage in the Bible which says that Christ's righteousness can be imputed to us so that God will count us as righteous when we are not. " Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness" (James 2:23). And righteousness will likewise be imputed " for us also,...if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead" (Rom. 4:22-24).
" Impute" simply means to " put down to one's account," to make a record of what is due to one on the basis of his actions. This is exactly God's method: to reward every man according to his works. The record is being kept, and according to that record each servant of God will be judged and rewarded (Mal. 3:16-17; Rev. 20:12).
Neither righteousness nor sin is transferable from one individual to another, no matter who the individual may be. We ourselves must become pure as Christ is pure (I John 3:3). We ourselves must become holy as God is holy (I Pet. 1:15-16). Abraham was counted righteous because he believed God and acted upon his belief. " Because thou hast obeyed my voice," said God, he received the blessing (Gen. 22:16-18). We will be counted righteous by the same process, just as we believe and act upon our belief.

Our Righteousness, Not Christ's

The Christadelphians say that for Christ to present us " faultless before the presence of His glory" (Jude 24), or " without blame before him," He must cleanse us, that only so can He present to Himself " a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing" (Eph. 5:26-27). " All these statements," they say, " become meaningful within the context of righteousness

being imputed."
But what about Paul's own words in II Cor. 7:1: " Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" ? Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit - this does not sound as though Christ does it for us. And the very passage they cite from (Eph. 5:26-27) shows what is the cleansing medium: " That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word." The washing is accomplished " by the word," by the application of His message, His gospel. This is the cleansing medium, just as Jesus said, " Now are ye clean" - because I am going to shed my blood on the cross for you? No, " now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you" (John 15:3).

The Place Of Forgiveness

The Christadelphians say, " Megiddo must have a strange concept of forgiveness, if salvation is by human effort, with no reference to the sacrifice of Jesus." We do indeed want and need forgiveness, but we want it on God's terms, not our own. And we do not find any evidence in the Bible that " forgiveness and the imputation of righteousness is made possible only by the death of Christ." What does the Bible say about God's terms of forgiveness? " Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (Isa. 55:7). What more could one need?

The Purpose Of Christ's Life

What was the purpose of Christ's life? The Christadelphians say, " The fact is that Christ was born and he died, 'for us'. This was his very reason of being." No Scripture is given to support this point - because none exists. But Jesus stated clearly the purpose of His life. When questioned by Pilate, " Art thou a king then?" He answered, " Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth" (John 18:37). This fact is reinforced by a statement made prophetically of Christ in Psalm 40, that He came to do His Father's will, a statement directly applied to Christ (see Heb. 10:7). This same statement in Hebrews 10 says also that God does not value literal sacrifice, that " Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein" (v.8) - why, then, would He demand the sacrifice of His own Son? But on the contrary, He wanted a life of obedience, of delighting to do the Father's will. " Lo, I come...to do thy will, O God" (Heb. 10:7).

About Breaking Of Bread And Associating With Christ's Saving Work

The Christadelphians say that " because forgiveness and the hope of salvation is only available through Christ's own death" - a statement for which they offer no evidence--we " need to associate ourselves with him." The inference is that we do this by regularly breaking bread, i.e., every week. The early Church, they say,

" broke bread very often," and cite Acts 20:7 and 2:42, 46.
There is a basic problem with this stance. How can we know that " breaking of bread" always referred to the Passover memorial? We read in Matthew 14 that when Jesus had commanded the multitude to " sit down upon the grass," He took bread and " brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples." Were all of these thousands of people keeping the sacred memorial? The same is said when He fed the multitude the second time (Matt. 15:33-38). Was He instituting the sacred memorial supper with all these multitudes? The apostle Paul also took bread and brake it when the ship was on the verge of being wrecked. We read that " He took bread, and gave thanks to God in the presence of them all: and when he had broken it, he began to eat" (Acts 27:35). Was this the time to observe the Passover? The term " breaking of bread" was simply a way of stating that the people had a meal together. It may or may not have been a Passover ceremony.
Do we have any instructions to partake of the emblems each week? During five full weeks after His resurrection (Acts 1:3), Jesus did not partake of the Passover with His brethren. How do we know? We have His own statement, made at the time He observed the sacred ceremony with His disciples on the evening of Abib 13, that He would no more eat thereof " until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God" (Luke 22:16; see also Matt. 26:29; Mark 14:25).
In observing the Passover, Jesus was observing the ancient Passover, an annual remembrance of the night of the Israelites' miraculous deliverance from Egypt. It was an anniversary, which is always a yearly occasion. In keeping it, Jesus re-memorialized it by associating it with Himself on the night before He suffered. But how could He change an anniversary (annual observance) into a weekly observance?

Ruth Sisson, September, 1992

8-4-1 The Word And Blood Of Christ

Final Duncan Heaster Statement

The seeker for truth will have noticed many fundamental doctrines that underlie our position in this debate. We believe that Christ was our representative, of human nature, who was of morally perfect character. We are all mortal and we are all personally sinners. We all need to be saved from our mortality and from our sins; we cannot save ourselves. Even Jesus, while being free of personal sin, needed redemption from his mortal condition (Heb. 9:12). By association with Christ's death and resurrection, shown by water baptism and a life of conformity to his words, we can share in his exaltation to immortality at his return. Because Christ was our representative, we are to share in his commitment to God. We are to identify with his crucifixion by putting sin to death in our lives; we are to identify with his resurrection by living in newness of life. If we fail to do this, we openly demonstrate that we do not truly believe in him (Rom. 6:4,11-12).

Megiddo's Smoke-Screen

Knowing this, Megiddo is surely putting up a smoke-screen by claiming that I have the neo-pagan view of the atonement held by orthodox Christendom. They know we believe that

Jesus is not God but that he is an immortalized man. He was one of us and that is why he is now an effective representative. This is basic to the power and truth of the Bible doctrine of the atonement.
As one of us, Jesus showed us how to overcome sin in our lives. And, because he understands our struggle against human nature, he is wonderfully suited to help us now in our times of need for spiritual help (Heb. 4:15-16).
Because he did not sin, he did not personally deserve to die and therefore God raised him from the dead. In the mercy of God, we, who do deserve to die, can benefit from the righteousness of Christ by belief in him, baptism into his name and a faithful life (Rom. 5:18-19). Furthermore, we have made it perfectly clear that a belief in Christ must result in a right pattern of life. If it does not, we will be rejected at the judgment seat of Christ. Obedience does matter to our salvation. This is not the orthodox view of the atonement, it is the biblical one.
I reject the idea that we are once saved, always saved. We believe that our individual effort is mandatory if we are to remain in the way of life. Megiddo knows this and is simply raising a smoke-screen when it ignores our beliefs in this regard.

Works Alone?

Megiddo's position is that our salvation depends " wholly upon what we do, i.e. our own virtue and obedience." Because they have this " works only" idea, they deny the connection between forgiveness of sins and Christ's death. We have shown that Megiddo's view is directly denied by specific Bible statements.
" In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his [God's] grace...For by grace are ye saved through faith...not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 1:7; 2:8-9). " The kindness and love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us...through Jesus Christ our Savior; that being justified by his grace..." (Titus 3:4-7). God says salvation is by grace through faith, not by works of righteousness which we have done. Understandably, Megiddo has not addressed such passages as they clearly contradict their contention that salvation depends wholly upon our own virtue.
How can Jesus be our Savior (and why does " Jesus" mean savior?) if we effect our own salvation? The redeemed praise Christ, " Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain and has redeemed us to God by thy blood." Why would they offer such praise if they were saved wholly by their own virtue? The salvation and forgiveness of those who lived before Christ was dependent upon the blood of Christ (Heb. 9:15). Why is this true if salvation is a matter of individual obedience without reference to Christ's blood? Why is salvation dependent upon the resurrection of Christ, after he had set the example in his life (I Cor. 15:12-21)?

Be Thankful For Grace

Megiddo says we must become perfect. If Megiddo is right, no one but the Lord Jesus will be saved. Consider Abraham -- " Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness" (Gen. 15:6 NIV). After this time, Abraham did not behave flawlessly: at age 85, he shared Sarah's doubt, taking her handmaid to conceive an heir; fourteen years later, he doubted that he and Sarah could have children at an advanced age and, that same year, he deceived the Philistine, Abimelech, regarding the status of Sarah (Gen. 16:2; 17:17; 20:2). Abraham's faith was very great and led him to offer Isaac, trusting God would raise Isaac from the dead. It was not adequate, however, to result in unblemished conduct. According to

Megiddo, Abraham could not be considered righteous until he had reached a point of sinlessness. Thankfully, that is not the way God works.
Consider Moses - " By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharoah's daughter...By faith he forsook Egypt...Through faith he kept the passover...(he) obtained a good report through faith..." (Heb. 11:24,27,28,39). Yet within a few months of his death, Moses committed a very serious sin which led to his exclusion from entering Palestine at that time (Num. 20:12). Like many people whom God saves, Moses did not steadily improve throughout life to a point of sinlessness (cp. Asa, Jeshoshaphat and Josiah, noting their last recorded action is a transgression, II Chr. 11,12; 20:37; 35:22). Megiddo's message that we must reach a point of no more sinning is not the Bible's message.
Consider ourselves - the great Christian command is to love one another. Of love it is said, " Love worketh no ill to his neighbor" (Rom. 13:10). Who would ever dare say they do not, even by thoughtlessness, occasionally work hardships and ill on others. Despite good intentions, our forgetfulness and insensitivity (aspects of our human nature) make it impossible for us to reach a point of not sinning.
Megiddo claims forgiveness comes when we overcome a sin and transgress no more in that way. Such reasoning may apply to robbery and drunkenness but it hardly applies to being thoughtless, insensitive or sarcastic. Just when we think we are exhibiting love, we realize we thoughtlessly caused much trouble to another person. When considering the finer virtues, scripture confirms what is an observation of sincere believers: " If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (I John 1:8).

Imputed Righteousness Equals Forgiveness

The truth is that when we believe and are baptized into Christ, we enter into a most blessed relationship with God. He forgives us our sins; He counts our faith for righteousness; He considers us part of His own family. He works with us and helps us develop personal holiness, unless we forsake the Truth and persist to walk in sin.
Megiddo rejects the idea of imputed righteousness. In doing so, they reject the forgiveness of sins, because having righteousness imputed to us simply means one's sins are forgiven. " But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin" (Rom. 4:5-8).
This is not a mystical matter of someone else's righteousness being attributed to us. In the gracious purpose of God, this is a matter of the forgiveness of our sins being made possible through the righteousness of Christ. In other words, God counts our attitude of faith as righteousness and deals with us as if we were actually righteous. In Bible terms, we thus have a righteousness that is of God.

The Issue Of Fairness

Megiddo claims that God is fair and will deal with us " exactly" as we deserve. If that were true, no one would have a chance as we are all sinners and " the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23).
Forgiving sins is not fair; it is merciful. As already indicated, Megiddo speaks of forgiveness of specific sins when a person ceases to commit that kind of sin. In acknowledging even this form of forgiveness, Megiddo concedes the whole fairness issue. We do not want fairness, we want mercy.

Being judged according to our works is speaking in relative, not absolute terms. Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, David were upright men, all of whom will be saved (Heb. 11:39-40). Yet they all sinned and came short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23). They were upright in that, after their commitment of faith to God, they " walked before thee (the LORD) in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart" (I Kgs. 3:6). They committed sins, but sin was not the pattern of life in which they walked (I John 1:6-7).
God is fair in that He is not biased by race, economic condition or social standing. He is fair in that He saves those who believe Him and walk in His way but He will destroy those who disdain His commands. Thankfully, He does not give us " exactly" what we deserve, for all we deserve is death. As Paul says, " O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 7:24).

The Typology Of The Mosaic Law

Because Megiddo believes that every type has a spiritual, abstract antitype, they have to deny that the Mosaic institutions pointed forward to the Lord Jesus, except for the obvious type of the high priest. The New Testament points out that many other aspects of the law also typified Christ. Jesus is also the antitypical altar (Heb. 13:10). And the bodies of the animals who were burnt " without the camp" pointed forward to Christ, who " that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate" (Heb. 13:11,12).
Megiddo asks where is it " that Jesus was typified by anything other than the high priest?" The whole of Hebrews 7 - 10 show that Jesus was typified by the sacrifices: " (Jesus) needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself...Nor yet that ye should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others: for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself...so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many...By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God" (Heb. 7:27; 9:25-28; 10:10-12).
The point could not be more clearly stated. The daily sacrifices typified the Lord Jesus as did the annual ones on the day of atonement. He was the antitypical burnt, sin and trespass offering as well as the antitypical scapegoat. Megiddo's challenge is clearly answered.
The passover lamb also pointed forward to the sacrifice of Christ. True, it was not a sacrifice for sin; true, again, that the unblemished quality of the animal is an exhortation to personal obedience. The fact is not changed, however, that the blood of the slain lamb saved from death those who relied upon it. This aspect of the ritual is directly applied to Christ: " Christ our passover is sacrificed for us" (I Cor. 5:7).

Figurative Language

There are many passages, as Megiddo admit, which " seem to say that the literal death of Christ is instrumental in our salvation." To explain these away, Megiddo have gone down a tortuous path of twisted semantics and fallacious logic. They seek to " prove" that the references to Christ's death and resurrection refer only to an example which we should follow by spiritually dying to the flesh, rather than also being the means of atonement for our sins. Megiddo asserts that the typical is literal while the antitypical is spiritual. The inaccuracy of their assertion is obvious. They admit that the Lord Jesus is an antitypical, yet literal, high

priest. The vine is a symbol of Israel, but this does not mean that the vine is not a literal plant, nor does it mean that Israel is something symbolic. " At the second time Joseph was made known unto his brethren" (Acts 7:13), as Christ will be accepted at his second coming by his Jewish brethren, having been rejected by them 2,000 years ago. Thus the life of Joseph has a literal antitype. Melchizedek was a non-Levitical priest, and a king of Jerusalem. As such, he typified Christ (Heb.7). This does not mean Christ will be only a symbolic priest and king. The wine represents Christ's literal blood. If Christ meant us to see the wine as symbolizing only his exemplary life rather than his literal blood, he would have said, " This is my way of life." Substitute " way of life" for " blood" and his words make no sense: " this is my blood [way of life] which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matt. 26:28). Our salvation is based upon his literal death, for " without shedding of blood is no remission" (Heb. 9:22). Megiddo equates the " word" with the " blood" of Christ. They say: " The blood cleanses and the word cleanses. Therefore, the blood is the word." But I wash with soap, and I wash with water. But this does not mean that soap is water. Again, they fail to appreciate that the end product, i.e. cleansing and salvation, results from a number of different factors, not just one (i.e. obedience to the word). Obedience to the word is a necessary response to " the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."
While there is much figurative language in scripture, we make a grave mistake if we fail to see the literal reality that underlies the powerful lessons expressed in figures of speech.

Example And Exhortation

I look to Christ as the great example to follow. But he is more than an example, he is the Savior. We agree that there is much exhortation to personal godliness in the death and resurrection of Christ. Megiddo has done a good job of pointing that out. But there is redemption as well as exhortation in the cross and the resurrection to glory that followed. Megiddo see the exhortation but needlessly reject the redemption.
Tragically, if a person rejects redemption in Christ he is still in his sins. No matter how much right doctrine a person may believe, no matter how holy he might live, he remains unforgiven: " For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood...where is boasting then: it is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith" (Rom. 3:23-27).
The great irony is that personal righteousness will only be developed by those who rely upon God in faith rather than upon their own virtue and obedience. By being forgiven in Christ, we have a right relationship with God in which He helps us to develop the fruits of the spirit. In addition, we are motivated by His love in giving Christ and by Christ's love in giving himself. If we yield ourselves to the word and work of God, striving to cooperate with Him in the molding of our characters, our faith brings forth righteousness (Gal. 5:5-6). " The just shall live by faith" speaks of how the just become just. They do so through faith in God. Consequently, they do not look at the goodness that develops as their virtue. They do not feel such goodness warrants God's favor, for they know any virtue they have is attributable to God in their lives.
Being forgiven in Christ precedes the development of such personal holiness. " If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared" (Psa. 130:3-4). Knowing we are forgiven, every sin does not rest as a crippling burden on our minds (Heb. 9:14). If we are not walking in sin but are walking in Christ, the blood of Christ cleanses us from sin; we thus rejoice as forgiven people (I John 1:7).
There is no conflict between redemption by faith in Christ and the development of personal

holiness. When rightly understood, our growth from repentant to upright people is dependent upon our forgiveness. The Megiddo approach is much like Rabbinic Judaism which started with the demand of obedience and pointed to forgiveness and sonship as its goal. The gospel starts with the free gift of forgiveness and sonship through faith and points to righteousness as its goal.

The Need For Baptism

Failing to acknowledge our need to be associated with Christ's literal death, Megiddo rejects the need for immersion into Christ in their steps to salvation. Again, this is a tragic mistake. Immersion into Christ is when the forgiveness of sins begins: " Buried with him in baptism in which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead. And you, who were dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses..." (Col. 2:12-13 RSV).
If we are faithful to our commitment, God has designated this humble act as the starting point for a life of forgiveness and the development of the fruits of the spirit.

Conclusion

This debate has shown the need to have a framework upon which to hang all our Biblical research. It has shown the need to understand the whole system of basic doctrinal truth which is in scripture. Just one major mistake, in one element of that system, leads to a denial of the basic Gospel message. It is tragic that Megiddo members have so many elements correct, but are astray on this fundamental issue of the atonement. We would dearly like to have more contact with anyone who is seeking the full system of truth. I would be delighted to send a free copy of our 380 page book Bible Basics to any who care to write to me and also to answer any questions concerning the matters presented in this debate. My address: info@carelinks.net .
In the course of this debate, we have touched upon most of the main elements of the true Gospel. Man needs redemption because he is mortal and because all of us have sinned. Our redemption was made possible by God through Christ, our redeemer, the promised descendant of Eve, Abraham and David who was to destroy sin's power. Being of our nature and acting as our representative, he destroyed sin in the very arena of sin's dominion, his human nature. Thus he was not of God's nature, neither did he physically exist before his birth.
By water baptism into his death and resurrection, we become " in Christ" . We, therefore, live now in the spirit of the resurrection, walking " in newness of life," serving God and not the flesh (Rom 6:11).
In grace, we have been granted forgiveness of sin by being " in Christ," but we still have the very real possibility of falling from grace. Our personal righteousness springs from a firm faith in Christ's redeeming work for us. We strive to endure the daily crucifixion of the flesh which being " in Christ" entails, knowing that " if we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him." We therefore look forward to his return to establish God's kingdom on earth when our warfare with sin will be over. We eagerly anticipate the day of resurrection and judgment, believing that, through the forgiveness of our sins in Christ we will stand " faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy." In that day, we will realize, even more than we do now, the degree to which " God was in Christ...not imputing our iniquities unto us." In that day, we will express our praise for God's redemption through Christ even more powerfully,

with far greater intellectual clarity and vigor: " To the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."

Duncan Heaster, October, 1992.

8-3-2 Sacrifice In The Law Of Moses

MegiddoMission Reply

The Teaching Of The Mosaic Law Regarding Sacrifice

We agree that the Mosaic law was built upon the principle of sacrifice, but the common idea that " the animal sacrifices under the law pointed forward to the sacrifice of Jesus" is built upon a serious misreading of the Mosaic law.
To understand the pattern of sacrifice under the Mosaic law, a few basic facts should be noted:
1) The majority of sacrifices under the Mosaic system had nothing to do with sin or atonement. The sin offering and the trespass offering were offerings for the removal of sin. The peace offerings, thank offerings, burnt offerings, whole burnt offerings, free will offerings, meal offerings, meat offerings, drink offerings, offerings for the first-born--all these were occasions of rejoicing and even feasting.
2) Sin offerings and trespass offerings were only allowed in certain cases, i.e., when a transgression was not punishable by death (see Lev. 2, 3). When the law said that a transgression was punishable by death (murder, sabbath-breaking, adultery, etc.), no sacrifice was accepted.
3) Under Moses' law neither credit for right conduct nor guilt for transgression was transferable. There was no provision for imputed iniquity or imputed righteousness. Each individual was accountable for his own conduct, good or bad. This was a long-standing policy with God: " The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin" (Deut. 24:16). When Israel strayed from this clear thinking, God's prophets brought them back with the reprimand, " What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge? As I live, saith the Lord God, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel....The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezek. 18:2-4).
4) The sacrifices for sin under the Mosaic law are not parallel with the theory that Jesus provided the sacrifice for our sins, because under the Mosaic arrangement any sacrifice for sin or transgression had to be provided by the transgressor himself. Whether he was a priest, a ruler, or a commoner, the rule was the same (See Lev. 4:3, 13, 27; 5:6-13, 14-17.) (The idea that we can sin and someone in better standing may make an offering for us is not Biblical and not parallel with any God-designed arrangement.) Under the law, the offender himself had to bring the animal, present it to the priest, lay his hand upon the animal's head, and kill it. And he could not bring the poorest, weakest animal in his flock. The sacrifice was intended to be felt. The offender had to bring an animal " without blemish...for a sin offering unto the Lord." Here was the whole purpose of the law as a teaching mechanism. If our law today required a payment of penalty from someone other than the offender, where would there be any restraint of evil?
5) The Mosaic system was a type, a foreshadowing of " good things" to come (Heb. 10:1). It was a " pattern," a " figure," teaching deeper spiritual truths. But one rule must be consistently followed: literal in the type, spiritual in the antitype. Literal sacrifices were

offered under the law of Moses; spiritual sacrifices are their counterpart in the antitype. Literal blood was shed under the Mosaic system (the blood of a literal animal); spiritual blood must be shed in the antitype (the life of the flesh nature - Eph. 4:22-24; Col. 3:2-4). If we say Christ's literal death is the appropriate antitype of the sacrifices under the law, we have an immediate incongruity, because His literal death cannot be the antitype of the literal sacrifices offered under the law. To have a fulfillment of the literal sacrifices under the Mosaic system (a type) we must have a spiritual sacrifice in the antitype, and this is what Paul called the offering of our bodies " a living sacrifice" (Rom. 12:1), a complete commitment of our total life to God. This is the shedding of blood (spiritual blood) required for forgiveness, without which " is no remission" (Heb. 9:22).

The Christadelphians state also: " The New Testament says that Jesus was typified by the altar, the High Priest, the mercy seat and the blood on it; all the elements of the Mosaic law pointed forward to Him - Hebrews 9." We ask, where? Where does the New Testament say even once in a comparison of type and antitype that Jesus was typified by anything other than the High Priest? Always He is the priest officiating, not the animal being slain upon the altar (see Heb. 2:17-18; 3:1-2; 4:14-16; 5:5-10; 7:14-28; 9:11-14; 10:19-22). The High Priest was never the sacrifice.

Passover And The Sacrifice Of Christ

The Christadelphians infer that the Passover lamb was sacrificed, as though it were an offering for sin and in this way a type of Christ's sacrifice. Read carefully the account of the first Passover, recorded in Exodus, chapters 12 and 13, and you will see not one reference to any atonement for sin, or offering for sin, or even any seeking of forgiveness. The Paschal lamb was not a sacrifice for sin; it was killed to be eaten as part of a memorial feast.

Was the fact that Jesus was as " a lamb without blemish and spot" a suggestion that the Passover feast pointed forward to the sacrifice of Christ?

This conclusion is also based upon an insufficient knowledge of the Mosaic system. Every lamb brought to the priest under the law had to be a lamb " without blemish and without spot." Whether it was for a peace offering, a thank offering, a free will offering, a burnt offering, or a sin offering, every offering had to be perfect. And such is a perfect parallel with the offering God requires of every believer. This is why Paul said that we must offer our bodies " a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is [our] reasonable service" (Rom. 12:1). For this reason Paul preached, " warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom," that he might " present every man perfect in Christ Jesus" (Col. 1:28). Jesus wanted His Church without " spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing" (Eph. 5:26-27). Paul prayed that his brethren might be " sincere and without offence till the day of Christ" (Phil. 1:10). He also charged his son-in-the-faith Timothy: " That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Tim. 6:14). The obligation was incumbent upon Timothy, not Christ.

What about the Passover observance pointed forward to the death of Christ? Certainly not the lamb that was killed, because the lamb was not offered to God; it was killed and eaten, as part of a ceremony memorializing the Israelites' departure from Egypt. Even the blood sprinkled upon the door posts had no connection with a sacrifice for sin. It was a visual demonstration of one's obedience or compliance, and every obedient one was " passed over." There was no offering for sin, or plea for forgiveness in the whole ceremony. Passover memorialized Israel's miraculous deliverance from Egypt, and at the same time re-dedicated them to God - because God had delivered them they belonged to God and were obligated to conduct themselves as people of God.

Jesus, as a loyal Jew, observed the Passover according to the law, but added to it a new

significance - His own; for at this moment He was facing the final and supreme test of His life, the completing of His own lifelong self-sacrifice to God, for He " became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:8). Concerning the Lord's Supper observance the apostle Paul explained that " the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me." And of the cup He said, " This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come" (I Cor. 11:23-26).

By commemorating the Passover we are memorializing not Jesus' physical death on the cross but His complete submission to His Father, the complete sacrifice of Himself to God, which is the death that we must " show" until He returns. We would have no way to show forth His physical death; God does not require that we be physically crucified. But we must make the same complete consecration Jesus made by partaking of the same cup of which He drank, that cup which is " the new testament" - or new covenant, an agreement between the one partaking and God. Loyalty to this covenant is the means to all forgiveness and all remission of sins. This is why Jesus said, " This [cup] is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matt. 26:28) - not that it imparts Christ's righteousness to us but it removes sins that we confess and forsake, according to the terms of the covenant. It was an agreement Christ ratified by His physical death, and which we ratify by our complete sacrifice of ourselves to God.

A Death To Share

The apostle spoke frequently of the death of Jesus as a death in which every believer must share, and how can we think they refer to His literal death? Would God ask what we cannot do? Try inserting the words " on Calvary" after each mention of Christ's death in these passages, to see if Christ's literal death on Calvary conveys the intended meaning. For example, " We are buried with him by baptism into death [on Calvary]" (Rom. 6:4). Or, " If we be dead [on Calvary] with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him" (Rom. 6:8). Or II Tim. 2:11, " It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead [on Calvary] with him, we shall also live with him." Or take this personal statement by Paul himself: " I am crucified with Christ [on Calvary]: nevertheless I live" (Gal. 2:20). Or Paul's statement, that " being made conformable unto his death [on Calvary]" (Phil. 3:10). Or Paul's statement in II Cor. 4:10, " Always bearing about in the body the dying [on Calvary] of the Lord Jesus" - how do any of these texts have any meaning when they are applied to the literal death of Jesus?

But when we apply them to the death of which Paul spoke in Romans 6, Jesus' death of His own will, His " death to sin" (Rom. 6:10), each one is meaningful. Christ died not to spare us the trouble of dying (self-sacrifice). He died to His own will to show us how we must die - to our own will - and so make a complete surrender of ourselves to God, as He did. This is how Peter could challenge his brethren to rejoice in being " partakers of Christ's sufferings" (I Pet. 4:13) - not His physical sufferings on Calvary but His life of complete self-surrender, of which His physical death was the completion and crowning act.

Peter described it precisely when he said that " Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps" (I Pet. 2:21), and he immediately continued to show the moral qualities of that death, showing that it was not His physical crucifixion but His supreme nobility of character. " Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not" (vs. 22-23).

No Imputed Righteousness

Picture a court scene. A man is on trial for abusing and killing his child. Everyone in the court knows the man is guilty. They have all seen him abuse the child numerous times, and the man himself admits that he is guilty. But when the judge gives the verdict, he pronounces the man " not guilty" because his next door neighbor is extremely kind to his children, and he wishes to credit the guilty man with the good conduct of his neighbor.

Or take the reverse situation. The good neighbor is on trial for abusing his child. Everyone knows he is not guilty, and everyone knows also who the guilty man is. But the judge pronounces the good neighbor " guilty" and subject to punishment because of the misconduct of the first man.

Now this is imputed righteousness, and imputed iniquity. And where is the justice? Is this the way God operates? Is this the way He treats His human family? It is, if the Christadelphians' theory of " imputed righteousness" is true. If God can impute righteousness, what is to keep Him from imputing iniquity?

But praise God! No such unfairness blots the record of the Almighty. His principle is clear: " His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins" (Prov. 5:22). Also, " The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezek. 18:20) - it, not some other.

The prophets even went so far as to state precisely that all the righteousness of the most righteous man would not be able to save the evildoer. " Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, where in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord God" (Ezek. 14:14). If they could deliver " but their own souls by their righteousness," how can God make an exception of Christ's righteousness and be true to His own principles?

The word " impute" is used 15 times in Scripture, and of these, 7 refer to imputing sin or iniquity, 2 are irrelevant, 4 speak of imputing righteousness to the righteous individual himself, and 2 others refer to imputing righteousness to those who believe. There is no passage in the Bible which says that Christ's righteousness can be imputed to us so that God will count us as righteous when we are not. " Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness" (James 2:23). And righteousness will likewise be imputed " for us also,...if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead" (Rom. 4:22-24).

" Impute" simply means to " put down to one's account," to make a record of what is due to one on the basis of his actions. This is exactly God's method: to reward every man according to his works. The record is being kept, and according to that record each servant of God will be judged and rewarded (Mal. 3:16-17; Rev. 20:12).

Neither righteousness nor sin is transferable from one individual to another, no matter who the individual may be. We ourselves must become pure as Christ is pure (I John 3:3). We ourselves must become holy as God is holy (I Pet. 1:15-16). Abraham was counted righteous because he believed God and acted upon his belief. " Because thou hast obeyed my voice," said God, he received the blessing (Gen. 22:16-18). We will be counted righteous by the same process, just as we believe and act upon our belief.

Our Righteousness, Not Christ's

The Christadelphians say that for Christ to present us " faultless before the presence of His glory" (Jude 24), or " without blame before him," He must cleanse us, that only so can He present to Himself " a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing" (Eph. 5:26-27). " All these statements," they say, " become meaningful within the context of righteousness being imputed."

But what about Paul's own words in II Cor. 7:1: " Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness

in the fear of God" ? Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit - this does not sound as though Christ does it for us. And the very passage they cite from (Eph. 5:26-27) shows what is the cleansing medium: " That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word." The washing is accomplished " by the word," by the application of His message, His gospel. This is the cleansing medium, just as Jesus said, " Now are ye clean" - because I am going to shed my blood on the cross for you? No, " now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you" (John 15:3).

The Place Of Forgiveness

The Christadelphians say, " Megiddo must have a strange concept of forgiveness, if salvation is by human effort, with no reference to the sacrifice of Jesus." We do indeed want and need forgiveness, but we want it on God's terms, not our own. And we do not find any evidence in the Bible that " forgiveness and the imputation of righteousness is made possible only by the death of Christ." What does the Bible say about God's terms of forgiveness? " Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (Isa. 55:7). What more could one need?

The Purpose Of Christ's Life

What was the purpose of Christ's life? The Christadelphians say, " The fact is that Christ was born and he died, 'for us'. This was his very reason of being." No Scripture is given to support this point - because none exists. But Jesus stated clearly the purpose of His life. When questioned by Pilate, " Art thou a king then?" He answered, " Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth" (John 18:37). This fact is reinforced by a statement made prophetically of Christ in Psalm 40, that He came to do His Father's will, a statement directly applied to Christ (see Heb. 10:7). This same statement in Hebrews 10 says also that God does not value literal sacrifice, that " Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein" (v.8) - why, then, would He demand the sacrifice of His own Son? But on the contrary, He wanted a life of obedience, of delighting to do the Father's will. " Lo, I come...to do thy will, O God" (Heb. 10:7).

About Breaking Of Bread And Associating With Christ's Saving Work

The Christadelphians say that " because forgiveness and the hope of salvation is only available through Christ's own death" - a statement for which they offer no evidence--we " need to associate ourselves with him." The inference is that we do this by regularly breaking bread, i.e., every week. The early Church, they say, " broke bread very often," and cite Acts 20:7 and 2:42, 46.

There is a basic problem with this stance. How can we know that " breaking of bread" always referred to the Passover memorial? We read in Matthew 14 that when Jesus had commanded the multitude to " sit down upon the grass," He took bread and " brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples." Were all of these thousands of people keeping the sacred memorial? The same is said when He fed the multitude the second time (Matt. 15:33-38). Was He instituting the sacred memorial supper with all these multitudes? The apostle Paul also took bread and brake it when the ship was on the verge of being wrecked. We read that " He took bread, and gave thanks to God in the presence of them all: and when he had broken it, he began to eat" (Acts 27:35). Was this the time to observe the Passover? The term " breaking of bread" was simply

a way of stating that the people had a meal together. It may or may not have been a Passover ceremony.
Do we have any instructions to partake of the emblems each week? During five full weeks after His resurrection (Acts 1:3), Jesus did not partake of the Passover with His brethren. How do we know? We have His own statement, made at the time He observed the sacred ceremony with His disciples on the evening of Abib 13, that He would no more eat thereof " until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God" (Luke 22:16; see also Matt. 26:29; Mark 14:25). In observing the Passover, Jesus was observing the ancient Passover, an annual remembrance of the night of the Israelites' miraculous deliverance from Egypt. It was an anniversary, which is always a yearly occasion. In keeping it, Jesus re-memorialized it by associating it with Himself on the night before He suffered. But how could He change an anniversary (annual observance) into a weekly observance?

Ruth Sisson, September, 1992

9.1 Should Christians Keep The Sabbath Today?

Transcript Of A Debate With Philip Bartlett

2001

Written debate on good-news e-mail discussion forum

Debaters:

Against the necessity of keeping the sabbath: Mr. Duncan Heaster

For the necessity of keeping the sabbath: Mr. Philip Bartlett (Conservative Presbyterian-Calvinist)

Part 1: Opening Statements of 3000 words

Mr. Heaster:

9-1-1 The Sabbath And The Law Of Moses

9-1-2 The Sabbath In The Early Church

9-1-3 No Difference Between Torah And The Ten Commandments

Mr. Bartlett:

9-2-1 Ceremonial And Moral Law

9-2-2 The Sabbath And Sunday

9-2-3 Colossians 2 Explained

Part 2: Rebuttals of 3000 words

Mr. Heaster:

9-3-1 Law, Commandment, Statutes And Covenant

Mr. Bartlett:

9-3-2 The Sabbath And Salvation

Part 3: Question And Answer: 5 questions of 100 words from each participant, with answers of 200 words by the other

9-4-1 The Weekly Sabbaths

9-4-2 The Sabbath And Israel

9-4-3 The First Day Of The Week

9-4-4 The Sabbath Fulfilled

9-4-5 The Sabbath And Conscience

Part 4: Summary / Final statements of 1000 words

9-5-1 The Sabbath Is Not Binding Today

9-5-2 Our Obligation To Observe The Sabbath

9-6 Moses' Law " Done away"

Note: Mr. Bartlett exceeded his total word count but this was accepted by Mr. Heaster.

Part 1: Opening Statements

Opening Statement By Mr. Duncan Heaster:

9-1-1 The Sabbath And The Law Of Moses

The Change In The Law

Jesus was the perfect sacrifice for sin and the ideal High Priest who could truly gain forgiveness for us. Therefore the old system of animal sacrifices and high priests was done away with after his death (Heb. 10:5-14). "The priesthood being changed (from the Levites to Christ), there is made of necessity a change also of the law" (Heb. 7:12). Therefore, "there is verily a disannulling of the former regulation (i.e. the law of Moses) because it was weak and useless. For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope (through Christ) did" (Heb. 7:18,19 A.V. with N.I.V.). This means that it is irrelevant to argue that any command system of God cannot be changed and is eternal- for clearly there *was* a change made.

The Problem Of Trying To Keep The Law

To trust in Sabbath keeping for justification means that we do not accept the fullness of Christ's victory. Such beliefs mean that we do not accept Christ's sacrifice as completely successful, and that we feel that works are necessary to bring about our justification, rather than faith in Christ alone. "No man is justified by the law in the sight of God...for, The just(ified) shall live by *faith*" (Gal. 3:11 cf. Hab. 2:4). Our own effort to be obedient to the letter of God's laws, however determined, will fail and will not bring us justification; surely every reader of these words knows this already.

If we observe the Law of Moses, we must attempt to keep *all* of it. Disobedience to just one part of it means that those who are under it are condemned. "As many as are of (i.e. rely on) the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in *all* things which are written in the book of the law to do them" (Gal. 3:10). What the

Law says, it says to those under the Law; but if we are under grace, as the NT says that we are, then the Law doesn't speak to us in the sense of commanding us (Rom. 3:19 cp. 6:14,15). If we are led by the Spirit, we are not under the Law (Gal. 5:18).

The Victory Of Jesus

The weakness of our human condition means that we find it impossible fully to keep the Law of Moses, but due to Christ's complete obedience to it, we are freed from any obligation to keep it. Our salvation is due to God's gift through Christ, rather than our personal works of obedience. "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh" (Rom. 8:3). Thus "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us" (Gal. 3:13). Because of this, we are no longer required to keep any of the ordinances of the Law of Moses. The New Covenant in Christ replaced the Old Covenant of Moses' law (Heb. 8:13). By his death, Christ blotted out "the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us (by our inability to fully keep the law), and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross...Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink (offerings), or in respect of a religious festival, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days: which are a shadow of things to come; but the reality is Christ" (Col. 2:14-17 A.V. with N.I.V.). This is quite clear - because of Christ's death on the cross, the law was taken "out of the way" so that we should resist any pressure put on us to keep parts of it, e.g. the feasts and the Sabbath. Like the rest of the law, the purpose of these things was to point forward to Christ. After his death, their typical significance was fulfilled, and there was therefore no further need to observe them. If we are going to keep the Sabbath, then why not keep the other Jewish festivals? For Paul lumps them all together. He made no difference between the 10 commandments and the rest of the Torah.

Warnings against keeping any part of the Law of Moses in order to gain salvation are dotted throughout the New Testament. Some taught that Christians should be circumcised according to the Mosaic Law, "and keep the law". James flatly condemned this idea on behalf of the true believers: "*we* gave no such commandment" (Acts 15:24). Peter described those who taught the need for obedience to the law as putting "a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear. But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ (as opposed to their works of obedience to the law) we shall be saved" (Acts 15:10,11). Paul is equally outspoken: "A man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ...that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified...no man is justified by the law...by (Christ) all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Gal. 2:16; 3:11; Acts 13:39).

The New Torah

"All the titles given by the Jews to the Torah: bread, water of life, light of the world, shepherd, the way, the truth and the life, all these John applies to Christ. The opening of John's gospel is taken from a pre-Christian Jewish hymn of praise to the Torah, in the Jewish hymn it is the Torah that is " in the beginning" , " the Word" , " with God" , " the world was made" , " light" , " life" , " the true light that enlightens every man" , " grace and truth" , " in the bosom of the Father" , but John applies all these to Christ. All that Judaism had claimed for the law, John applies to Jesus Christ, he, rather than the Torah, is the final revelation of God's will" (J. Mann) (1). The 5 books of Moses are seen to be matched in the 5 segments of

Matthew's Gospel, and the way the Lord Jesus in imitation of Moses declared *His* Law from a mountain. Indeed, the Lord Jesus parallels His words with those of the Torah. In first century Judaism it was often said: 'The person who hears the words of the Torah…builds on firm ground' [see Joachim Jeremias, *New Testament Theology* p. 254]. The Lord Jesus purposefully alluded to that when He spoke about 'The person who hears *my words*' as building on firm ground (Mt. 7:24-27). He saw His words as a new Torah.

The Sabbath And Israel

The Sabbath was the last day of the week, when God rested after the six days of creation (Ex. 20:10,11). As Sunday is the first day of the week, it would be incorrect to observe this day as the Sabbath. The Sabbath was specifically "a sign between me (God) and them (Israel), that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them" (Ez. 20:12). As such, it has never been intended to be binding on Gentiles (non-Jews). "The Lord hath given *you* [not all mankind] the Sabbath (Ex. 16:29); "thou [God] madest known unto them [Israel] thy holy Sabbath" (Neh. 9:14).

The Sabbath Is Part Of The Old Covenant

Jesus once commented on a theological problem: a baby boy had to be circumcised on the eighth day of his life. If this day fell on a Sabbath, then work would have to be done. So which law should be kept, circumcision, or the Sabbath? Jesus replied that circumcision had to be honoured, because this came from Abraham, whereas the Sabbath law was later, from Moses: "Moses gave you circumcision [not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers - *i.e. Abraham*]…". If the law of circumcision took precedence over that of the Sabbath, how can it be argued by some that the Sabbath law is binding but that of circumcision isn't? And how can it be argued that a Sabbath *law* was in force from Eden onwards? Circumcision was the token of the covenant with Abraham, whereas the Sabbath was the token of the law of Moses (Ex. 31:17), and Jesus judged that the covenant with Abraham was more important. Paul uses the same kind of argument, when he reasons that the new covenant given to Abraham [which included no command about the Sabbath] is something which cannot be *added to* or disannulled. He asks, therefore, why it was that "the law…was *added*" (Gal. 3:15,19)? He replies that the law was added, by implication temporarily, seeing that the new covenant cannot really be added to, in order to teach men about sin and lead them to an understanding of Christ, the promised seed of Abraham. Now that Christ has come, we are not under the law.

The Sabbath Is Irrelevant To Salvation

Therefore through Christ's death on the cross, the Law of Moses was done away, so that there is now no necessity to observe the Sabbath or, indeed, any festival, e.g. the day of Christ's death (Col. 2:14-17). The early Christians who returned to keeping parts of the Mosaic law, e.g. the Sabbath, are described by Paul as returning "to the weak and miserable principles (N.I.V.), whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage. Ye observe days (e.g. the Sabbath), and months, and times, and years (i.e. the Jewish festivals). I am afraid of (for) you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain" (Gal. 4:9-11). This is the seriousness of attempting to keep the Sabbath as a means to salvation. It is clear that observing the Sabbath is irrelevant to salvation: "One man esteemeth one day above another (i.e. in spiritual significance): another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that

observeth (A.V. mg.) the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that observeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it" (Rom. 14:5,6).

Note

(1) This is all especially apparent in John's Gospel. John was "unlearned and ignorant" (Acts 4:13)- according to C.H. Dodd, "two technical terms for those who were ignorant of Torah" (C.H. Dodd, *The Interpretation Of The Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1960) p. 82). If indeed keeping the Law is required of Christians, we wonder why John is presented in these terms, and didn't go out of his way to show himself Torah observant? Significantly, through his Gospel John uses terms which were well known in Rabbinic Judaism as referring to the Torah, and applies them instead to Christ. "Grace and truth" was a common Jewish description for the Torah, and yet John says that this came by Jesus, and not through the law given to Moses (Jn. 1:17). Jesus, and not the Torah as the Rabbis believed, is the way to life (Jn. 6:63); "truth" was now not Torah as the Jews said, but the person of Jesus. Well known symbols for the Torah such as wine, bread and water are used by John to describe Jesus. And John purposefully alludes to Rabbinic passages about the greatness of Israel and applies them instead to Christians. Thus the Jewish writing Pirqe Aboth 3.19 claimed: "Beloved are Israel, that they are called sons of God. Greater love was it that it was known to them that they were called sons of God...". Yet these very words are applied exclusively to the Christian believers by John in 1 Jn. 3:1,2. He seems to be going out of his way to show that the Lord Jesus is the new Torah for all those in Him, and it is the community of Christ who are God's true people now, and not Israel. Why would John do this, if indeed Christians are required to be Torah observant?

9-1-2 The Sabbath In The Early Church

Because of this, it is understandable that we do not read of the early believers keeping the Sabbath. Indeed, it is recorded that they met on "the *first* day of the week", i.e. Sunday: "Upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread..." (Acts 20:7). That this was a widespread practice is indicated by Paul advising the believers at Corinth to take up a collection "upon the first day of the week" (1 Cor. 16:2), i.e. at their regular meetings on that day.

There is ample historical evidence that the early church didn't keep Saturday. If some say 'We keep the Sabbath but it's now Sunday' then they admit God's law was changed- therefore their arguments about the unchangeable nature of God's commands are nullified.

Ignatius (110 AD):" no longer observing the Sabbath but fashioning their lives after the Lord's day" ; " If then they who walked in ancient customs came to a new hope, no longer living for the Sabbath... how then shall we be able to live without Jesus…"

Justin Martyr (100-165): " Sunday is the day on which we all hold our common assembly"

Epistle of Barnabas (120-150): " we keep the eighth day with joyfulness, a day also in which Jesus rose from the dead"

Irenaeus (178): " the mystery of the Lord's resurrection may not be celebrated on any day other than the Lord's day"

Bardasian (b. 154): " the first day of the week we assemble ourselves together"

The Didache (70 AD): " on the Lord's own day gather yourselves together and break bread"

And therefore ***" Unquestionably the first law, either ecclesiastical or civil, by which the sabbatical observance of that day is known to have been ordained, is the edict of Constantine 321 AD."*** (Chambers Encyclopaedia art. " Sabbath"). Both history and Scripture show that the practice of the early believers was to meet together on Sundays- not Saturday. Either the early church was disobedient, or one has to conclude that Saturday observance was changed to Sunday. And there is no evidence for this.

9-1-3 No Difference Between Torah And The Ten Commandments

It is often argued that keeping of the Sabbath was one of the Ten Commandments given to Moses, and that, whilst the rest of the Law of Moses was done away, the obligation remains to keep all of the Ten Commandments. Some make a distinction between a 'moral law' of the Ten Commandments, "the law of God", and a so-called 'ceremonial law', the "law of Moses", which they believe was done away by Christ. This distinction is not taught in Scripture. The Bible uses the terms "law of Moses" and "law of God" interchangeably (Num. 31:21; Josh. 23:6; 2 Chron. 31:3). The Old Covenant refers to the Law of Moses, which was replaced on the cross by the New Covenant. - God "declared unto you (Israel) his covenant, which he commanded you (Israel) to perform, even Ten Commandments; and he wrote them upon two tables of stone" (Deut. 4:13). Again it should be noted that this covenant, based upon the Ten Commandments, was made between God and *Israel*, not Gentiles of the present day.

§ Moses ascended Mount Horeb to receive the stone tables upon which God had written the Ten Commandments. Moses later commented concerning this, "The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb" (Deut. 5:2), i.e. through those Ten Commandments.

§ At this time, God "wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments" (Ex. 34:28). This same covenant included details of the so-called 'ceremonial law' (Ex. 34:27). If we argue that keeping the covenant made in the ten commandments is necessary, we must also observe every detail of the entire law, seeing that this is all part of the same covenant. It is evidently impossible to do this.

§ "There was nothing in the ark save the two tables of stone, which Moses put there at Horeb…the ark, wherein is the covenant of the Lord" (1 Kings 8:9,21). Those tables, on which were the Ten Commandments, were the covenant.

§ Heb. 9:4 speaks of "the tables of the covenant". The Ten Commandments were written on the tables of stone, which comprised "the (old) covenant".

§ Paul refers to this covenant as "written and engraven in stones", i.e. on the tables of stone. He calls it "the ministration of death...the ministration of condemnation...that which is done away" (2 Cor. 3:7- 11). The covenant associated with the Ten Commandments can certainly not give any hope of salvation.

§ Leviticus 19 gives a good example of how varied the laws are: " Do not steal [one of the 10 commandments). Do not lie. Do not deceive one another... Do not hold back the wages ...Do

not mate different kinds of animals. Do not plant your field with two different kinds of seed" (Lev 19:11,13,19,27) -there is no implication that there are different categories of law.

§ Christ blotted out “the handwriting of ordinances that was against us” (Col. 2:14) on the cross. This alludes to God’s handwriting of the Ten Commandments on the tables of stone. Likewise Paul speaks of “the law...being dead...the oldness of the *letter*” (Rom. 7:6), probably referring to the letters of the Ten Commandments which were written on the tables of stone.

§ Just one of the Ten Commandments is styled “the law” in Rom. 7:8: “The law...said, Thou shalt not covet”. The preceding verses in Rom. 7:1-7 stress how “the law” has been done away by Christ’s death; “the law” therefore includes the Ten Commandments.

All this makes it clear that the Old Covenant and “the law” included the Ten Commandments. As the New Covenant has done the Old Covenant away, the Ten Commandments have therefore been removed. The Lord Jesus invites those who follow Him to accept the “rest” which He gives (Mt. 11:28). He uses a Greek word which is used in the Septuagint for the Sabbath rest. Jesus was offering a life of Sabbath, of rest from trust in our own works (cf. Heb. 4:3,10). We shouldn’t, therefore, keep a Sabbath one day per week, but rather live our whole lives in the spirit of the Sabbath.

The Ten Commandments are referred to in Revelation 19:10 when the term " testimony" is used. In the Law the " Testimony" was another term for the Ten Commandments: " then put in the ark the Testimony" (Ex 25:16, 21; 30:6), " when the Lord finished speaking to Moses on Mount Sinai, he gave him the two tablets of the Testimony, the tablets of stone inscribed by the finger of God" (Ex 31:18). So we can see that the " Testimony of Moses" was the Ten Commandments. Now what does Revelation say the " Testimony of Jesus" is? " The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (Rev 19:10). The " testimony" of the old covenant is replaced by those New Testament prophets who spoke under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

Various Objections

- All the believers are described as being priests (1 Pet. 2:9) - who were exempt from keeping the Sabbath (Mt. 12:5).

- Paul lists many sins in the New Testament, both those practised by the " world" as well as those practised in the churches: (Rom 1:28-32, 2 Cor 12:20-21, Gal 5:19-21, Eph 4:25-29, 5:3-18, 2 Tim 3:1-9, 2 Pet 2,3:3-7) but nowhere mentions Sabbath-breakers.

- If we are to keep the Sabbath, we must do so properly; we have earlier shown that it is fatal to keep the Mosaic Law partially, because this will result in our condemnation (Gal. 3:10; James 2:10). Israel were not allowed to do any work on the Sabbath: “Whosoever doeth work therein shall be put to death”. They were also commanded: “Ye shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations upon the Sabbath day”, and therefore they were forbidden to prepare food on that day (Ex. 35:2,3; 16:23). A man who gathered sticks on the Sabbath, presumably in order to kindle a fire, was punished with death for doing so (Num. 15:32-36). Those denominations which teach that Sabbath-keeping is binding upon their members should therefore punish those members with death when they break the Sabbath like this.

9.2 Changing God's 'Eternal law'

The most common argument used by Sabbath-keepers is that the Law of God can't change, and it is described as an 'eternal' law. Here are some bullet points against that view.

The Law of Moses changed- even within Moses' lifetime:

- The Law changed in accordance with circumstance. Thus in Ex. 12, the Passover was to be eaten in individual homes; but in Dt. 16, spoken at the end of Moses' life, when Israel were about to enter their land, this was forbidden. Passover had to be eaten at the sanctuary.

- Many parts of the 'eternal law' were only relevant to the period of time when Israel were in the wilderness. As an example, consider the 'eternal law' of Lev. 17:5-7, stating that animals could only be slaughtered at the tabernacle. This would've meant that those who lived a distance from the sanctuary would have had to be vegetarians. Later, Moses amended this law. Dt. 12:20 ff. permitted Israel to slaughter their animals without going through the procedures of Lev. 17. Only the regulations about blood were preserved (Lev. 17:10 cp. Dt. 12:23).

-The commandments about carrying the ark obviously were only addressed to a tempporary situation. It was placed in the temple and "it shall no more be a burden upon your shoulders" (2 Chron. 35:3). Clearly Mosaic commands weren't "eternal" in the sense of being unchangeable. Indeed many of the laws were impossible for Israel to obey when they were outside of their land in captivity; yet geographical distance from the land didn't make them therefore automatically not God's children just because they couldn't keep all His laws. Indeed Dt. 4:10 could be read as implying that the Law was to kept "all the days that they shall live upon the *eretz* / land" of Israel.

- Ex. 21:30 implies penalties could be met by a fine instead of the actual punishment- the Law was evidently flexible, and the priests were empowered to use it that way. But this feature means that we are mistaken to see Moses' Law as a set of statements which were 'eternally' set in stone. The fact some of the commands were broken by men like David and yet he isn't condemned for it, but rather commended, is further illustration.

- The plans for the temple were given to David by God; but they replaced parts of the law God gave to Moses about the tabernacle. The laws given about the temple replaced those given about the dimensions and construction of the tabernacle.

- The laws about following the cloud, camping around the tabernacle, eating the manna, etc. were obviously annulled once Israel entered the land and settled there. The specific monetary amounts of the fines [e.g. shekels] would've had to change too, over time.

- I would even suggest that Moses' 'law' about God visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children was annulled and changed by His later statement through Ezekiel that He would *not* operate like that, but instead, the person who sinned would die for his own sin (Ez. 18:4).

Defining 'Olahm'

The Hebrew word 'olahm', translated 'for ever' clearly doesn't always mean literal future infinity- although in *some* places it can have that sense. It's actually used in places to describe *the past*; events of a long time ago, but not events that happened an 'infinitely long time' ago. It describes the time of a previous generation (Dt. 32:7; Job 22:15); to the time just before the exile of Judah (Is. 58:12; 61:4; Mic. 7:14; Mal. 3:4); to the time of the Exodus (1 Sam. 27:8; Is. 51:9; 63:9); to the time just before the flood (Gen. 6:4)[(1)].

- A servant was to serve his master 'for ever' [*olahm*]- i.e. for the limited period of the slave's life, not literally 'until infinite time in the future' (Dt. 5:7; 1 Sam. 27:12; Job 40:28).

- Jeremiah's enemies were "always" [*olahm*] at ease (cp. Ps. 73:12)

- The temple would eternally bear God's Name- but the temple was destroyed.

- Hannah promised to give Samuel to the Lord for *olahm*(1 Sam. 1:22), but this is defined as "all the days of his life…as long as he lives" (1 Sam. 1:11,28).

- Jerusalem would be an eternal ruin (Jer. 25:9); and yet the same prophet predicts that one day in the future, it would be rebuilt, and be no longer a ruin (Jer. 31:4).

- God told the family of Eli that He had once promised that family that they would be "'before me forever (*olahm*)'; but now the Lord declares: 'Far be it from me; for those who honour me I will honour, and those who despise me shall be treated with contempt" (1 Sam. 2:30). God can say that something will be 'forever' but then change it.

Notes

(1) Consider this discussion of the meaning of *olahm* in the *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, edited by G. Johannes Botterwick and Helmer Ringgren (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980): "…Jenni holds that its basic meaning " most distant times " can refer to either the remote past or to the future or to both as due to the fact that it does not occur independently (as a subject or as an object) but only in connection with prepositions indicating direction (*min* " since, " *ad* " until, " *lĕ* " up to ") or as an adverbial accusative of direction or finally as the modifying genitive in the construct relationship. In the latter

> instance *ō lā m* can express by itself the whole range of meanings denoted by all the prepositions " since, until, to the most distant time "; i.e. it assumes the meaning " (unlimited, incalculable) continuance, eternity. " (THAT II, p. 230) …But … it is sometimes used of a not-so-remote past. For the meaning of the word in its attributive use we should note the designation of the lord as *el ō lā m* , " The Eternal God " (Gen 21:33)…The LXX generally translates ō lā m by aiō n which has essentially the same range of meaning. That neither the Hebrew nor the Greek word in itself contains the idea of endlessness is shown both by the fact that they sometimes refer to events or conditions that occurred at a definite point in the past, and also by the fact that sometimes it is thought desirable to repeat the word, not merely saying " forever," but " forever and ever.".. Both words came to be used to refer to a long age or period—an idea that is sometimes expressed in English by " world. " Postbiblical Jewish writings refer to the present world of toil as *hā ō lā m hazzeh* and to the world to come as *hā ō lā m habbā ″* ".

9-2-1 Ceremonial And Moral Law

Opening Statement By Mr. Philip Bartlett

The position I have been called to defend is that Christians are bound by the law of God to observe the Sabbath on Sunday. I will attempt to prove this through an appeal to the whole counsel of God, not simply to scattered verses that appear to say something on their own. The way heresies have historically been formed in the church of God is to appeal to one scripture and deny what the whole and entire counsel of God has to say upon a certain matter. One of us is sinning in presenting his position. If my brother is right, then I am sinning by binding you to a yoke greater than Christ has given to us. If I am right, then my opponent is sinning by telling you it is alright to disobey a command that God has instituted for us.

In order to present clearly the issue of whether it is fit and proper to observe the Sabbath, we must first determine precisely what God has stated concerning His law and how we are to apply it to ourselves today. It is my firm opinion, and the firm opinion of many Reformed Christians (Calvinists), that the reason why the church has such little impact on the broader society today is because we have moved away from obedience to God's commandments as they must be properly instituted in our lives. God promises not only spiritual blessing, but material blessing and earthly dominion if we are faithful to obey the commandments of the covenant (Deuteronomy 28, and yes this applies to the church today since Christ informs us that the kingdom of Israel has been passed to the church in Matthew 21:43, and Paul tells us that the Gentiles have been grafted onto single vine while the Jews have been torn off in Romans 11; Psalm 2 also commands all governments to submit to the law of the Bible). If we are not faithful to obey the commandments of the covenant, God promises judgments as 1 Peter 4:17 states, judgment begins with the house of God. Most Protestants and Christian groups today have essentially committed that old heresy where the Old Testament law is thrown out and all we pay attention to are the sayings of Jesus Christ in the gospels. The scripture vehemently rejects this position. For this reason God has made the Protestant church weak and the heresy of Romanism powerful, and it is presently now swallowing up many of the liberal and even those that are seen as evangelical protestant denominations. Gone are the days of Protestant influence on the earth due to these Arminian influences.

If we are to understand the New Testament properly we must first understand what the Bible says about the application of the law of God. The Bible tells us that there are two kinds of law: that law that is binding upon all people of the earth, and that there is also law that is only binding upon ethnic Jewry. Most who hold to my opponent's position contend that every law in the Old Testament given by Moses is only binding upon ethnic Jewry. But is this the case? Not according to the scriptures!

The scriptures tell us that all are under judgment due to sin, and that we know what sin is by the Mosaic Law. Paul states: "When Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their heats, their consciences also bearing witness" (Romans 2:14-15). So Paul clearly states here that the requirements of the law of God, as revealed in the Old Testament, are written upon the hearts of every single man. This is no law meant only for the Jews! Paul states early in verse 13 "it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous" (Romans 2:13). Paul is saying here that even though the Jews "have the law" and will be judged by the law, even the Gentiles have that law written on their hearts, and therefore all who obey this one law will be declared righteous. Paul is clearly advocating here one law for Jew and Gentile that is to be obeyed and by which all men are judged.

The Old Testament also binds the Gentiles to the law of God when it states in Deuteronomy 9:5 "It is not because of your righteousness or your integrity that you are going in to take possession of their land; but on account of the wickedness of these nations, the LORD your God will drive them out before you…" So we see here that God is judging these nations for their wickedness and sin. The Bible clearly tells us that sin is defined as a violation of the law of God in 1 John 3:4 "Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness" (or as the KJV renders it 'sin is the transgression of the law'). These Canaanite Gentiles were wicked because they were breaking God's law, the same law that Israel was bound to obey. God is saying in this verse: I am not bringing Israel into the land because it is lawkeeping, but I am kicking the Canaanites out because they are lawbreaking. The same law for both is implied here. This is even more abundantly proven in the fact that Jew and Gentile could both be executed by the civil law of Israel for breaking one of the Ten Commandments. Both the Jew and the stranger (Gentile) were not allowed to commit adultery, murder, kidnapping, Sabbath-breaking, and if either did both were to be put to death. After God lists the death penalties for violating the ten commandments in Leviticus 24, He states in Leviticus 24:22 "You are to have the same law for the alien and the nativeborn, I am the LORD your God". God is not talking about the entire law of the Torah here, but just the laws of death penalty for violating the Ten Commandments, which He has just listed (this also proves by the way that when a Gentile nation covenants with King Jesus the nation should pass the civil law of God as expressed in the Bible, because all are bound to the same justice).

In Deuteronomy 18, God lists a whole bunch of moral laws concerning witchcraft and idolatry in the first verses (tied to the first two commandments of the Decalogue) and then states in verse 12 "ANYONE who does these things is detestable to the LORD, and because of these detestable practices the LORD your God will drive out those nations before you." As we can see, God is punishing the Gentiles for breaking the moral law of God as summarized by the Ten Commandments.

So what we have established here is that all men are bound to obey the law, and will be judged according to their obedience to the law. What is this "law" that Paul speaks of in

Romans 1 and God refers to as binding on the Gentiles in the Old Testament? It is the moral law of God as expressed in the Ten Commandments. The Jewish rabbis themselves understood this distinction, and they divided the law into that law which was binding upon both stranger and Jew, and that law which was only binding upon the Jew (namely the ceremonial and sacrificial systems and circumcision). Not only have many rabbis made this distinction throughout their history, but the Bible itself makes this distinction, and even clearly relates that one law is superior to the other law. Brian Schwertley writes

"A number of passages indicate that both God and Israel clearly recognized the distinction between moral laws and those which were ceremonial. In fact, several passages would be incomprehensible without such a distinction. "Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD?" (1 Sam 15:22) "*To obey is better than sacrifice*," because obedience to God is a moral duty, constantly and indispensably necessary; but sacrifice is but a ceremonial institution, sometimes unnecessary, as it was in the wilderness; and sometimes sinful, when it is offered by a polluted hand, or in an irregular manner; therefore their gross disobedience to God's express command is not to be compensated with sacrifice."

The ceremonial rituals apart from faith and repentance accomplished nothing except arousing the anger of a holy God.

"A *category distinction* is unmistakable in God's declaration, 'I desire faithful love, not sacrifice' (Hos. 6:6). That statement would have made no sense whatsoever if Israel could not have told the difference between the laws demanding sacrifice (which we call ceremonial) and the laws demanding faithful love (which we call moral and civil). Are we to believe that the ancient Israelites lacked the mental acumen to catch the contrast between laws which bound Jews and Gentiles *alike* (e.g., the death penalty for murder, Lev. 24:21-22) and those which bound Jews but *not* Gentiles (e.g., the prohibition of eating animals that died of themselves, Deut. 14:21)? Whether they used the verbal labels of 'moral' (civil) and 'ceremonial' (as we do) is beside the point."[7]

The New Testament also recognizes the ceremonial distinction. In fact, the book of Hebrews is incomprehensible without such a distinction (cf. Heb. 7:11-12, 18-19). Although violating a ceremonial law under the Old covenant would be immoral (i.e., a sin), because any violation of God's revealed will is sinful, nevertheless the distinction between moral and ceremonial is biblical and must be maintained."[1]

Paul refers to the ceremonial law as the "weak and beggarly elements" and the "commandments contained in ordinances" that no longer need to be obeyed since the death of Christ on the cross to provide the more perfect sacrifice and end the ceremonies. This is what the apostles were fighting against when in Acts 15 the apostles had to fight against certain Pharisees who wanted to circumcise everyone and command them to keep the ceremonial laws. What does the New Testament say about the law of God and how we are to approach it today? Christ's words are clear in Matthew 5:17-19 "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven."

We see from this verse that Christ wishes to make it ABUNDANTLY CLEAR that His law remains in FULL FORCE. In fact, we have the opportunity to obey it better than ancient Israel ever did, because we now no longer have to use the ceremonial sacrificial laws, since we can cling to Christ and acknowledge the sacrificial law in that way! In this way, we still obey the entire law. There are many who will attempt to pull statements of Paul of context that appear to state that we no longer have to obey the Old Testament law, or as Paul expresses it, "we are no longer under the law". This does not mean that we are no longer to strive to obey the law, it simply means that the law no longer has the power to condemn us if we disobey it, because we have been justified by faith alone in Christ alone. Brian Schwertley writes concerning this "believers are not under the *curse* of the law. 'Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, 'cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree'), that the blessings of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith' (Gal. 3:13-14). Paul says that by Christ's death on the cross, believers are set free from the curse or penalty of the law.

Anyone who commits sin is under a curse. God said, 'The soul who sins shall die' (Ezek. 18:4). John the Baptist declared that 'he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him' (Jn. 3:36). Paul said that the 'law brings about wrath' (Rom. 4:15). 'Having shown the absolute demand of God upon a man's life, having defined what sin is, having convicted man of sin and shown him the nature of sinful rebellion, the law pronounces the just condemnation of God upon the sinner. The law shuts up all men under sin and seals off any escape to life for them in their own strength (Gal. 3:22). The sinner finds himself lost and sold under sin; the magnitude of his dilemma is revealed in the words, 'It stands written that accursed is everyone who does not continue in all things having been written in the law-book to do them' (Gal. 3:10).' Jesus Christ bore the guilt and the penalty for the sins of His people on the cross at Calvary.

The wrath of God that we deserved for our sins was placed upon Christ.

But the fact that Christ bore the judgment that we deserved does *not* mean that believers are no longer under law as a guide for daily living and sanctification. Such a view 'is antinomianism, and alien to St. Paul. St. Paul attacked man-made laws, and man-made interpretations of the law, as the way of justification; the law can never justify; it does sanctify, and there is no sanctification by lawlessness.'"

Clearly then, the WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD must be considered if we wish for Israel, or the church of Jesus Christ to be strong again. The ethnic Jews in Palestine are no longer the Israel of God. We must put on ourselves the entire word of God and obey the entire law of God as revealed in the Old and New Testament. Bestiality is an example of a clear moral law that is only mentioned in the Old Testament, but must still be obeyed today. Tithing is another example where the church has gone wrong. Because we no longer consider tithing to be a requirement of God's moral law of giving related to the eighth commandment, giving in churches is at an all time low.

So how does this all relate to the fourth commandment? Well it is clear, as Jesus states in Matthew 5, that the fourth commandment continues for today. First of all, the fourth commandment was originally binding not only on just the Jews, but also the Gentile strangers as the verse states in Exodus 20:10 "but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, NOR THE ALIEN WITHIN YOUR GATES". As we can

see, the Gentiles were bound to obey this law under penalty of death since, as is stated elsewhere, Sabbath violators were to be executed. This is far different from the Passover for example, were an alien stranger was not bound to observe it unless he became circumcised and expressed an interest in becoming a full Jew. We see here that this Sabbath commandment is binding upon Jews and Gentiles, and not only this, but we see that God sanctifies the Sabbath day ALL THE WAY BACK IN GENESIS when God rested.

The Sabbath was not sanctified when God covenanted with the Jews, but when God created the heavens and the earth. The Sabbath is a creation ordinance, and an eternally binding principle that is a reflection of God's essential nature of work and rest. Does Jesus ever repudiate the Sabbath? Absolutely not! In fact, what we find is Jesus giving us specific information on exactly what we are to do on the Sabbath day! Jesus worships in the synagogue on the Sabbath day. Jesus specifically tells us it is proper to perform works of mercy and healing on the Sabbath day. Jesus specifically tells us it is right to nourish ourselves on the Sabbath day like David did and like He did when he was picking grain with His disciples. Why would Jesus go into all this detail on the Sabbath in the gospels if He was only going to abolish it a few years later?

Hebrews also tells us in 4:9 "there remains then a Sabbath-rest for the people of God". Some will argue that this is referring back to the earlier verses that refer to the rest we have in Christ. However, this is the ONLY instance where the word Sabbatismos is used in the Greek. All of the other times the author mentions rest another word is being used. This should clue us in that the author in this verse is talking about a different kind of Sabbath. The only other time this word is used, which is in the Greek Septuagint Old Testament, is when it is being used in reference to the earthly Sabbath day. This then tells us that Hebrews is here commanding a Sabbath rest for us in the New Testament. John in Revelation 1:10 states that there is such a thing as a "Lord's Day". This is an echo of Isaiah 58, which also refers to a "Lord's Day" or a day that is the Lord's possession, and God refers to it as the Sabbath day. If John were using the term to describe the very final day of judgment as some contend, then we would not be sitting here arguing this because the judgment would have already come!

Isaiah 58 (KJV) states " If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on **my holy day**; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: Then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it." So we see here the word "Sabbath" and "Lord's day" (or "My holy day") are synonyms. This is further accentuated by the fact that many of the visions of Revelation deal with the worship of God by the elders, as well as the elements of Old Testament temple worship like the temple and alter and incense. Worship is of course especially to be done on the Sabbath day.

Finally, we know that the day has been changed from the seventh day of the calendar week, to the first day of the calendar week through apostolic example as well as the information that Christ rested from His work of salvation the first day. Brian Schwertley writes concerning apostolic example: "The universal practice of the apostolic church was to observe the first day of the week. The apostles met together on the first two Sundays after the resurrection (Jn. 20:19-26). The disciples also met together for public worship on Pentecost Sunday: "When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place" (Ac. 2:1). "Just as the disciples had been 'gathered together' (probably in the upper room) on the first

Resurrection Sunday, the next or second Sunday (John 20:26), and very probably every following Sunday as well, so too were they 'with one accord in one place'—probably also in the same 'place,' the upper room—on the eighth Sunday of Pentecost...that eighth Sunday, the Lord's day, when the Lord's Spirit suddenly came to His temple (His church in the upper room) and burned like an oven with tongues of fire—*that* too was the new Day which God would create, the Day of the Lord, the Day of the Lord God the Holy Spirit." It is clear that the apostles and the very first churches founded by them sanctified the first day of the week.

The abiding nature of the new covenant first-day observance is demonstrated by Acts 20:7: "Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight." Note that several years after the resurrection and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost the practice of the New Testament church was still public worship on the first day of the week, the Lord's day (Rev. 1:10). The disciples came together to hear the preaching of the Apostle Paul and to celebrate the sacrament of the Lord's supper, which in the early church was taken together with a meal. They broke bread as a memorial to Christ's death on the cross, and they met on the first day of the week to study, celebrate and remember Christ's work of redemption and His glorious resurrection victory. "It should be observed that the disciples did not come together on the first day of the week simply so that Paul could preach to them before his departure, as some claim. If the sole purpose of the gathering was to hear the Apostle preach his farewell sermon to the congregation, this was something that could have been done at any time during his previous week's sojourn there. From the Seventh-day Adventist point of view, one would expect such a sermon to have been preached to the congregation on the previous day, Saturday, and for the hastening Paul to have sailed from Troas at sunset on Saturday or dawn on Sunday. Yet there is no trace of this, nor indeed of any Saturday meeting whatsoever. Rather does the whole context teach that Paul simply and incidentally availed himself of the opportunity to preach to the congregation 'upon the first day of the week when the disciples (as usual) came together to break bread'—and not specially to hear Paul."

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[1] Schwertley, Brian "God's Law for Modern Man" located at www.reformed.com/pub/law.htm

9-2-2 The Sabbath And Sunday

Another passage which proves that the apostolic church held public worship on the first day of the week is 1 Corinthians 16:1-2: "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come." The first thing to note regarding this passage is that Paul, speaking by the Holy Spirit, insists that the charitable donations for the poor brethren in Jerusalem be collected on the *first day* and no other. The fact that the Holy Spirit chose the first day of the week and no other day presupposes that for the Christian church there was something unique—of abiding religious significance—regarding that day. Otherwise, why would the Holy Spirit insist upon only the first day and not the seventh, or third, or fourth, etc.? Second, note that this was not just the practice of the church at Corinth but of *all* the churches in Galatia: "as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also." Collecting tithes for the poor on Sunday was the *universal* practice of the Christian church in the days of

the apostles. “The only explanation for this ‘catholic’ [i.e., universal] injunction to all Christians everywhere to lay by for the poor saints in Jerusalem specifically on Sunday, is that all Christians everywhere were in the habit of laying by for their own local poor brethren too.” It is not an accident that Paul’s injunction to give to the poor brethren on the Lord’s day immediately follows chapter 15, which focuses on the significance of Christ’s resurrection. Giving is an aspect of Lord’s-day public worship. We give unto God because He first gave Himself for us. “Elsewhere Paul speaks of this collection in terms that are full of theological content: ‘fellowship,’ ‘service,’ ‘grace,’ ‘blessing,’ and ‘divine service.’ All this together suggests that the ‘collection’ was not some mere matter of money, but was for Paul an active response to the grace of God that not only ministered to the needs of God’s people but also became a kind of ministry to God Himself.” Thus, this passage not only proves that the apostolic churches conducted their public worship services on the first day of the week, but also shows that giving to God is part of Christian worship. This is to be expected, for it was also the universal practice in the Jewish synagogues to receive tithes and offerings during their public worship services on Saturday. The New Testament church was patterned to a large extent after the Jewish synagogue.

Seventh-day Adventist apologists have attempted to circumvent the obvious implication of this passage by arguing that collections were made on Sunday, rather than on Saturday, because it would have been a violation of the Saturday sabbath to do bookkeeping, etc., on that day. Such reasoning is fallacious for three reasons: First, as already noted, the Jews collected tithes on Saturday and engaged in “bookkeeping” procedures related to charity on the Sabbath for centuries without divine disapproval. Second, Jesus Christ clearly taught that works of mercy were permissible—yes, even required—on the Sabbath (Mt. 12:12; Mk. 3:4). Third, works of mercy on the Sabbath are permitted and commended in the Old Testament as well (1 Sam. 21:6; 2 Kgs. 4:23). “If, as Seventh-day Adventists maintain, the post-resurrectional Christian Church held its weekly meetings and its sabbath on Saturday, it is more than probable that the entire collection would have been handed over to Paul on such an occasion, rather than ‘on the first day of the week.’”[2]

So we see here a clear statement that the Sabbath was observed on consecutive Sundays. Some will argue from this that the law then has changed, because the day has changed from the seventh to the first. They forget, however, that the commandment is not for what day of the week the seventh day of rest would fall on, but that there would simply be a pattern of six days of work and one seventh day of rest. The particular day on which that seventh day of rest falls might very well indeed depend upon the dispensation and is not a part of God’s eternal moral commandment.

Finally, some dispensationalists and others who believe only the NT law is truly applicable to us will argue that Jesus denies the Sabbath throughout the gospels by consistently breaking it. This is simply not true. Jesus never claims to break the Sabbath, but is simply correcting the foul interpretation that the Pharisees have given to the Sabbath. People will claim that Matthew 12:1-8 demonstrates that we no longer need to observe the Sabbath. What Jesus is doing here is informing the Pharisees of the proper application of the Sabbath not only today, but also under the old covenant, which the interpretation of the Pharisees had perverted. Christ is stating here that if David could violate the true ceremonial law of God, then certainly Christ and His disciples could disobey the traditions of mere men without guilt. The Pharisees classified taking grain as threshing and therefore unlawful work on the Sabbath day. This was, however, the Pharisees twisted interpretation, and nowhere does the Word of God ever state we cannot nourish ourselves on the Sabbath day (works of necessity). If Christ

were disobeying a ceremonial law before His crucifixion, then Christ would have sinned in God's sight and not been able to accomplish our perfect redemption.

When Christ informs the Pharisees that He is "Lord of the Sabbath" it is not stated in order to allow Him to break the Sabbath, but rather to define what the Sabbath always was, since God Himself is the best interpreter of His own Word. If Christ had used this excuse to break the Sabbath, then the people would have had something to say when Christ stood on trial and asked them "Which of you accuses me of sinning?" No one could answer Him a word of course, because He had not broken the Sabbath law according to the scriptures. While He has broken the tradition of the Pharisees, Christ did not break the scriptures, and to claim He did is entirely against the whole tenor of the word of God. Christ is informing us in Matthew 12 that works of necessity on the Sabbath day, like nourishing yourself on the Sabbath day when you are hungry, are not sins.

Some might argue that Christ is disobeying the Sabbath because it is only a ceremonial law. Nowhere does Christ argue that the Sabbath is a mere ceremonial law. Christ in no place argues that He is breaking the Sabbath to begin with, He is rather detailing what has always been lawfully and rightfully done on the Sabbath day. The oral tradition of the Pharisees held that threshing grain fell under a certain category of work, and they were effectively calling something unlawful work that God did not call unlawful work. Therefore, Christ set out in this passage to correct that errant tradition of the Pharisees and replace it with the true inspired interpretation. To thresh grain in order to nourish your body on the Sabbath day, Christ is clearly stating, is not a sin; no more than David getting the bread from the Temple. Christ also states in this passage that it is lawful for the priests or religious leaders to work on the Sabbath day, and therefore such are acquitted of any Sabbath violation when they work to preach and labour for God on that day. Christ is using examples of lawful work on the Sabbath day to justify the lawfulness of His activity with His disciples in Matthew 12. Christ is in no way advocating a violation of the law of God here. Brian Schwertley writes: "The Pharisees were the enemies of Christ; thus they were continually looking for a reason to accuse, condemn, and destroy Him. They seized the opportunity when they observed His disciples walking through a grain field, plucking the heads of grain and rubbing off the chaff between their palms to eat. Suddenly they confronted Christ, accusing Him of allowing His disciples to break the Sabbath. How were they breaking it? According to rabbinical tradition, their innocent activity was defined as reaping and threshing grain! "According to the Mishna that man is guilty of sabbath desecration who on that day 'takes ears of grain equal to a lamb's mouthful.' "They based their whole case against the Lord and His disciples on the fact that He was allowing His disciples to transgress some of the merely traditional and anti-Scriptural thirty-nine 'Azoth' by 'reaping' (plucking the ears) and 'threshing' (rubbing them in their hands) on the sabbath day."

In the face of this false accusation based on the false legalism of the Pharisaical oral *traditions*, Christ set forth the true meaning of the Sabbath. His explanation of the Sabbath is an implicit condemnation of the Pharisees' interpretation of the fourth commandment and an explicit justification of His disciples' behavior. "Over against their restrictive traditions, He posited the perfect freedom of the authoritative Word of God." "

[2] Schwertley, Brian "The Christian Sabbath: Examined, Approved, Applied" at www.reformed.com/pub/sabbath2.htm

There are some who argue that Paul repudiates the Sabbath day in Colossians when he states in verse 2:16 “Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration, or a Sabbath day.” On the surface it would seem that Paul clearly is advocating no longer following the fourth commandment here. But is this really the case? If we look at the context we find Paul is discussing the moon days of the ceremonial law. It is in this context that we find his use of Sabbath day. This is a clear reference to the special ceremonial Sabbaths of Leviticus 23 and elsewhere. This is by no means a reference to the moral Sabbath of the Ten Commandments, which we have already demonstrated the apostles were actively observing on the first day of the week, and which Christ upheld throughout His earthly ministry. Leviticus 23 speaks of these special Sabbaths. They are special memorials and holidays where trumpets were blown. Paul clearly tells us these holy days and ceremonial feast days have been fulfilled and abrogated in numerous places throughout his epistles. NOWHERE does he state that the moral Sabbath has been done away. Leviticus 23 states in part (KJV): “***23*** And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 24 Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, In the seventh month, in the first day of the month, shall ye have a sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, an holy convocation. ***25*** Ye shall do no servile work therein: but ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD. ***26*** And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, ***27*** Also on the tenth day of this seventh month there shall be a day of atonement: it shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD. ***28*** And ye shall do no work in that same day: for it is a day of atonement, to make an atonement for you before the LORD your God. ***29*** For whatsoever soul it be that shall not be afflicted in that same day, he shall be cut off from among his people. ***30*** And whatsoever soul it be that doeth any work in that same day, the same soul will I destroy from among his people. ***31*** Ye shall do no manner of work: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings. ***32*** It shall be unto you a sabbath of rest, and ye shall afflict your souls: in the ninth day of the month at even, from even unto even, shall ye celebrate your sabbath.”

What this document has clearly demonstrated is the continuation of the moral law of God, and its applicability in every area of life today. While it is beyond this scope of this paper, the Bible has things to say about every area of life, from politics, to economics, to education, to slavery, to science, and to innumerable other things. The law of God and the Word of God are pervasive and are to be applied to every aspect of civilization as a guide to all of life. When Christians observe the Sabbath again, God will bless His people once more. Therefore, like Nehemiah did, I appeal to you to put down your worldly activities this coming Sunday, and observe this Sunday and every Sunday as sanctified and holy to the Lord. We worship on the Lord’s Day, not the Lord’s hour.

9-3-1

Part 2: Rebuttal Statements

Mr. Duncan Heaster:

1. God promises not only spiritual blessing, but material blessing and earthly dominion if we are faithful to obey the commandments of the covenant (Deuteronomy 28)

“The covenant” cannot be just the 10 commandments. Dt. 28 follows after the re-affirmation of the covenant in chapter 27. There, the people had to assent that there would be curses for disobeying “his commandments and statutes, which I command thee this day”. These weren’t

just the 10 commandments- e.g. "cursed be he that removeth his neighbour's landmark. And all the people shall say, Amen" (:17). "Commandments and statutes" is obviously more than the Decalogue (which of the ten would be "statutes" and which "commandments"?). The blessings for obedience and cursings for disobedience of Dt. 28 follow straight on from this- relating to "all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day" (28:1,15). These weren't just the Decalogue. Moses told them far more than this in his final speech to them. The blessings and curses were clearly not relevant to Gentiles- the curses are specific to Israel and include suffering "thine olive shall cast its fruit…all the diseases of Egypt…ye shall be left few in number, whereas ye were as the stars of heaven…the Lord shall scatter thee among the peoples, from one end of the earth even unto the other…the Lord shall bring thee into Egypt again with ships, by the way whereof I said unto thee, Thou shalt see it no more again; and there ye shall be sold for bondmen". This last curse identifies those being spoken to as those who came up out of Egypt. Clearly the chapter refers to Israel, not Gentiles. I have shown in my opening statement that the Sabbath was specifically for the Jews.

2. …and yes this applies to the church today since Christ informs us that the kingdom of Israel has been passed to the church in Matthew 21:43

Mt. 21:43 says that the Kingdom of God would be taken from the Jews and given to others. But this doesn't mean that the laws given to Israel are now binding on Gentiles.

3. Psalm 2 also commands all governments to submit to the law of the Bible

This is going too far. The law recorded in the Bible includes all kinds of commands given by God at various times, but not all of these are binding on men of later times. Psalm 2 doesn't say this anyway. It speaks of a time when the Lord's Christ will be surrounded by His enemies but they must submit- and therefore "Lay hold of the son [of God], lest…ye perish" (:12 RVmg.). The appeal is to the Israel who crucified Jesus to repent and accept Him as Christ. It isn't an appeal to keep the Law. It is applied in the NT to the sufferings of Jesus at the hands of the Jews. Jesus refers to it when He appeals to Israel to repent "except [lest] ye likewise perish" (Lk. 13:5).

4. If we are not faithful to obey the commandments of the covenant, God promises judgments as 1 Peter 4:17 states, judgment begins with the house of God.

But this passage says nothing of being judges for not obeying Old Testament laws.

5. Most Protestants and Christian groups today have essentially committed that old heresy where the Old Testament law is thrown out and all we pay attention to are the sayings of Jesus Christ in the gospels.

This certainly isn't the Biblical position. The fact one doesn't keep the Sabbath doesn't mean one pays no attention to the OT revelations.

6. For this reason God has made the Protestant church weak and the heresy of Romanism powerful, and it is presently now swallowing up many of the liberal and even those that are seen as evangelical protestant

This is false logic. I don't keep the Sabbath. But it doesn't mean I am on my way to Rome.

7. The Bible tells us that there are two kinds of law: that law that is binding upon all people of the earth, and that there is also law that is only binding upon ethnic Jewry.

Where does the Bible tell us this? No evidence is provided. My opening statement pointed out that there is no such difference.

Philip's reasoning from Romans seems to me to prove little. The law being spoken about there, he reasons, is the Decalogue. But Paul is talking about circumcision, which was not part of the Decalogue, but of what Philip thinks of as the 'ceremonial law' which has been done away. Paul is writing to the Jews and Gentiles in the church at Rome. The Jews were trying to make the Gentiles be circumcised (cp. Acts 15). Paul is proving the universal need of both Jew and Gentile in Christ; he does so by saying that the Jewish Christians who try to keep the law break it; and the Gentiles who don't keep the Law also have a sense of right and wrong, a conscience, and will be judged by God for their sins against what they know to be right. And so Paul goes on to show the futility of keeping the Law: "Therefore by works of the law shall no flesh be justified…but now apart from the law a righteousness of God hath been manifested" in Christ (Rom. 3:20,22). The "law of faith" has replaced the law of obedient acts; "therefore we conclude [RV we reckon] that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (3:27,28). *If* a Gentile was perfectly obedient to the Law, *then* his uncircumcision would be "reckoned" as circumcision (2:26). But as Paul so often shows, nobody is perfectly obedient to the Law. And therefore we "reckon" that someone is justified by faith quite apart from deeds of the Law. Philip has told us that this section of Romans refers to the Decalogue when it speaks of "the law". If this is so, then the works of obedience to that Law are not going to justify us. Our salvation comes from outside that Law.

8. Paul states … "it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous" (Romans 2:13). Paul is saying here that even though the Jews "have the law" and will be judged by the law, even the Gentiles have that law written on their hearts, and therefore all who obey this one law will be declared righteous.

I think this is missing the point. Paul's point is that those who totally obey the Law would be righteous, but none of us do or can…so our being declared or reckoned righteous must be by another means- by faith in Christ. So "the law of faith" replaces the Mosaic Law.

9. The Old Testament also binds the Gentiles to the law of God when it states in Deuteronomy 9:5 "… on account of the wickedness of these nations, the LORD your God will drive them out before you…" So we see here that God is judging these nations for their wickedness and sin. The Bible clearly tells us that sin is defined as a violation of the law of God in 1 John 3:4… These Canaanite Gentiles were wicked because they were breaking God's law, the same law that Israel was bound to obey.

Again logic seems to me to be faulty here. The Mosaic Law was given on Sinai as Israel were on their way to dispossess those peoples. Those nations were wicked before that- this is why their land was given to Israel. So their sin was *before* the Mosaic Law was given. Their sin therefore wasn't because they were not keeping Mosaic Laws such as the Sabbath. God did not make known to the people in Egypt anything about the Sabbath, but after He brought them out of Egypt and into the wilderness he gave them the Sabbath law (Ez. 20:10-12; Neh. 9:13, 14). There is no evidence that even Abraham kept the Sabbath law, for Moses, while speaking of the covenant that contained the Sabbath commandment, said: " The Lord made

not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even who are all of us here alive this day" (Deut. 5:3).

10. Jew and Gentile could both be executed by the civil law of Israel for breaking one of the Ten Commandments. Both the Jew and the stranger (Gentile) were not allowed to commit adultery, murder, kidnapping, Sabbath-breaking, and if either did both were to be put to death. After God lists the death penalties for violating the ten commandments in Leviticus 24, He states in Leviticus 24:22 "You are to have the same law for the alien and the nativeborn".

But God didn't say that the entire Gentile world had to keep the Decalogue. Only the Gentile who chose to live in the Israelite community. I showed in my first statement that the Sabbath was a sign between God and Israel, not the Gentiles. So who was the "stranger within your gates" who had to keep Sabbath? It can't be merely a Gentile, because the Sabbath was a sign between God and Israel. Therefore these people must refer to proselytes, those who had chosen to enter into the community of Israel and share as far as they could a covenant relationship with God. And this is why Is. 56:3,6 speaks of "the stranger that hath joined himself [Heb. implies, in covenant] unto the Lord…to minister unto him, and to love the name of the Lord…that keepeth the Sabbath" (RV). These were Gentiles ["strangers"] who had chosen to enter into covenant relationship with Yahweh and therefore they came under His laws. This is why "the stranger" also participated in confirming the blessings and cursings attendant upon having covenant relationship with God (Josh. 8:33). It is why the stranger kept the Passover in later generations (Ex. 12:49)- to show that they felt solidarity with Israel's God to the point of feeling that He had brought them too through the Red Sea. It's why they could offer sacrifice (Lev. 17:8). But is false logic to say that because these Gentiles kept the Sabbath therefore all Gentiles now must do so. Those Gentiles kept the Passover and the laws governing sacrifices; it can't mean that Gentiles now must therefore do those things.

11. …they divided the law into that law which was binding upon both stranger and Jew, and that law which was only binding upon the Jew (namely the ceremonial and sacrificial systems and circumcision).

But the Gentiles who lived among Israel also had to keep Passover and offer sacrifices etc. Neither of these is in the Decalogue.

12. …distinction between moral laws and those which were ceremonial. "Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD?" (1 Sam 15:22)… 'I desire faithful love, not sacrifice' (Hos. 6:6).

This hardly proves such a distinction exists between moral and ceremonial law. God wants obedience to His principles from the heart, rather than mere obedience to the letter of a law. Surely Philip is missing the hyperbole- it wasn't that God didn't want any sacrifice, He wanted love more than He wanted sacrifice. For He elsewhere criticizes Israel for not following the sacrifice legislation as they ought to have done. All this was summated in the work of Jesus as foretold in Psalm 40- "sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not", compared to the work and death of the Lord Jesus. He showed the "faithful love", obedience to the voice of the Lord etc. which the OT passages had explained were what God wanted more than He wanted animal sacrifice.

13. The New Testament also recognizes the ceremonial distinction. In fact, the book of Hebrews is incomprehensible without such a distinction (cf. Heb. 7:11-12, 18-19).

These verses make no such distinction. Because Jesus was to be a priest after the order of Melchizedek [through Judah not Levi] it followed that "there is a disannulling of a foregoing commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness"- and this commandment is "the law" which has been replaced by "the word of the oath", the new covenant in Christ (7:28). Nowhere is there the slightest suggestion that "the law" refers to only part of the Law. Hebrew 8 goes on to say that this "law" was the old covenant, which has been replaced by the new. But the old covenant was that which was epitomized in the Decalogue, written on table of stone. And the new covenant is *not* written "in tables of stone" as were the 10 commandments; we are ministers not of those written letters in the stone, but of the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:3-11). What was "in letters, engraven on stones" (RVmg.) was undeniably the 10 commandments, including the Sabbath. And this is called "the ministration of death…of condemnation", "which is done away"; it is to be contrasted with the ministration of the Spirit.

14. Christ's words are clear in Matthew 5:17-19 "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them.

And He did. He fulfilled them in His life and death. He didn't abolish them during His lifetime. He fulfilled them. When we read of the teachers of " the law" we understand it to mean the Law of Moses, not the Decalogue (Matt 5:20, 7:29).

15. The Sabbath was not sanctified when God covenanted with the Jews, but when God created the heavens and the earth.

No, there is no command to keep Sabbath until Moses. The fact God rested that one day doesn't mean He commanded His creatures to rest. Because He made lights on the 4th day doesn't mean we have to every 4th day.

16. Hebrews also tells us in 4:9 "there remains then a Sabbath-rest for the people of God".

The Israelites who left Egypt didn't enter the "rest" of the promised land, nor was the full Kingdom of God established then. " If Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken later about another day" (Heb 4:8) and that day is Today " God again set a certain day, calling it Today" Heb 4:7, so " we who have believed enter that rest" (Heb 4:3). We don't enter that rest once /week. It is a state we are in now, as we wait for the ultimate rest of the Kingdom at Christ's coming. This entering God's rest through faith in Christ is alluding to Matthew 11:28-30: "I will give you rest". Just before Matthew tells us of Jesus' dispute with the Jews concerning the Sabbath he records Jesus' words " I will give you rest" - from Sabbath keeping and legalistic righteousness.

17. John in Revelation 1:10 states that there is such a thing as a "Lord's Day".

This is "the day of the Lord" – a common phrase for events to come in the future, especially around the final coming of the Lord in the person of His Son. John was there "in spirit"- the "spirit of prophecy". "My holy day" and "the Lord's day" don't seem synonyms to me. "The day of the Lord" and "the Lord's day" certainly are.

18. The apostles met together on the first two Sundays after the resurrection (Jn. 20:19-26)…Acts 20:7

If we don't have to keep Sabbath, the argument about when it should be kept becomes irrelevant. If the disciples met on the 1st day of the week doesn't prove they were doing so in an attempt to keep the Sabbath. My church meet on Sundays but not to keep Sabbath. The fact is there is no statement ever that Sabbath [Saturday] was changed to Sunday. Philip has argued that God rested on the 7th day and so should we. If this is really so, why does he say that we must now rest on the 1st day? It means that the argument based on what happened at creation is invalidated.

The meeting in Jn. 20 took place on the Sunday evening after the resurrection. The disciples were assembled, we are told, *"for **fear of the Jews**."* In fact, some of them didn't even believe the Master had risen. (Mark 16:11-14, Luke 24:36-38). They were hardly holding a worship meeting. The Sabbath is not even mentioned in this verse.

Regarding Acts 20:7, note that the meeting was held in the **evening of the first day of the week** and continued till midnight or a little later. That is, it began on Sunday evening and finished in the early hours of Monday morning. The *" breaking of bread"* took place **after midnight** (verse 11)- therefore on the Monday morning, not Sunday!

19. In Col. 2:16 Paul is discussing the moon days of the ceremonial law.

But Colossians 2:14 speaks of "handwriting" that was done away. This surely refers to the Old Covenant, the 10 commandments, which were "*written* on tables of stone" (2 Cor. 3). Col. 2:14RV has: "the bond written in ordinances", of which "the sabbath days" of v. 16 were part. The bond that was done away by the cross was "the old covenant", that written on stones, the 10 commandments, which included the Sabbath. If Paul intended us to keep the Sabbath, why did he not define in more detail that he was referring to the Sabbath days of the feasts? The Sabbaths were a shadow of Christ, fulfilled in Him- that's why they are ended, Paul says. So, is the weekly Sabbath *not* a shadow of Christ? It surely is, for Jesus was clearly alluding to it when He offered us "rest", and when Hebrews 3 says that "today" is the Sabbath. If the weekly Sabbath was a type of Christ, which it surely is, then according to Col. 2:17 it has been "taken out of the way" by the fact Christ fulfilled it. It would be hard for Philip to argue that the monthly "Sabbaths" were types of Christ, so [according to Col. 2] they were ended; but the weekly Sabbaths are not types of Christ. If they are, then according to Colossians, this is the very reason why they have been taken out of the way. And this is why v. 18 warns us to let no man tell us to keep Sabbaths or any legalistic righteousness- for it is a sign that in the end we will not hold fast to Christ, who has fulfilled these things, and opened a way for a real salvation, through faith rather than works of legal obedience.

9-3-2 The Sabbath And Salvation

Mr. Philip Bartlett:

Duncan Heaster's argument for the discontinuance of the Sabbath day is typical of most people who adhere to his position. Let us examine it point by point and then add a few additional comments. His first argument is

The Change In The Law

He argues that the old system of animal sacrifices of priests was done away after the death of Jesus Christ. He then uses Hebrews 7:12 to support his position that the entire law as expressed in the Old Testament has been completely abrogated. Is this the case however? Christ states in Matthew 5 that whoever fails to teach the least of the Old Testament commandments will be called least in the kingdom. In addition, I have already proven from my previous paper that the law in the Old Testament, with the exception of the **ceremonial regulations** was binding not only upon the Jews, but all of the Gentile nations. It is of course fitting then to find that in the context of Hebrews 7:12 the author is only talking about the priesthood, temple, and sacrifices. These were things only peculiar to the Jews and not binding on Gentiles. The author is saying that with a change of the priesthood, there must also come a change in the **ceremonial law**, or that law which is only binding on the Jews. Read Hebrews 7 and you will see that the inspired writer is only talking about the ceremonial law, there is no mention of any of what I would define as moral laws in the entire chapter. In addition, to say that the moral law has changed is to say that God's eternal moral character has changed. This presents incredible theological difficulties for Duncan.

Problem Of Trying To Keep The Law

Heaster then argues that because I urge you to keep the Sabbath I am promoting salvation by works. Not correct. Calvinism and Lutheranism are the origins of the doctrine of justification by faith alone during the Protestant Reformation. I believe that you are justified by faith alone. Nowhere have I claimed that we are justified by keeping the Sabbath day. Because we are in Christ, the law no longer has the power to condemn us. Do we nullify the law because we have been saved by faith alone? Is the moral law completely done away as our standard of conduct now that we have faith? Paul says by no means in Romans (Romans 3:31, 6:1-2)! Rather we uphold and follow the Old Testament law of Christ as He commands in Matthew 5:

17 Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. ***18*** For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. ***19*** Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. ***20*** For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven. "

The Victory Of Jesus

I too promote and endorse the victory of Jesus. Part of the victory of Jesus as world history progresses will be the eventually spread of His law-word to the ends of the earth, and the conformity of every nation to that Word. There will come a day when mankind will obey the law of God from cover to cover, before Jesus returns again as prophesied in numerous places including the Psalms. Duncan argues on the basis of Col 2:14-17 that we no longer have to regard the entire Old Testament law. However, if you look at the quote he provides you notice all the specific things Paul lists in verse 17 are ceremonial laws binding only upon the Jews! I have already explained that the word "Sabbath" in this verse must be understood as the ceremonial Sabbaths in Leviticus 23 and not as the moral Sabbath of the Ten Commandments which was also binding on Gentiles. You can find this reference in my first paper.

The New Torah

Duncan is right to say that Jesus is the fulfillment of the Torah law. Notice however that Jesus in Matthew 5:17-20 is absolutely adamant in stating that His fulfilling the Torah does not mean that we are free to disobey the Old Testament law!

The Sabbath And Israel

In this section Duncan argues that because the Sabbath would now be the first day of the week according to my argument, it cannot be the fourth commandment since the fourth commandment mentions the seventh day. I have answered this already in my previous article. The commandment only commands six days of work followed by a seventh day of rest, it does not demand that it be on the seventh day of the roman calendar week.

The Sabbath Is Part Of The Old Covenant

In this section Duncan argues that since work had to be done in circumcising a baby on the Sabbath, then the law of circumcision took precedence of the Sabbath. Therefore, since it seems from this that circumcision is more important than Sabbath keeping, and that circumcision has been done away in the New Testament, how can we argue for retaining the Sabbath? First of all you will notice that God specifically makes an exception for religious work on the Sabbath. The priests and religious leaders were able to work on the Sabbath, and Christ affirms this into the New Testament. The Sabbath never means a day of idleness. Idleness is not the biblical definition of Sabbath. Christ commands us to perform works of worship (Christ worshipped in the synagogue on the Sabbath), teaching (Christ read in the synagogue on the Sabbath), mercy (Christ healed people on the Sabbath), and nourishment (Christ allowed people to glean and eat on the Sabbath). Therefore, circumcising a baby on the Sabbath is absolutely no problem, because religious work is not only required on the Sabbath, but it is commanded on the Sabbath! Proof that the Sabbath is more important than circumcision lies in the fact that the Gentiles and even the animals had to rest on the Sabbath (see the fourth commandment), but only the Jews were required to be circumcised.

The Sabbath Is Irrelevant To Salvation

Here Duncan continues to argue from verses that tell us we no longer need to observe special days. These passages are referring only to the ceremonial Sabbaths and feasts, not to the moral Sabbath which was even binding on the Gentiles and animals. The Gentiles did not have to keep the Jewish feast days in the Old Testament. He quotes: . “Ye observe days (e.g. the Sabbath), and months, and times, and years (i.e. the Jewish festivals). I am afraid of (for) you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain" (Gal. 4:9-11). This is the seriousness of attempting to keep the Sabbath as a means to salvation. It is clear that observing the Sabbath is irrelevant to salvation: " One man esteemeth one day above another (i.e. in spiritual significance): another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that observeth (A.V. mg.) the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that observeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it" (Rom. 14:5,6). Duncan readily admits that these verses refer to the Jewish festivals, yet for some reason he lumps the moral Sabbath in there which was binding not only on the Jews but also on the Gentiles as is clearly stated in the fourth commandment itself. The strangers were bound to observe the Sabbath as everyone else, even the animals were! It is a universal commandment. To prove that Paul is referring to Sabbaths other than the moral Sabbath in these verses all one has to do is look at

Leviticus 23:23-32, where we see that there are ceremonial Sabbaths that have nothing to do with the moral Sabbath which is still binding for us and on all Gentiles.

The Example Of The Early Church

Duncan then uses uninspired sources to prove that the church enforced a first day of the Roman calendar week observance. I agree with the conclusion of this section. I have already proven that the day was changed from Saturday to Sunday by example of Christ and the apostles, please refer to my opening statement for the proof of that.

No Difference Between Torah And Decalogue

In this section Duncan tries to prove that there is no distinction between the moral and ceremonial law. However it has already been proven by me in my opening statement that the Bible does make such a distinction. God says "I desire mercy and not sacrifice" thus saying that obedience to His moral commandments is preferable to having to make the sacrificial obligations of the ceremonial law to atone for your sin. There are two distinct law systems here. In addition, the Gentiles were bound to observe certain commandments (moral) and not others (ceremonial) proving that God also made the distinction in this way. Only circumcised Jews could observe the holidays and go to the temple and make sacrifices! Notice that it is these only that Paul lists as no longer necessary for NT Gentile Christians. The ceremonial law is "the law of commandments contained in ordinances" which is clear in Col 2:14-17. There is a clear biblical difference between moral and ceremonial law. Finally, Christ says clearly and emphatically in Matthew 5:17-21 that His moral law must continue to be followed in every way unless you want to be called LEAST in the kingdom!

Various Objections

Duncan then argues that the believers are priests and therefore exempt from the Sabbath. Not so, for Jesus never says the Sabbath is to be a day of idleness, but a day of works! Works of worship, teaching, mercy, and necessity as is demonstrated all throughout the gospels where the Pharisees wrongly accuse Christ of violating the sabbath are required on this day. Therefore the NT believers do work on the Sabbath just as OT priests did.

- The second objection that Paul nowhere mentions Sabbath breakers as a sin is an argument from silence. Simply because Paul does not mention it as a potential sin does not mean it cannot be one. Paul also did not mention bestiality as a potential sin, does that mean that bestiality is no longer sinful?

- As a Christian Reconstructionist who believes that the law of God must apply to every area of life, I do believe that a properly constituted civil government of God would indeed impose the death penalty for Sabbath violation on the testimony of two or three witnesses before a duly constituted civil court. This is no issue if one understands that God's laws of civil justice remain in effect today as the eternal standard of His just nature. Nowhere does the New Testament do away with His civil laws and penalties. As nations eventually begin to covenant with God, they will model their government and civil system on God's complete revelation. God punished the Gentile nations for not doing away with idolaters and other wicked people through the death penalty. Paul upholds the civil law in Romans 13, since the civil magistrate is to be the minister of God's justice. God's governmental justice is defined by the Old Testament civil statutes, one of which is the death penalty for Sabbath violation.

As you can see, Duncan's arguments have failed to stand the test of biblical scrutiny. He fails to realize that countless laws of the Old Testament were binding not only on Jews but also on the Gentiles. Paul states in Romans 1 that the Old Testament law is written upon the heart of every Gentile. The Ten Commandments were not simply given to the Jews, but given to every nation and obedience is demanded of every nation. This is clearly proven in my opening statement where God punishes the Gentile nations for disobeying laws that Duncan argues are given only to the Jews. In addition, it is also clear that the temple, holidays, and laws of separation (clean and unclean foods, animals, seeds, clothes) were only needed to be obeyed by the Jews! The Gentiles were not forced to follow these laws when they visited Israel, nor does God ever mention punishing the Gentile nations for not visiting the temple and offering the yearly sacrifices. The Gentiles slaves and strangers were bound to obey the moral Sabbath, even the animals were (Exodus 20:8-11) Ancient and modern Rabbis confirm that there is such a legal distinction between laws only for Jews and laws also binding on Gentiles. The Bible clearly states that there are two systems of law running throughout Old and New Testaments. Part of the moral law, binding on both Jew and Gentile, is the weekly Sabbath day since it is stated in the Ten Commandments, the summary of the moral law. Ten is the number for completeness. The first four commandments are the summary of love to God, and the last six of love to neighbor. Christ binds us to all ten complete commandments when He tells us to "Love the LORD our God with all of our heart, mind, soul, and strength" and to "Love your neighbor as yourself." Christ warns us of doing away with any commandment that He does not in Matthew 5:17-20. Finally, Christ and the apostles are seen actively observing the first day of the roman calendar week as the Sabbath day, or Lord's Day.

Part 3:Question And Answer

9-4-1 The Weekly Sabbaths

Questions By Mr. Philip Bartlett Answers By Mr. Duncan Heaster

1. Ephesians 2:14-15 states: "For He himself is our peace who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace". This abolishing of the "law with its commandments and regulations" sound remarkably similar to Col 2:14 where it states "having cancelled the written code with its regulations, that was against us". You contend that this refers to the complete law of God given in the Old Testament because handwriting must somehow refer to the Ten Commandments (even though you never prove this). Yet, Ephesians 2:14-15 says that these commandments are a "barrier" between Jew and Gentile. John Calvin writes concerning this: "Ceremonial observations were afterwards added, which, like walls, enclosed the inheritance of God, preventing it from being open to all or mixed with other possessions, and thus excluded the Gentiles from the kingdom of God…. What has been metaphorically understood by the word *wall* is now more plainly expressed. The ceremonies, by which the distinction was declared, have been abolished through Christ" (*Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1981], pp. 236-237). In addition Theodoret, Calvin, Bucer, Grotius, Meier, Holzhausen, Olshausen, and Conybeare and countless other scholars hold these passages only to be referring to the ceremonial law. In light of all of this, and the fact that the Gentiles

were judged in the Old Testament for disobeying laws based on the Decalogue, how can you say that these passages refer to the whole Old Testament law?

The quotation of "scholars" is hardly Biblical proof. A number of the scholars mentioned didn't believe in Sabbath keeping- so in any case calling them as witnesses only serves to defeat the argument being postulated: that Christians should keep the Sabbath today. The "dividing wall" clearly alludes to the wall beyond which Gentiles could not pass in Herod's temple. For those "in Christ" by baptism, all Jew / Gentile differences are ended because they all become the true children of Abraham (Gal. 3:27-29). Colossians 2 gives us one example of this- in that the Old Covenant has been ended. The handwriting of God is further defined in 2 Cor. 3 to mean that which was "engraven on stones"- clearly the 10 commandments, which were the epitome of the entire Mosaic Law. The link between Col. 2 and Eph. 2 doesn't prove that Paul has in mind only the "ceremonial" law. Col. 2:14-17 defines the law as including the Sabbath. The reason this has been ended is because it was fulfilled in Christ. The weekly Sabbaths just as much as those of Lev. 23 were fulfilled in Christ. You would have to argue that the weekly Sabbath was not fulfilled in Christ but those of Lev. 23 were…and this is untenable. In addition to which it is pure supposition to say that "Sabbath" in Col. 2 *must not* refer to the weekly Sabbaths.

9-4-2 The Sabbath And Israel

1. You claim that Gentiles could not be cursed by God for disobeying the law (ie sinning) in your previous statements. Yet God clearly states that He was driving the Canaanites out of their land because of their sins against laws that He binds Israel to obey: "***9*** When thou art come into the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations. ***10*** There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, ***11*** Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. ***12*** For all that do these things are an abomination unto the LORD: and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee. ***13*** Thou shalt be perfect with the LORD thy God. ***14*** For these nations, which thou shalt possess, hearkened unto observers of times, and unto diviners: but as for thee, the LORD thy God hath not suffered thee so to do." How then can you say that the law and curses were not universal when God clearly is cursing Canaan for disobedience?

I said that the Gentiles could not have been driven out of the land because they disobeyed the Sabbath law, as you claimed, because that law had not then been given. You are arguing from silence. Scripture definitely says that the Sabbaths were given by God *to Israel* as a memorial between them and Him- not to the Gentile world. "I caused them to go forth out of the land of Egypt, and brought them into the wilderness. And I gave *them* my statutes, and shewed *them* my judgments…moreover also I gave *them* my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify *them*. But the house of Israel rebelled…my sabbaths they greatly polluted" (Ez. 20:10-13). "Thou camest down also upon Mount Sinai and spakest with them from heaven, and gavest them right judgments, and true laws…and *madest known unto them* thy holy sabbath…and a law, by the hand of Moses" (Neh. 9:13,14). The whole sabbath concept- and note that there is no difference made between weekly and ceremonial sabbaths- was "made known" to Israel by Moses. They didn't know it before. So you can't reasonably argue that the Gentiles knew about it before Israel did.

1. God states that Israel's law is to be an example and model for all nations, not simply for Israel: Deuteronomy 4:***5*** "Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the LORD my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it. ***6*** Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people***.*** ***7*** For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the LORD our God is in all things that we call upon him for? ***8*** for what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?" The statutes and judgments are righteous according to the Gentile nations, or in other words tell them how to keep from being wicked or sinful. How then can you say that this law is only for the Jews?

You have stated that the Decalogue was for Gentiles and Jews, but the rest of the Law of Moses was only for Jews. But now you are saying that Dt. 4:5-8 is speaking about the 10 commandments. But "statutes and judgments…that *ye* should do in the land whither ye go" are clearly not the ten commandments. They were to be obeyed a) by Israel b) in the land of Israel. Not by the Gentile world. Israel's obedience to them would make their neighbours say "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people". There is no statement in the above passage that the Gentiles had to be obedient to these "statutes and judgments". The passage prophesies that the Gentiles would only come to know about God's laws through seeing the example of those who had been obedient to them. This is proof positive that those nations didn't know them beforehand- so it cannot be that they knew those laws before Israel did, and were expelled from the land for disobedience to them. The Queen of Sheba came to visit Solomon because she had heard of the wisdom and happiness of Israel as a result of their obedience to the law of their God- but she hadn't been commanded by God to be obedient to the laws which Israel were obeying.

1. You claim that whenever the Bible uses the word stranger it refers only to those people who have latched onto Israel and have decided to covenant with Yahweh, and that only these special people had to keep the Sabbath day. Yet this is not how the Bible uses the word stranger at all. In fact, God distinguishes those strangers who DO latch on and covenant with Yahweh, from those strangers that do not. Exodus 12:48 says "An alien living among you **who wants** to celebrate the passover of YAHWEH must have all the males in his household circumcised." Notice carefully that in order to partake of the Passover the alien or stranger first had to **want** to do this, and then also have his household circumcised! The Sabbath commandment however is binding upon **all** strangers without exception, and even the animals. The stranger, even if he did not want to observe the Sabbath, nevertheless had to do so, even if he was not circumcised. The commandment is universal. Therefore how can you say that the Sabbath is like circumcision when the Sabbath is universally binding upon all Gentile visitors and circumcision is binding only upon those who wished to enter the Jewish covenant (i.e. go onto the Jewish side of the 'wall of partition' mentioned in Ephesians 2:14-15)?

If the Sabbath is a moral commandment, how can animals have to be obedient to it? Surely they are a-moral? Are they really going to be resurrected and judged and condemned for their failure to sit down and rest on the 7th day? The Israelite owner of animals was not to use his animals for labour on the Sabbath because *he* had to observe the Sabbath- not them. What evidence is there that God specifically requested all animals, fish, birds etc. not to work on

the Sabbath? Did He beam it into their brain cells? Scripture is totally silent about this. You give no evidence at all that Sabbath keeping was obligatory upon Gentile visitors. If as you claim it was a moral requirement for the whole planet, then why did God not instruct His prophets to tell the whole planet about their duty to keep it? Israel were never commanded to go and tell the Gentile world to keep Sabbath, and there is no record of such instruction being given to Gentile nations before the time of Moses. All these huge assumptions, which have not the slightest Biblical proof, are required simply because a wrong proposition has to be 'proved'.

1. Jesus says in Matthew 5:17-20 "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven." Christ here clearly states that not the least stroke will disappear from the law until **all** is fulfilled and heaven and earth itself disappear. Therefore, He says if you teach others to disobey the very least of the Old Testament law, you will be called least in the kingdom. If you claim that fulfill involves doing away with our need to obey His law (not for justification but for sanctification, we are justified by faith alone), then you cause Our Lord to contradict Himself by calling us to obey it! How do you respond to this statement of our Lord?

Nobody was free at the time Jesus spoke those words to disobey the Mosaic Law- because the Torah was in force right up until Jesus "took it out of the way" through His death on the cross. Then the "heavens and earth" of the Mosaic system ended. This phrase must be symbolic because the literal earth and heaven will not be destroyed- God will not destroy His own abode, and His eternal Kingdom is prophesied to come here on earth (Ecc. 1:4). If you say that the ceremonial law has been done away but the 10 commandments haven't been, then by quoting Mt. 5:17 you are forced to assume that "the law" meant only the ten commandments. And yet it is clear from the usages of the phrase "the law" in the New Testament that it clearly refers to the entire law. You are forced to conclude that sometimes "the law" refers to the 10 commandments, sometimes to the rest of the Law. How can you decide which definition to apply? There is no Biblical warrant for this. And you went further in your second paper to introduce yet a third compartment of 'law': "Nowhere does the New Testament do away with [God's] civil laws and penalties". You seem to be saying that the "Law" was divided into: 1) the 10 commandments, 2) the "civil laws and penalties", and 3) the "ceremonial law", and that only the last category of "the law" was done away. These legalistic distinctions are purely artificial and man-made. They cannot be sustained from the Bible text.

9-4-3 The First Day Of The Week

Questions By Mr. Duncan Heaster

Answers By Mr. Philip Bartlett

Answers

1. Re. Acts 20:7 proving we must keep Sunday as the first day of the week. Seeing they broke bread after midnight on the Sunday, what day did they eat the Lord's supper on?

They intended to break the bread on the first day as Acts 20:7 states "On the first day of the week we came together to break bread." Clearly, however, there was an accident that occurred. In addition to this, Paul in the enthusiasm of his sermon, appeared to have spilled the message over until past midnight. What is important is that the time of their coming together in order to have a meeting and the Lord's Supper, was on the first day of the week. Simply because the meeting spilled over past the Sabbath day does not negate that they met on the Sabbath day. It simply proves the incredible enthusiasm with which the apostles and disciples embraced the truth of the teaching of the Word of God and that they observed HOURS in instruction not a mere hour in the morning. Midnight is the demarcation time of the Christian Sabbath. Verse seven also states that because Paul intended to leave the next day, he kept talking until midnight. This implies that ordinarily he would have stopped and they would have had the Lord's Supper before midnight.

1. Please give references where Paul, Jesus and Peter asked us to keep the Sabbath, and which show that the Sabbath [7th day] was changed to the first day of the week [Sunday]

No direct commandment is necessary since it has already been commanded in the Old Testament. Jesus tells us in Matthew 5:17-20 that not the least jot or tittle will be removed till heaven and earth themselves disappear. Jesus is speaking about being called least "in the kingdom" if one does not teach all of these commandments proving that this extends far beyond the cross of Jesus Christ. We even obey the sacrificial laws and the Passover and circumcision, only that we obey it in a superior way because Christ has become our Passover and has been "cut off" for us (in the way of circumcision). We no longer need to make the sacrifices in the old way since Jesus has become our sacrifice and we obey the sacrificial laws through Jesus. However, with this in mind all of the law of Moses is to be taught and obeyed today. While it is not necessary to keep the law of Moses FOR SALVATION (Acts 15), it is still necessary to obey the law of Moses for sanctification. Nowhere does the scripture ever say that the Ten Commandments have been done away, no matter what my opponent tries to tell you. He always quotes verses out of context whenever trying to prove that.

9-4-4 The Sabbath Fulfilled

1. Was the Sabbath a type of, and therefore fulfilled in, Jesus Christ? You have reasoned that the ceremonial law was taken away because it was fulfilled in Jesus Christ. And I have given Biblical reasons for believing that the Sabbath was also fulfilled in Him, and is therefore likewise done
away with.

As far as the Sabbath being fulfilled in Christ, the ceremonial part of it was yes. This includes especially the feast Sabbaths in Leviticus 23 and other places. But the moral part of the Sabbath, where God morally commands that men be given a time to rest and worship Him as God, has always been effect for all men everywhere. When God states in the scripture that He "made known to them My Sabbath" this does not prove that God first instituted the Sabbath then, but rather is a statement that He caused them to remember His Sabbath after the knowledge of it had been lost in human history. God didn't sanctify the Sabbath day when He gave it to the Jews, He sanctified it all the way back in Genesis as a holy and special day.

Genesis 2:4 “And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that He had done”. The day was holy to the Gentiles long before it was holy to the Jews.

1. What is " the ministration of death, written and engraven on stones" (2 Cor. 3:7) which " killeth" , " was to be done away" , " which is done away" ? It was the 10 commandments (including the Sabbath) which were engraven on stones.

The ministration of death written and engraven on stones was not the commandments themselves, but the power of those written commandments to kill you because you were not saved by Jesus Christ. That ministration has been done away now that Christ has come, but Paul asks in Romans 3: ***30*** Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith. ***31*** Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law. And again in Romans 7: ***7*** What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. ***8*** But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. ***9*** For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. ***10*** And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. ***11*** For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me. ***12*** Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.

9-4-5 The Sabbath And Conscience

1. How can Romans 14 say that keeping days as special is a matter of conscience, if it is a vital part of our obedience to God?

You are ripping this chapter out of its context like you usually do with passages like this. The context of Romans 14 refers only to the feast days and ceremonial days of the Jewish ceremonial law. Also mentioned in this verse are the ceremonial food laws. Clearly Paul is dealing only with those things specific to the Jews. In Isaiah 56:1-2 God binds the Sabbath on Jew and Gentile : “Keep justice, and do righteousness, for my salvation is about to come, and my righteousness to be revealed. Blessed is the man who does this, and the **son of man** who lays hold on it; who keeps from defiling the Sabbath, and keeps his hand from doing any evil” Christ chose to appear repeatedly to His disciples on the first day of the week (Mt. 28:9; Lk. 24:15-31, 36; Jn. 20:19, 26). This pattern of appearance is carefully noted in the Scriptures and is obviously not arbitrary. Jesus chose the first day of the week to strengthen the apostles’ faith, instruct them in doctrine, issue commands, engage in fellowship, and partake in the breaking of bread.

Part 4: Summary / Final Statements

9-5-1 The Sabbath Is Not Binding Today

Mr. Duncan Heaster:

If there is no difference between the ceremonial and moral laws, how can you say that the ceremonial law was binding on the Jews only, but the moral laws on the Gentiles? If Sabbath keeping is a moral issue, then how could the priests by God’s command “profane the Sabbath” law, as Jesus said they did (Mt. 12:5)? Presumably according to Philip’s definitions

they were being “immoral”, and so Jesus and the Mosaic Law would have commended them for immorality. If the Sabbath is an unchangeable moral issue, then it cannot be that morality is broken in this way. You can’t be immoral in order to be moral.

I don’t see that Philip has Biblically proved his contention that the Ten Commandments were and are binding on the Gentile world, but the other Mosaic commands were binding on the Jews alone. He wrote: “Only circumcised Jews could observe the holidays and go to the temple and make sacrifices!”. But this just wasn’t so. There is specific legislation, even encouragement, for the “stranger within thy gates” to keep Passover and offer the Passover lamb (Ex. 12:48; Num. 9:14). And they could definitely make other sacrifices too: “And if a stranger sojourn with you, or whosoever *be* among you in your generations, and will offer an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the LORD; as ye do, so he shall do. One ordinance shall be both for you of the congregation, and also for the stranger that sojourneth with you, an ordinance for ever in your generations: as ye are, so shall the stranger be before the LORD. One law and one manner shall be for you, and for the stranger that sojourneth with you” (Num. 15:14-16). The stranger could also offer a sacrifice to atone for committing a sin of ignorance (Num. 15:26-29).

The argument from Romans 14 hasn’t been satisfactorily answered. Paul says that if someone wants to keep *any* day as especially holy, they are welcome, *but* it must be understood it is merely a matter of conscience. So it is not good enough to say that Paul is only speaking of some ceremonial Sabbaths. He is speaking of observing *any* day. And there is no evidence that Scripture makes any distinction between “moral” and “ceremonial” Sabbaths. Philip is forced to this conclusion because preconceived ideas demand it; but it is nowhere in Scripture.

I several times in my papers referred to Paul’s argument in 2 Cor. 3, where he described that which was “engraven on stones” as the Old Covenant which was being done away. And it was the Decalogue which was “engraven on stones”. The ministry of the Spirit has replaced that of those “letters”. And yet Philip makes no comment upon this. I leave readers to re-read the comments made about this in my earlier papers.

Philip has stated two things which seem to me contradictory:

1) The commands about killing Sabbath breakers should ideally be implemented today- even though these are not part of the Decalogue. They are therefore part of what Philip calls the “ceremonial law”

2) The “ceremonial law” has been done away and is no longer binding upon us.

I leave readers to reflect upon this. If all outside the Decalogue has been ended, then why insist that parts of it must still be kept? Philip says that the whole has been fulfilled in Jesus; and yet this is the very reason, according to Col. 2:14-17, that we do not need to keep the Law! Philip says that the ceremonial law doesn’t have to be kept because it was fulfilled in Jesus, and yet he says the *entire* Law was fulfilled in Him. Therefore logically he ought to accept that the rest of the Law likewise has been done away.

One could even argue from the Lord's teaching about new wine needing new bottles that it is potentially destructive to a person to mix the old and new covenants. A Christian trying to keep the Mosaic law is likened to trying to tack old cloth onto new, or putting old wine in

new bottles. The result will be damage, because faith in Christ and salvation by pure grace requires us to shed all ideas of salvation by the works of law-keeping (Lk. 5:36-39). The fact Paul and the Lord Jesus both quote the Old Testament extensively, advocating the upholding of some of the principles and laws found there, is significant- because their lack of command to keep the Sabbath is a glaring omission. If indeed they intended us to do so, why don't they even once make the point?

Summing up, it seems to me that we humans shy away from the purity and reality of God's grace. We would all rather "do" something in order to earn our salvation. Yet as Romans 6:23 points out, this would mean that salvation would be a wage earned, rather than gift given quite undeservedly. "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his *faith* is counted for righteousness" (Rom. 4:4,5). Most 'Christian' groups include some elements of seeking salvation by works, and have therefore in some form included some of the Mosaic system in their belief structure: be it tithing, priests dressing up in robes, places of worship which are treated as if God dwells in them, observing some special days… whereas the reality is that we have sinned and deserve death, eternal death, and only a salvation by pure grace can save us. The Lord Jesus, as one of our nature, our representative, Son of God and yet with human nature, tempted as we are yet without sin (Heb. 4:15)…lived, died and rose again as our representative sacrifice. We can appropriate that great salvation to ourselves through immersion (baptism) into Him, as adults gratefully grasping with both hands the gift of grace which is in Him. And we cannot be passive to that grace, to the Hope of resurrection at the second coming, to eternal life in God's Kingdom on earth… which has been enabled for those who accept the true Gospel in baptism. We must live the life of response to grace, not in terms of fulfilling Mosaic commands, but in seeking to simply reflect our experience of grace in all spheres of human life. For this is, in its barest essence, "the law of Christ".

I appeal to all readers to give themselves no rest until they have learnt the true Gospel, believed it, and been baptized. I would be delighted to discuss any questions you may have and to send you a free copy of *Bible Basics*, a study manual enabling you to systematically analyze the message of the Gospel for yourself, in your own home. Or you can view it at www.biblebasicsonline.com.

May God bless us all towards His Kingdom.

Duncan Heaster, info@carelinks.net

9-5-2 Our Obligation To Observe The Sabbath

Mr. Philip Bartlett:

Summary

In conclusion I would like to briefly repeat the clear scriptural proofs which make it absolutely certain that the Sabbath must be kept today. First of all it is commanded in the law of God (Exodus 20:8-11). Second of all Jesus Christ said that we are to observe even the least of the commandments of the law of God in the New Covenant just as in the Old (Matthew 5:17-20). It is sure that the Sabbath commandment was not a least commandment but was written by the finger of God Himself and was a day sanctified long before the Ten Commandments were given (Genesis 2:4). Given that Christ is our more perfect sacrifice,

circumcision, feast day, and ceremonial Sabbaths of rest (Leviticus 23) we now observe these particular things in a superior way and are no longer under the wall of partition and the commandments contained in ordinances but we obey these particular things in a new and more fulfilled way (Ephesians 2:11-18, Colossians 2:13-17, Romans 14, Matthew 5:17). We also know that we do not observe the entire law of Moses for salvation (Acts 15:1) which is by faith alone, but rather we observe it for sanctification as the evidential mark of being God's spiritual people (Matthew 5:17-20, 1 John 5:3, Romans 3:31, Matthew 7:21-23, Romans 12:9-21, Rev 22:15, Rev 22:14, Rev 14:12).

As stated earlier, the Sabbath is one of these commandments of God that mark the saints. It is called by God in the Old Testament "My Holy Day" or the "Lord's Day" (Isaiah 58:13). On this day God's pleasure was to be done only. In other words it is the day that belongs to the Lord (Isaiah 58:13-14). The Sabbath was to be a day of holy convocation (gathering together), worship, reading of the law, and rest (Isaiah 66:23, Exodus 20:8-11). The fact that John is observing this "Lord's day" in Revelation is proof that this day is continuing to be observed (Revelation 1:10) by the church. In addition this is demonstrated to be the first day of the week in the new covenant by evidence that the apostles are gathering together to break bread with Jesus or with the Holy Spirit (ie with God) over consecutive Sundays and worshipping (John 20:19-26, Acts 2:1, Acts 20:7, 1 Corinthians 16:1-2). In addition Christ states that the Sabbath is made for mankind, not simply for ethnic Jews (Mk 2:27). Christ tells us specific things that can and cannot be done on the Sabbath like healing/charity (Mt 12:11-12). Finally the scriptures tell us that we are commanded to meet together (Hebrews 10:25). All of this combined is proof that it is a perpetual and moral obligation to observe one day in seven (the first day of the week) as the Sabbath day.

9-6 Moses' Law " Done away"

Note:

In the course of this debate the question was raised by a third party as to whether Mr. Heaster was correctly representing the Biblical position by saying that the Law of Moses had been "done away". He responded:

" Done away" is surely a perfectly reasonable term to describe the Law's passing. If it hasn't been done away, is it still in operation...? If there is " difficulty" in accepting that there has been a change in the law, then the difficulty is with the Apostle's clear reasoning in Hebrews- that there has been a change of the law (7:12). If Divine Law hasn't been changed, then we ought to be keeping ALL the Law of Moses. Our sister's statement that " The Law was neither weak or useless" seems to me to rest strangely beside Scripture's clear statement that the Old Covenant comprised " weak and beggarly elements" . Because it was " weak through the flesh" it was, therefore, " weak" in practice, no matter how " holy, just and good" it was as Divine legislation. The ministrations of the law and of the Spirit are explained in 2 Cor. 4 as below. The law was " glorious" but not as glorious as the ministry of the Spirit. And this ministration of law was, in Bible language, " done away" . The fading glory on Moses' face was analagous to the Law- it was fading away in the 1st century, in that it was " taken out of the way" on the cross yet there was an interim period in which some 1st century Christians were permitted to keep parts of the Law, although the ideal- to put away the " weak and beggarly elements" - is clearly brought before us by Paul time and again.

" But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious. Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech: And not as Moses, which put a vail over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished: But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which vail is done away in Christ. "

We die in baptism; we became 'deaded to the law', to translate Paul's Greek literally (Rom. 6:3,4; 7:4). In Romans 7, Paul speaks of our relationship with Christ and the Law as being two marriages, which are mutually exclusive. If we are married to Christ, our relationship with the Mosaic Law is over. Indeed, if we even seek to be justified by the Law [and Sabbath keeping is just that!], then we are 'severed from Christ', divorced from Him (Gal. 5:4). This is how important the debate about Sabbath keeping is.

Introduction

In surveying Bible teaching about the roles of men and women, the question arises: "How much of this was just relevant to the local situation, time and place in which it was given?". And that is just the question I wish to discuss in this paper, rather than actually getting into the question of *what* Scripture teaches about those roles. To put the conclusion up front: God has perceived and dealt with the issue of gender in a manner radically different to how it was understood in the societies contemporary with Biblical times. For me, therefore, I have to reject the idea that God's position on the gender issue somehow changes with time. It was exactly because His position on it was *so* radically different from that of 'religious' people at the time... that it wasn't always perceived or accepted even by His own people. But when it was, as it was at the time of the first century church, the results were amazing, and became part of an irresistible witness to this world.

Women And The Law Of Moses

The Bible emphasizes the place and spiritual status of women, in sharp distinction to the male-dominated attitudes of the surrounding cultures. We will also demonstrate how Bible teaching is not influenced at all by the surrounding world. Truth is truth, and the principles will not change with time. It should be noted that even in Genesis there are 'incidental' historical examples of the attitude of believing men to women being different from that of the surrounding culture. Thus Abraham personally got the meal ready for his unexpected visitors, rather than leaving it all to the wife (Gen.18).

Under the Law of Moses, both male and female could offer sacrifices (Lev.5:4; 6:3,6; 12:5-8). This showed the woman's direct personal responsibility to God; if she sinned, she had to offer for herself. She could not trust in her husband to do this for her. This was in sharp contrast to surrounding cultures; in them, religious sacrifice was largely male-oriented, often involving some display of male prowess in the slaughtering of the animal. That women were allowed to directly offer sacrifices to the God of Israel without their husbands' presence or approval was something radically different from surrounding concepts of a woman's place in

religion. Indeed, women did not have a public place in local religious rituals. Contrast this with the women being able to take the vow of the Nazarite (Num.6:2) and offer sacrifices. Other examples of the Law's radically different perspective on women in comparison to the surrounding world are as follows:

-The Mosaic Law did not contain clauses which evidently oppressed women. Yet other broadly contemporary legal codes did, e.g. the laws of Hamurrabi, and the local Arab traditions which form the basis for present Islamic law, with its evident repression of women.

- Female captives were to be given a very high level of moral and ethical protection. Immediate intercourse with them was forbidden, and only after an elaborate, lengthy procedure could they be married (Dt.21:10-14). This is in sharp contrast to the surrounding practice of treating captured women as legitimate sexual booty. The mother and courtiers of Sisera, a local Canaanite King, rubbed their hands with glee at the thought of the fun their victorious boys (as they thought) would be having if they had defeated the Israelites: "...to every man a damsel or two; to Sisera a prey of divers colours...of needlework"- i.e. an exceptionally well dressed young woman (Jud.5:30).

- The point has been made that women were usually punished for their husband's sin in most law codes contemporary with the Law of Moses. But there is nothing of this kind in God's Law- indeed, there is the hint of the opposite (1).

- The Hebrews were to "honour father *and* mother". Local customs emphasized honour to the father, whilst if anything the mother was supposed to honour her son once he was adult. But under the Mosaic Law, disobedience to the mother was as bad as that to the father (Dt. 21:18-21). Equal reverence for both parents was a great theme of the Law: Ex.20:12; 21:15,17; Lev.19:3; Dt. 5:16. The book of Proverbs is largely a commentary on the Mosaic Law, and this is full of references to the importance of this: Prov. 1:8; 6:20; 20:20; 23:22; 28:24; 30:11,17.

- Israel were warned that even in the case of a female sacrifice, it was not to be offered blemished (Lev. 3:1), as if foreseeing a male tendency to think that the female sacrifices would be acceptable if they were blemished. The female element in sacrifice of itself bespoke the acceptability of female devotion as well as male.

- The marriage tie could only be broken by a "bill of divorcement", and then only for highly specific reasons, associated with sexual impurity. This is in stark contrast to the local customs of the husband being able to dissolve a marriage at will, without any legal process or reason. This was the case even in the relatively civilized Greek empire, where little thought was normally given to the wife after her childbearing years were over (2). If this was the case then, how much worse would it have been among the Canaanite tribes and Sinaitic nomads who comprised the world contemporary to the giving and practice of the Mosaic law. Therefore the Law's commands concerning divorce were radical; they did not reflect in any way the attitudes of the surrounding world.

- "All the people", male and female, rich or poor, slave or affluent materialist, High Priest or mentally retarded cripple were all in covenant relationship with God (Ex.19:11). Thus women as well as men had to travel to the tabernacle to keep the feasts (Dt.12:12,18; 16:11,14). The Bible emphasizes how these commands were kept in practice; hence Jud.21:9-23 shows how it was well known that women would be present at the feasts, and 1 Sam.1 and 2:19 describe

Hannah and Peninnah going up to keep the feasts each year. Local religions did not have this feature. The covenant was between their god and the leaders of the nations. "That which distinguishes the God of Israel from the gods of the (surrounding) nations is, among other traits, his condescension to the humble; he deigns to establish his covenant with the children, the women and the slaves... Judaism...guarantees women a standing before God which they did not have in any heathen religious relationship" (3).

Towards the end of Old Testament history, the church's surrounding world was dominated by Greek culture. We know much about the Greek attitude to women, and it is significant that it stands in sharp contrast to the teaching of the law of Moses, which was still practised by Israel throughout the Greek era. In practice, the Greek wife was not considered by her husband "in a much higher light than...a faithful domestic slave" (4). This, again, is in sharp contrast to the Mosaic law, whereby a husband was certainly not to treat his wife as a slave. The Proverbs, written during the time of Solomon, describe the faithful husband as standing up in respect to his wife, and praising her (Prov.31:10, 25-28). There was much Greek culture in the Lycus Valley in the first century AD; yet Paul told the church at Ephesus that husbands should "love their wives as their own bodies" (Eph.5:28). Clearly Paul's commands concerning men and women were not influenced by surrounding culture.

The Old Testament abounds with accounts of women of distinction- e.g. Esther, Ruth, Deborah, Miriam etc. Yet the classicist James Donaldson points out that in Athens, centre of the Greek world, "Not one Athenian woman ever attained to the slightest distinction" (5). The words of Pericles sum this up: "If I am to speak of womanly virtues...great also is hers of whom there is least talk among men whether in praise or in blame" (6). Yet the Bible abounds with records of women, which are intended to be meditated upon by male and female believers of all time. Jesus, speaking against a similar Greco-Roman cultural background, said that Mary's devotion to him would be spoken about world-wide "for a memorial of her" (Mk.14:9). This was therefore a radical departure from the surrounding culture, which suppressed the mention of women.

Notes

(1) This point is expanded upon in Wang Lih Na, 'Women victimized by ancient criminal law', *Women Of China,* April 1988 Vol. 4.

(2) See E.Guhl and W.Koner, *The Life of the Greeks and Romans* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1989 reprint), p.186

(3) Charles Ryrie, The Role of Women in the Church (Chicago: Moody Press, 1970).

(4) Guhl and Koner, *op. cit.* , p. 185

(5) James Donaldson, *Woman: Her Position and Influence In Ancient Greece and Rome, and Among the Early Christians* (Elibron Classics, 2006 reprint), p.55

(6) Thucydides, II, XLV, 2

Women In New Testament Teaching

Charles Ryrie concludes his research with this telling statement: "...equally clear is the fact that Christianity stands in sharp contrast to the treatment of women in ancient Greece and Rome" (1). Again, the point is driven home that the attitude of Bible-based religion to women was not influenced by the surrounding cultures.

The point has been made by many writers that the teaching of Christ concerning women was in sharp contrast to the accepted values of the surrounding Roman world concerning them. Jesus would not have compromised on principles; he would not have inwardly believed one thing about the gender issue, and yet taught something else, just out of deference to the surrounding culture. All that we see and know of the Lord indicates this was not how He was, nor is. True Christianity has ever been a religion of contrast with the world and the philosophies around it. Lightfoot (2) commented on Christ's attitude towards women: "To contemporaries it must have appeared in the light of a social revolution".

Jesus was highly sensitive to the gender division. He did not just ignore it. The parable of the mustard seed which a man planted is followed by that of the leaven which a woman hid in the meal (Lk.13:18-21). Likewise in Lk.15:3-10 Jesus speaks firstly of the joy of a man finding a lost sheep, and then of the joy of a woman on finding a lost dowry coin. He spoke of the lilies of the field which do not physically exert themselves in labour, as men must do, but also who do not spin (women's work). Christ spoke of the second coming as finding two men in the field and two women grinding at the mill. This parallelism of attention between men and women can be profitably followed through the Gospel records: Lk. 8:14,15 cp. Lk. 8:16,17; Lk. 11:5-8 cp. 18:1-8; Lk. 4:24-27; Mt. 24:43-51 cp. 25:1-13; 24:40,41; Mt. 13:31-33 cp. Lk. 13:18-21. This approach contrasts sharply with the male-centred teaching approach of the contemporary rabbis and other religious leaders (19). Thus his parables were consciously designed to appeal to both men and women. Luke particularly seems to rejoice in observing how the Lord treated men and women in parallel. Both Martha and the male ruler lack one thing (Lk. 10:41,42 cp. 18:22); there are two parables on answered prayer for men and women (Lk. 11:5-8 cp. 18:1-8); the men of Nineveh and the queen of the South are paired (Lk. 11:29-32); justice is for both male and female servants (Lk. 12:45,46); both men and women would be divided (Lk. 12:51-53); a woman and a man are both healed on the Sabbath (Lk. 13:10-16; 14:1-6); a 'daughter of Abraham' and a 'son of Abraham' are healed (Lk. 13:16; 19:9); the woman loses a coin, a man loses a sheep (Lk. 15:4-10). Indeed, a profitable study could be made of how the Old Testament prophets liken God to both male and female figures in tandem- e.g. "The Lord goes forth as a mighty man… I will cry out like a woman in travail" (Is. 42:13,14).

The following are further examples of where the Lord's teaching concerning women was contrary to local culture:

- In the surrounding culture, a woman followed the religion of her husband (3). Christ cut right across this by saying that following him was a totally individual matter.

- The Rabbis taught that a man should not salute a woman in a public place (4). For Jesus to talk to the Samaritan woman at the well (Jn.4) was therefore an indication of his studied disregard of local tradition concerning women when it clashed with spiritual principles. The incident was "a strange innovation on Rabbinic custom and dignity" (5). The Talmud taught: "Six things are a disgrace to a disciple of the wise: He should not…converse with a woman in the street" (Babylonian Talmud: Berakoth "Benedictions" 43b). A woman could only be alone with two men, never with one, and this was within a town; outside a town, she had to

be in the presence of three men (Babylonian Talmud: Kiddushin "Betrothals" 81a). But the Lord spoke to her alone. A woman could even be divorced for speaking to a man. "What conduct transgresses Jewish custom? If she…speaks with any man" (Mishnah: Ketuboth "Marriage Deeds" 7:6). There can be no doubt that the Lord didn't accept the prevailing view of women.

- Local Jewish culture stressed that the place of the woman was about domestic matters rather than spiritual ones. Yet in the incident of Martha and Mary, Christ commended Mary for neglecting her domestic duties in order to concern herself with spiritual development (Lk.10:38-42). She sat at his feet, as if a student at the feet of a rabbi. When we read that Mary sat at the Lord's feet (Lk. 10:39), it's easy to forget that to sit at the feet of a Rabbi [and the Lord was called 'Rabbi'] meant to be a disciple of that Rabbi. And women… couldn't be disciples of a Rabbi. It was all radical stuff.

- The Rabbis in Christ's time were split into two schools on the question of divorce. One school taught that divorce was available for any reason, whilst the other said that it was only for sexual impurity. The question was put to Jesus as to when he thought divorce was possible. It seemed that he was going to be forced to take sides with one of the two contemporary attitudes. But he cut clean through the whole thinking of first century Israel by basing his argument on the principles of Eden: God created man and woman, and joined them together; therefore, he reasoned, the ideal standard is that there should be no divorce for any reason, including adultery. This is a cameo of the teaching of Christ; through radical and fundamental recourse to the Old Testament, his teachings cut right through all the conceptions and expectations which were present in the mind of first century Jewry as a result of their cultural conditioning. We too must cut through the cultural conditioning of our era. In the time of Jesus, Roman law allowed women to divorce their husbands; some of the women of Herod's family got divorces like this (6). Jesus was aware of this, and commented upon this local social attitude, roundly condemning it: "If a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery". If Jesus was so unafraid to challenge local cultural attitudes towards women, why should we think that He merely went along with those local contemporary attitudes?

Thus the point is established that Jesus was revolutionary in his attitude to women. He was unafraid to challenge their accepted place in society. The words he spoke were God's words, and were uninfluenced by the surrounding social situation. The Gospel records emphasize the place of women, both in responding to the call of the Gospel, and also in spreading it.

Notes

(1) Ryrie, *op. cit.,* p.13

(2) Joseph B. Lightfoot, *Sermons Preached on Special Occasions* (London: Macmillan, 1893), p.224. The same point is often made in Alfred Edersheim, *Sketches of Jewish Social Life in the Days of Christ* (Religious Tract Society) and W.M.Ramsay, *The Church in the Roman Empire* (Hodder & Stoughton)

(3) "It is becoming for a wife to worship and to know only the gods that her husband believes in" (Plutarch: *Moralia*, 140D).

(4) Aboth, I, 5

(5) C.G.Montefiore, *Rabbinic Literature and Gospel Teachings* (New York: Ktav, 1970 ed.) p.47.

(6) See Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (Eerdmans)

The Contrast Between The Bible And Contemporary Views Of Women

The most common objection to what we have been saying is that the Bible simply reflects 'sexist' contemporary views which prevailed at the time the Bible was inspired. Whilst in being "all things to all things" the Bible does speak to its contemporary audience in terms and forms acceptable to them, close analysis of the text reveals a fundamental disparity between the contemporary views of women and the articulation of God's mind.

The Bible record begins with the statement that Adam was to work in the fields as a punishment for his sin. Although it is difficult for us to grasp hold of ancient perceptions, work in the fields was strongly perceived as women's work. It would have stood out like a sore thumb throughout the first few millennia. There was a major difference, therefore, between God's intention for the gender division of labour, and the way human societies saw it. Claus Westermann comments: "Genesis 2 is unique among the creation myths [sic] of the whole of the ancient Near East in its appreciation of the meaning of women, i.e., that human existence is a partnership of man and woman" (1).

It was rare in contemporary literature for women to be named and written about as freestanding individuals; they were normally spoken of as the wife or brother or daughter of a great man. Yet Scripture doesn't do this. Take Dinah and Miriam. They are spoken of in the Biblical record for what they did. Yet Jewish traditional literature had a hard job accepting them as women freestanding in history; they wanted to identify them in terms of their husbands. Thus Jewish tradition goes to great lengths to prove that Dinah became the wife of Job, and Miriam married Hur, Moses' assistant. But God's word doesn't seek to define women in terms of their husbands in this way. The Mosaic law specifically prohibited the abuse of female prisoners of war (Dt. 21:10-14); whereas surrounding culture assumed such women to be the prizes of the victorious warriors to do with just as they pleased (see Jud. 5:30).

Moses makes the amazing statement that Israel's God is to be likened to a mother eagle fluttering over them (Dt. 32:13,14). Dt. 32:18 LXX speaks of God as "the God who begot you...who feeds you" - as if He were Israel's mother. This likening of God to a female is repeated elsewhere. God manifest in Israel couched "as a lion and as a lioness" (Num. 24:9 RV). "As the eyes of [male] servants look unto their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God" (Ps. 123:2). Notice the careful balance of figure, to include both men and women. That Israel's God was comparable to a woman would surely have been a strange simile to the ears of the contemporary world. Moses likened God to Israel's mother (Num. 11:12; Is. 49:15). And elsewhere, God is likened to a midwife, seamstress (Neh. 9:21; Gen. 3:21), housewife, midwife (Ps. 22:9-11), nurse and mother (Ps. 22:9,10; 71:6; Is. 42:14; 49:15; 66:9,13; Hos. 11:1-4). Ps. 90:2 RV mg. speaks of God giving birth to the whole earth. Thus the Lord Jesus was unashamed to apply female images to both God (Lk. 15:8-10) and Himself (Mt. 23:37). Deut. 28, in common with Luke 21 and some other passages in the prophets (e.g. Is. 32:9) stress the judgments to come upon women as well as men. The Chronicles genealogies give a significant value to the place of women, as do those of the Lord Himself, and mention, e.g.,

the achievements of women like "Sherah, who built Beth-Horon" (1 Chron. 7:24). And the ten commandments taught that a man was to respect his mother as much as his father- radical stuff for a patriarchal society. Significantly, Lev. 19:3 says that a man must fear "his mother and his father"- placing the mother first, which was uncommon in any other contemporary legal code. It was similarly radical for David to deal bread and wine "even among the whole multitude of Israel, as well to the women as men" (2 Sam. 6:19), thus recognizing that women had an equal part in salvation and relationship with God. And note again how the women are mentioned before the men.

The prophets use figures which were relevant to women as well as men, even though they were writing in a male dominated society. Thus Is. 30:22 likens idols to used tampons, and yet the next verse goes on to give a figure based on the work of male farmers. "Ask him that fleeth, and her that escapeth" (Jer. 48:19) is typical of the subtle inclusiveness of both male and female in God's self-revelation. And David must have shocked many by singing of how "our sons shall be as plants…and our daughters as corner stones" (Ps. 144:12 RV). For the corner stones of a family were perceived to be male. Yet David foresaw the importance of women as being the foundation of the royal house; he may even have perceived the importance of women in the genealogy of his greater son.

The Lord Himself was evidently very conscious of the inclusiveness of both male and female in His redemptive work. He came to save that [both male and female] which was lost (Mt. 18:11). He asked His people to follow Him in His cross carrying, and then told them to follow a *man* bearing a pitcher of water (doing woman's work)- probably a slave bearing water for the purification rites of Passover. In asking this He was requesting us to see in that man a symbol of Himself in His time of self-sacrifice. Yet the Lord saw Himself as a slave, a man doing woman's work, as the seed of the woman...surely the Lord had worked out in advance this wonderful blend of the genders in the figure He chose to represent Him. He spoke of leaving one's sister for His sake as being a sacrifice, whereas the contemporary culture would rarely have felt that way about a female relative. Jesus not only spoke to women publically, but is even recorded as allowing a Gentile woman to change His mind (Mt. 15:22). This was unthinkable and shocking to contemporary society.

Likewise one is hard pushed to find women-only scenes in contemporary literature written during Biblical times. The women are presented in terms of the men with whom they inter-relate. Yet Elizabeth and Mary are recorded as having a conversation with no male present (Lk. 1:39-45); and there are other such passages in Scripture (Gen. 19:32,34; 30:14,15; Ex. 2:1-10; Jud. 5:28-30; Ruth 1:6-2:2; 3:16-18; 4:14-17; 2 Kings 5:2,3). The narrative of the women at the tomb and the resurrection is another example (Lk. 23:55-24:4). In all these passages, the reader is invited to share the woman's perspective.

The Lord taught that one must forsake all that he has in order to truly be His disciple (Mt. 13:44; Lk. 14:33). But at the end of His ministry, He as it were chose to exemplify this aspect of discipleship by drawing attention to a woman who gave to God "all the living that she had" (Lk. 21:3). Putting the passages together, the Lord is saying that she is to be the model for us all in this aspect of devotion. And there's another example of this when we come to consider the woman who could not stand up; for the Lord described His healing of her as losing her from a bond in order to lead her away to the water of life (Lk. 13:15)- whereas this is the very cameo of all the redeemed in Rev. 7:17.

Contrary to what is often claimed, Paul went out of his way to show that contemporary views of women were unacceptable for those in the Lord. His teaching in Gal. 3:27-29 that in Christ, there is neither Jew nor Gentile, slave nor free, male or female, is surely conscious allusion to the Jewish traditional morning prayer for men: "My God, I thank thee that I was not born a Gentile but a Jew, not a slave but a free man, not a woman but a man". He is surely saying that for those in Christ, the Jewish male world-view is unacceptable. Paul encourages younger mothers to "rule their households" (1 Tim. 5:14), using a word [*oikodespoteo*] which would usually be used about the man ruling the house. His implication is surely that in Christ, husband and wife together rule the household, notwithstanding the wife being in submission to her husband. Surrounding Roman culture forbad women to drink wine with men, and only permitted them to do so in special cases if they drank different wine from a different cup (2). But Paul in conscious reference to this emphasizes the one cup shared by all believers, male and female, in memory of the unity and tearing down of barriers between people achieved by the Lord's death. John likewise uses the neuter rather than the male gender to describe all believers (1 Jn. 5:4).

Paul emphasized that it was by one male, Adam, that sin entered the world (Rom. 5:12)- in designed contrast to the contemporary Jewish idea that Eve was to be demonized as the femme fatale, the woman who brought sin into the world. Thus Ecclesiasticus 25:4: "From a woman sin had its beginning, and because of her we all die". Paul is alluding to this and insisting quite the opposite- that Adam , the male, was actually the one initially responsible. Paul can hardly be accused of being against women! Another example of Paul's conscious rebellion against the contemporary position of women is to be found in Rom. 5:12: "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin". This is an intended rebuttal of Ecclesiasticus 25:24: "From a woman sin had its beginning, and because of her we all die". This allusion is one of many reasons for rejecting the Apocrypha as inspired. The idea that women were second class because Eve, not Adam, was the source of sin was widespread. Tertullian (*On Female Dress*, 1.1) wrote: "You [woman] are the first deserter of the Divine law…on account of your desert, that is, death, the Son of God had to die". And Paul is consciously countering it. Peter likewise describes sisters as 'joint-heirs' with their husbands, implying "full religious equality with man- a thought impossible for Judaism" (3).

The Gift Of Gender

Given the Lord's tearing down of male:female barriers, what, therefore, is the significance of gender in God's service? Our gender seems to me to be a talent we are given, which we are to use in the Lord's service. Women are under much pressure to adapt to a man's world, to prove that of course they can do work previously done by men. But that isn't necessarily using the talent of gender, in this case the feminine gender, as God intends. It's proving a point, and it's a point well proven and that needs to be well-taken by those of a chauvinist mentality. But it's not necessarily using the feminine talent in the specific way God has made potentially possible. At the last day, we will be asked what we did with our talents- not the talents given to someone else. I rather like how Yoko Ono spoke of women's need for "the utilization of feminine qualities as a force capable of changing the world" (4). It's an appreciation of this unique call which can help us resolve many crises of conscience and conflicts of decision. Especially are women caught between wanting to be good mothers devoted to their children, and yet wishing to develop themselves personally by pursuing a career which enables them to make a unique public contribution to society. These conflicts lead in so many women to feelings of frustration and guilt. Surely the key is to understand ourselves and to utilize our talents; for the woman to realize that being a woman in this age, sharing in these inevitable

conflicts, is actually part of being a woman, part of being human. And this should never be a source of guilt- it's no sin to be glad that you're alive, that God created you as you are. Sense, use your intuition, ask God to reveal your calling to you, His specific intention for you, the crucial part you have to play in the body of His Son, in which every part has a vital role, and for His power to realize / operationalize it. In many parts of the world, working out this realization will have radical and painful consequences. Previous generations in the West spoke of 'knowing our station and our place'. It was a Western form of the Indian caste system. And even today, I believe many in our societies are increasingly being processed by the corporate mentality into the same basic mindset . It's attractive, because it appeals to our innate laziness and constant desire for the old wine rather than the new. The Lord's parable about that is a telling window into His understanding of the basic conservatism of human nature.

Becoming in Christ, a member of His body in which every part is vital and indispensable to the growth of the whole, leads us to shed this attitude. We are called to do unique things which only we can, to be unique persons. The value of the individual was never more accentuated than in the teaching and person of our Lord. For too long, women have suffered from the objectification of people, and the devaluing of them as persons. Their work has so easily been unappreciated and undervalued. Too often they have been denied a personal existence, condemned rather to living their lives through a third party such as their husband or son; forever tied down to providing for others rather than blossoming themselves as persons; and so often used and identified as sex objects. But being called to recognize our gender as a talent to be used and developed enables women to rise above this.

Simply being a sensitive female, with a sense for the value of persons, can of itself be a high enough calling. In many ways, women possess a talent of spiritual perception which is far different, far quicker and more practical, than what men possess in this area. Consider these Biblical examples:
- The Lord's conversations with Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman are recorded in an intentional parallel in John 3 and 4. The man doesn't get it, he fails to perceive the double entendre in the Lord's words, and struggles with their deeper meaning. The Samaritan woman gets it straight away, and even responds to the Lord with the same kind of language.
- The male disciples so tragically misunderstood their Lord. Right up to the cross, they were expecting Him to overthrow the Romans and establish His Kingdom there and then. They asked Him to show them the Father, implying they wanted Him to produce a visible, Moses-like theophany. They didn't perceive that His personality and His upcoming death were indeed that revelation of the Father which they so desperately sought. Their masculine objectivity got in the way of their understanding His message. Whereas it was a woman who perceived the Lord's death, and anointed His body beforehand for burial.
- It was women who first grasped the resurrection. It was the male disciples who mocked them, with some pretty woman-demeaning comments thrown in. Although note their humility in recording this in their Gospel records.
- It was Pilate who condemned the Lord to death, as a male caught up in male objective politics. It was his wife who perceived, in a dream that surely reflected her subconscious perceptions and realizations, that Jesus was truly a man from God (Mt. 27:19).
- Elisabeth understood the significance of the birth of John the Baptist; her husband didn't.

So in what sorts of ways can a woman use her feminine sensitivity, intuition and perception? Bible study, writing up the results, sharing the conclusions in seminars, preaching outreach, and motivating other female believers. I, as a male Bible student, always enjoy reading

feminist theologians. Not that I agree with much of what they write, but because they simply look at Biblical material in such an insightful way that stimulates and challenges my own perceptions. In caring... caring for the person, in a way that men can't, or shall we say in a different way than men. In being motivational, in a whole host of ways. We come back to Yoko Ono and women's opportunity for "the utilization of feminine qualities as a force capable of changing the world". Modern technology has freed women from many of the ties that have bound them for generations. No longer is housework so all demanding, no longer are they slaves to so many taboos as previously. But they must use that empowerment and freedom to achieve something.

And what are male believers to make of all this? Men need to recognize the many Bible passages present God Himself as having both male and female characteristics. God comforts as a mother comforts (Is. 66:13). Not surprising, seeing women along with men are made in the image of God. Without trying to act like women, pretending they have the feminine talents just to prove a point, without refusing to develop the talents of their own maleness, men need to perceive the value of women and where appropriate to seek to incorporate feminine sensitivity, perception etc. in their approaches to people. I remember sitting in the kitchen, chatting to Cindy as she prepared food. I was talking about something in general terms, the topic was dysfunction as I remember. Obviously she couldn't give me her undivided attention as she peeled potatoes or whatever, but I remember her looking up and asking: 'Sorry, who are you talking about?'. I wasn't talking about anybody, I was talking generally. But it struck me how a woman thinks in terms of persons. And how that is overall a far more Godly way of approaching life. The Lord Jesus was male, and yet in so many ways He combined feminine sensitivity with His almost heroic, classic masculinity, as the King, warrior, brave captain who gave His life for His friends. You see it even after the resurrection- He cooked a meal for the guys as they were out fishing (Jn. 21:9). From our cultural distance it's not immediately obvious, but in first century Palestinian terms this was so obviously the work of a woman. The men fished, the woman sat on the beach preparing food for the hungry workers when they returned off night shift. But it was a man, a more than man, the exalted and risen Lord of the universe, who chose and delighted to do this very feminine, thoughtful and sensitive action of service. The incident isn't merely an insight into the Lord's humility even after His resurrection. It speaks of how He incorporates in His person both male and female characteristics, as the ideal and perfected humanity, the Man fully and ultimately in the image of God. And there are other examples in His life. He perhaps rejoiced to lead His disciples to the breaking of bread through setting up the sign of a man carrying a pitcher of water- which was evidently women's work. The way the Lord held John to His breast at the last supper is likewise a classic female image. And thus there are many examples in Scripture of men doing what is usually women's work or sharing what is classically female understanding- e.g. Abraham running around preparing food for the Angelic visitors. And the reverse is true- very feminine women doing what is typically the male role- e.g. Jael killing Sisera. Now all this doesn't mean that the gender distinction has been collapsed in practice- rather are we seeing men being men, women being women, but growing up into the image of God by incorporating the strengths and sensitivities and perceptions of the other gender into our personhood and service of God.

Notes

(1) Claus Westerman, *Genesis 1-11: A Commentary* (SPCK, 1984).

(2) See A.H. Nicholls, *Letters To Timothy And Titus* (Birmingham: CMPA, 1991) p. 399.
(3) K. Stendahl, *The Bible And The Role Of Women*, (Westminster: Fortress Press, 1966) p. 31.

(4) Quoted in Paul Tournier, *The Gift Of Feeling* (London: SCM, 1981) p. 58.

Women In The New Testament Church

It should be noted that women are not omitted from the record of the early church; in Rom.16, of the twenty six people Paul greets, eight are women. This would not be the case if women are omitted or de-emphasized in the Biblical record of the early church. Indeed the remarkable freedom offered to women was one of the reasons that Christianity grew so powerfully in the first century.

Paul's teaching about women also contradicts the local views. He encourages unmarried women to stay single so that they can devote themselves to spiritual matters (1 Cor.7:32,34). In the surrounding Jewish culture, the unmarried woman was seen as a reproach. In the local Greco-Roman culture, the unmarried woman would have been perceived as an immoral woman, or one morally disgraced. Yet Paul does not imply that once those cultural perceptions had changed, then his advice about choosing the single life should be followed. Regardless of the surrounding perceptions, Paul spoke forth the Spirit's guidance. Paul's teaching that remarriage could only take place after the death of the first partner (1 Cor.7:39; Rom.7:1-8) actually elevated the status of women compared to what it was in the local culture. He can hardly be accused of being a woman hater, in the light of this; nor is he giving commandments regarding the place of women which only fitted in with the local culture. Immorality, particularly in terms of temple prostitution, was so widespread that it is hard for us to appreciate the radicalness of Paul's insistence on absolute faithfulness to one's partner.

Clement of Alexandria commented: "The Apostles, giving themselves without respite to the work of evangelism... took with them women, not as wives but as sisters, to share in their ministry to women living at home: by their agency the teaching of the Lord reached the women's quarters without raising suspicion" (1).

All these references to women in the early church teaching would have been anathema to many of the surrounding cultures in which the Gospel spread in the first century: "Not only the arm, but the voice of a modest woman ought to be kept from the public, and she should feel shame at being heard…she should speak to or through her husband" (Plutarch, *Advice to Bride and Groom* 31-32). Likewise the encouragement for a woman to "learn in silence" was a frontal attack on the position that a woman's duty was to follow the religion of her husband and concern herself with domestic duties rather than religious learning. The way the Lord commended Mary rather than Martha for her choice to learn and her rejection of domesticity similarly challenged the prevailing gender perception. There is no doubt that a 1st century Christian woman was far more liberated than in any other contemporary religion. In our societies too, our sisters mustn't concern themselves only with domestic duties. Some Asian and African cultures demand this, but it is for our sisters to reach out in witness to the world, to strengthen each other, to take responsibility for this and not just rely on 'the brethren'. And it is for sisters living in European and American societies shaped by a Godless feminism to likewise break out of the mould that is pressed upon them by their societies.

Notes
(1) Quoted in Stephen B. Clark, *Man And Woman In Christ* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Books, 1980) p. 116.

The Female Factor In The Early Church

I suggest that one of the reasons for the phenomenal spread of Christianity in the first century was the role afforded to women within Christianity. The first century society was built around the concept of *oikonomia*, household fellowship. The head of the house was the leader, and all the extended family and slaves had to follow his religion and be obedient to him. For slaves, this was on pain of death. However, the call of Christ was to individuals; and yet individual conversion to a religion was unheard of at the time. And yet further, it was usual for the head of the household to automatically be the leader of the religion which his household practised. But for the true Christians, this was not necessarily so to be; for the Lord had taught that it was the servant who was to lead, and the least esteemed in the ecclesia were to judge matters (1 Cor. 6:4). Elders of the household ecclesias had to be chosen on the basis of their spiritual qualification, Paul taught. The radical nature of these teachings is so easily lost on us. Even if not all these poor converts were slaves, they were all subservient to their employers / sources of income. Craftsmen would have had to belong to a pagan trade guild, normally involving idol worship which a Christian had to refuse, and slaves of course had no 'right' to their own religion if it differed from that of their household. Everything was against the spread of the Truth amongst the poor women and slaves of the first century. And yet, the Gospel grew and prospered, as it marched through town after town across the Roman empire. The Romans allowed the existence of the autonomous politaea, the city-state, so long as within its religion it featured the worship of the Emperor. And yet the NT writers speak of the ecclesia as a city which is independent, defiantly devoted to the worship of the one and only true God (Eph. 2:19; 3:20; Heb. 12:22; 13:14; Rev. 21). The writers must have nervously penned those inspired words, knowing the problems it would create. The Spirit of God could have chosen not to so directly challenge this world; and yet there is a chasmic difference between the community of God and the surrounding world, which the New Testament unashamedly triumphs in. And let us do so too, not being conformed to this word, but being transformed unto the things of God.

Slaves in the first century were seen as mere bodies owned by their masters or mistresses. Hence Rev. 18:13 describes slaves as *somata*, bodies. They were seen as both the economic and sexual property of those who owned them (1). It seems Paul had this in mind when he spoke of how we have one master, Christ, and our bodies are indeed not our own- but they are His, to be used according to His wishes. For many slaves, this would've meant running the risk of death or flogging. And yet despite this radical demand, Christianity spread rapidly amongst the huge slave population of the first century world.

According to Plato, no artisan could be a citizen of the ideal state. Aristotle tells us that in Thebes no man could become a citizen until ten years after he had stopped working at a trade. Cicero believed that "No workshop can have any culture about it" . And then, into this culture, walks Jesus. A working man, who in practice learnt His matchless spirituality in the worskhop. And whose religion had for its founding fathers a band of working men from Galilee. Truly did Christianity with its women and slave converts turn the first century world upside down. It could only have been on the basis of their transformed personalities and that 'something' about them, which converted the masses, and also the educated white collar converts whom we know were made.

Notes

(1) Jennifer A. Glancy, *Slavery In Early Christianity (*Oxford: OUP, 2002).

The Role Of Women In The First Century

Men greatly outnumbered women in the Greco-Roman world. Dio Cassius blamed the declining population of the Roman empire on the shortage of females(1) . J.C. Russell (2) claims that there were 131 males / 100 females in Rome itself, and 140 / 100 in most of the rest of the empire. A study of inscriptions at Delphi enabled the reconstruction of 600 families; and of these only six had raised more than one daughter (3) . This was partly due to female infanticide, and also partly due to the awful methods of contraception and abortion employed, which often resulted in the death of the woman.

And yet there is every reason to think that Christianity attracted women to it disproportionately. It held a liberating message for women, allowing and encouraging them to study Scripture and be independent from their male society when it came to personal faith and relationship with Jesus, even enabling them to formally teach each other and those in the world. Christian women enjoyed far greater marital security than pagans; abortion was outlawed for the early Christian; and they were to be respected for their own personhood by their brethren. Through being able to work with the likes of Paul in his preaching work, they broke through the surrounding low expectations of female roles. The competing religions offered no such respect of women. Some like Mithraism were limited solely to males. The Christian stress on the need to marry only within the faith must have lead to many sisters being single for the Lord's sake; and there were doubtless many others who were divorced by unbelieving husbands. Such women were usually condemned to a life as prostitutes (hence the Lord said that if a man divorced his wife, he made her commit adultery). Yet the sisters' problem with finding partners doubtless led them to go out into the world and convert men; as well as providing the basis for a unique society of females which would have drawn to it other hurting and neglected women within Roman society. Another outcome of the unusual situation would have been that women married brothers of different social rank to their own- there are records of higher rank Christian women marrying Christian brothers of far inferior status socially. The social world of the first century was turned upside down by those sisters and their preaching, in the same way as Northern Kazakhstan and other parts of the world have likewise been by the witness of large groups of sisters. Childless, single women would have been looked down on even more in those days than they are in ours. Time and again, the sisters would have asked themselves: 'What am I doing this for?'. And every time, ultimately, the answer was that they were committed to this invisible man, the Lord Jesus, who had loved them to the end and was surely coming to claim them as His own.

An inventory of property removed from a Christian house church in North Africa listed 16 men's tunics and 82 women's tunics, along with 47 pairs of specifically female shoes and no men's(4) . Adolf Harnack notes that the early source documents "simply swarm with tales of how women of all ranks were converted in Rome and in the provinces…the general truth that Christianity was laid hold of by women in particular" (5). Henry Chadwick likewise: "Christianity seems to have been especially successful among women. It was often through the wives that it penetrated the upper classes of society in the first instance"(6) .

Notes

(1) Dio Cassius, *The Roman History* (London: Penguin Classics, 1987 ed.).

(2) J.C. Russell, *Late Ancient And Medieval Population*, published as vol. 48 pt. 3 of the Transactions Of The American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, 1958.

(3) Jack Lindsay, *The Ancient World: Manners and Morals* (New York: Putnams, 1968).

(4) See R.L. Fox, *Pagans And Christians* (New York: Knopf, 1987).

(5) Adolf Harnack, *The Mission And Expansion Of Christianity In The First Three Centuries* (New York: Putnam's, 1908) Vol. 2 p. 73.

(6) Henry Chadwick, *The Early Church* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967) p. 56.

What The Early House Churches Were Like

The household churches were a major key to the growth of Christianity (1). 1 Cor. 14:23-25 seems to imply that unbelievers came into house churches and ought to have been so deeply impressed that they declared that "God is in you of a truth". They were to be the living exemplification of how, as the Lord had prayed in John 17, the witness of Christian unity ought to be enough to convert the world. We need to give His words there their true weight. To see slaves and masters, men and women, Jew and Gentile, all sitting at the same table celebrating their salvation in the same Lord, with offices of leadership and responsibility distributed according to spiritual rather than social qualifications… this would've been astounding to the Mediterranean world of the first century. The way men mixed with women and the poor with the rich would've been especially startling.

Women

Women were only allowed to be present at meals with men if they were close family members. Houses unearthed in Pompeii feature two dining rooms side by side, for men and for women (2). And yet the Christian breaking of bread featured a "coming together" into one place for the memorial meal. Men and women, slaves and masters, eating together- this was radical stuff. To simply be present at such a meeting as an onlooker would've presented an almost irresistible case for Christianity. Significantly, the catacombs around Rome [where many Christians lived and were buried] feature meal scenes which appear to depict breaking of bread meetings. They show men and women sitting or reclining together around the bread and wine (3); whereas contemporary secular art nearly always depicts men and women feasting separately.

The dignity afforded to women by Christianity, the strange bonding between genders, races and social ranks, all combined to make the early house churches attractive, especially to women. Celsus complained that the Christian sect was growing through contacts initially being made in houses, and Christianity spreading amongst slaves and female members of households. House groups then, as now, were the key to the powerful spread of the Gospel. Adolf von Harnack commented that women "played a leading role in the spread of this religion" (4). This fact is understandable once we appreciate how house groups were the key to Christianity's wildfire spread in the first century.

Young People / Children

In *Against Celsu*s 3.55, Origen defends Christianity against the allegation that it requires men to leave the world of men and go mix with women and children in "the washerwoman's shop"- presumably a house church Celsus knew. Lucian of Samosata even mocked Christianity as being largely comprised of children and "old hags called widows". Marcus Cornelius Fronto likewise mocked the way "children" [and by that term he would've referred to teenagers too] participated in the breaking of bread [Octavius 8-9]. The teaching of the Lord Jesus was attractive to children / young people. They like women were treated as of little worth; the Greco-Roman world considered that children had to be taught, and couldn't teach a man anything. But the Lord Jesus repeatedly set children up as examples of discipleship (Mk. 9:36,37; Lk. 9:47,48; as Heb. 12:5-9). So we can understand the appeal of early Christianity to young people, teenagers, especially girls. O.M. Bakke has written a fascinating study entitled *When Children Became People* (5). The thesis is that the teaching of Christianity gave disenfranchised people an identity and meaning as persons- women and slaves are obvious examples- but this also applied to children / young people. They too were disregarded as people in Mediterranean society; and yet in Christ they were given their value as people. In the house church setting, we can imagine how this happened. Celsus mocks how teenage boys go to Christian house churches to be taught by women- reflecting how attractive Christianity was for young people.

Slaves

Slaves, especially female ones, were in a very bad situation. They had no identity outside their family of ownership. Both male and female slaves were used for sexual purposes at will. They were seen as having no honour, no rights, and therefore there was nothing to violate. They were used as objects rather than persons. But enter the call of Christ. Now, the dominated, powerless female slave hears of honour and beauty being ascribed to her if she is "in Christ". Paul's description of all those in Christ as a beautiful, chaste virgin must've struck chords of wonder with those slave women (2 Cor. 11:2). For those who had the faith to overcome the 'Can this all be really true for me?' syndrome, there was a new life and self-perception- encouraged by the way they saw others like them being transformed as persons. Slaves were sold with their children at times, but there are no records of slaves being sold as married couples. Their place of origin was listed in the records as the place where they had been purchased. They were the "people without history", seen as having no past and no future. They were outside of normal human society. All this is well summed up in Patterson's *Slavery And Social Death* (6). One example he gives of how slaves were seen as mere bodies is the way in which female slaves had to wet nurse the children of their mistress. They were called *mamma*- literally meaning, a breast. And from this came the use of that word to mean 'mother'. But initially, *mamma* meant strictly a breast; that was the name given to wet nursing slave women. They weren't seen as persons, but rather as a mere body part.

Into this darkness and desperation, there burst the light of Christ. We can imagine a group of those women eagerly listening to Paul's latest letter being read out in the house church. They heard of how they had been bought with the price of Christ's blood, that now they were slaves of the Father and Son, that their bodies were truly not their own but His. And in 1 Cor. 7:21-23 they would've heard how Paul advised them not to be like other slaves, always dreaming of somehow getting free, but to be content with their situation in which they had been called, to live for the daily joy of being Christ's slave. They were no longer part of the 'household' of their master. They belonged to house churches, which were part of the patria of God (Eph. 3:15). They belonged to another household, a household which they perceived by faith- the household of faith (Gal. 6:10). No wonder Celsus complained that Christianity

led its followers into rebellion against the heads of households. Doubtless he was exaggerating, but the idea of having another head of house, another patria , was indeed obnoxious to a slave owning society. This is why the language of slavery permeates so much of the New Testament letters; for according to Christianity's critics, it was largely a slave, female religion to start with. And of course, the unity between slave women and free women in the house churches was amazing; it cut across all accepted social boundaries of separation. *The Martyrdom Of Perpetua And Felicitas* tells the story of how a Christian mistress (Perpetua) and a slave girl (Felicitas) are thrown together into the nets to be devoured by wild animals, standing together as they faced death (7). This was the kind of unity which converted the world.

What does all this mean for us? Firstly, we need to perceive that the apparent freedoms we have aren't what they appear. We're so easily enslaved to sin in all its guises. This world is a world in slavery to sin. That's the telling paradox of Rom. 6- that in baptism, we are changing masters. We're not giving up freedom, but rather escaping from slavery to sin. Secondly, our appeal needs to be made to those who perceive their slavery to this world, to those who cry out to be recognized as persons rather than treated as slaves. And this applies to just about everyone- children abused by a parent, the high profile corporate manager, the druggies, alcoholics, the ignored handicapped, the forgotten-about elderly. They're all in need of the amazing affirmation of the human person which there is in Christ; that one lost sheep is worth total effort by Him. But they need telling about it, and to see it in us; for what passes as Christianity has evidently failed to teach them anything about it.

Given the predominance of slaves, children and women in the early churches, we are to imagine those house meetings with plenty of women, nursing mothers, kids running everywhere. Eph. 6:1 and Col. 3:20 seem to suppose that children would be present at the church gatherings and would listen attentively to what was said. The equal footing upon which women were accepted into the church through baptism would itself have been shocking and a huge advert for the value of the human person which there was and is in true Christianity. The way true Christianity gives meaning to the individual, makes them see their value before God, is something we need to communicate better. We need to positively preach a definite salvation in Christ, specifically speaking of how great is the love and passion of God for us as individuals; the wonder of the fact that we here on earth can please Him, can touch His heart, there in Heaven. God is a master who is so emotionally and profoundly pleased with our service, unlike human masters who forget. Note in passing how Heb. 11:4 speaks of God bearing witness, giving a verbal testimony, to Abel's sacrifice, and that through that witness Abel is as it were still speaking to us, in that to this day God is still speaking / testifying to that acceptable act of service performed by Abel. This is how delighted our Heavenly Master is with our service; and this would've meant so much to first century slaves. We won't succeed in convicting men and women of their value before God if we're merely preaching ideas, theology, interpretation... And if that was all the message of the early Christians had amounted to, they wouldn't have enjoyed the phenomenal success which they did amongst women, young people and slaves.

Female House Churches?

What is worthy of reflection is that the New Testament speaks of households run by women: Mary (Acts 12:12), Lydia (Acts 16:14,40); Nympha (Col. 4:15) and Chloe (1 Cor. 1:11). These women were presumably wealthy widows or divorcees who hadn't remarried. We are left to speculate whether they were in some way the 'leaders' of the house churches which

met in their homes. Women are described as ruling households in 1 Tim. 5:14; Tit. 2:4,5. The woman of Prov. 31 clearly had autonomy within the private sphere of the household, even though the husband was the public leader. Seeing Christianity was initially a house-church, household religion, we are left to wonder how much women actually led house churches, especially seeing that the majority of early Christian members appear to have been women. The wall paintings [frescoes] found in the Christian catacombs around Rome are highly significant for our present study. The significant ones for our purposes are the catacombs of Priscilla on the Salaria Nuova, Callixtus on the via Appia Antica, and that of Domitilla on the via Ardeatine. They feature in places scenes of female Christians raising cups, with the inscription agape over them. Some show a woman occupying the central place in the meal, with a large cup in her hand, with the other women looking at it intently. Some of the frescoes [there are many of them] show women dressed as slaves doing this in what appears to be a wealthy home. These frescoes seem to me indicative of how groups of slave women formed house churches, and faithfully kept the breaking of bread. Some frescoes show the women sharing the bread and wine with children around the table; one shows a woman holding a scroll, as if she is reading Scripture to the others. One frescoe features a woman holding a cup of wine inscribed '*nobis*'- 'for us' (8). Some frescoes show men in the group, but the woman in the centre, as if she is leading the meeting, or as the host of the household. Why were the brothers not leading the breaking of bread meetings? I came across a possibily similar situation some years ago in Northern Kazakhstan, shortly after the collapse of atheism and the USSR there. A zealous group of elderly sisters baptized over 300 people in a short space of time, establishing a whole set of house churches, comprised almost exclusively of women. In time, a few men became interested. They had known little of the Bible, coming from a Soviet background. They were taught by the sisters, baptized by them, and became members of the already-existing house churches. But they on their own admission felt unable to lead the meetings, as they were babes in Christ compared to those sisters. I can imagine similar situations arising in the early church. The dynamic success of those female house churches in Northern Kazakhstan was similar to what happened in the first century; groups of sisters coming together in home situations and bonding together in Christ, slave and free, Jew and Gentile, rich and poor… it would've been an amazing thing to behold. What went wrong in Kazakhstan was what went wrong in the early church; things got institutionalized, power politics entered the scene, the live, raw appeal of Christ to the world got somehow muted and made respectable.

Conclusions

One wonders whether our enthusiasm for church halls is in fact in line with New Testament practice. By having them, especially in India or Africa, we may feel that we have 'arrived' as a religion, but the essential belief and practice of God's Truth is surely independent of them. If someone will only join us if we have a building, then they can hardly believe the Gospel and see their desperate need for baptism into the Lord. Psychologists have suggested that we need association on three different levels: the large group level, where we have a sense of belonging to something transcending our local state and area [which we have in the world-wide membership of the body of Christ]; the 'congregation' level, where people know most of the others and yet there are a few strangers [which Corinth, e.g., had in their occasional larger gatherings]; and the 'cell' level, where there is mutual support, in-depth personal fellowship and understanding. This would have been possible in the household ecclesias. One wonders whether our larger ecclesias should not consider a similar breakdown. We surely need to realize that our services are not as it were a theatre, with actors on a stage and an audience looking on. We are a body consisting of members who share out to each other the

essence of Christ; the body makes increase of itself, building up itself in love. We are a family, not just an audience, linked together by a real and far reaching involvement and responsibility in each others' lives. We show Christ to each other; and this is so much easier in home meetings.

Notes

(1) Robert Banks, *Paul's Idea Of Community* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1980) p. 41.

(2) See Carolyn Osiek and David Balch, *Families In The New Testament World: Households And House Churches* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997) pp. 16,17.

(3) Ample photographs of the catacomb art depicting these scenes are to be found in J. Deckers, H. Seeliger, G. Mietke, *Die Katacombe 'Santi Marcellion e Pietro: Repertorio delle pitture* (Vatican City: Pontificio instituto di archeologia cristiana, 1987). This is a huge 3 volume production with a large number of photographs of catacomb art.

(4) Adolf von Harnack, *The Mission And Expansion Of Christianity In The First Three Centuries* (New York: Harper, 1961 ed.) p. 368. This same conclusion is reached by Rodney Stark, *The Rise Of Christianity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

(5) O.M. Bakke, *When Children Became People* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005).

(6) Orlando Patterson, *Slavery And Social Death* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982).

(7) 'The Martyrdom Of Perpetua And Felicitas', in H.Musurillo, translator, *Acts Of The Christian Martyrs* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972) pp. 106-131.

(8) Ample photographs of the catacomb art depicting these scenes are to be found in J. Deckers, H. Seeliger, G. Mietke *Die Katacombe 'Santi Marcellion e Pietro: Repertorio delle pitture* (Vatican City: Pontificio instituto di archeologia cristiana, 1987). This is a huge 3 volume production with a large number of photographs of catacomb art. The photo plates relevant to what I've written of here are numbers 30a-b; 31a-b; 19a-b; 20a-b; 33c; 58a-b.

12.1 Mary: A Biblical Debate

Transcript Of A Debate With Philip Bartlett

Written debate

Speakers:

Supporting the fallibility of Mary: Mr. Duncan Heaster

Against the fallibility of Mary: Mr. Philip Bartlett (Catholic)

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(Note: Mr. Bartlett was previously a Presbyterian at the time of his debate about the Sabbath transcripted elsewhere in this book

12-1-1 The Mary Debate: Opening Statement By Duncan Heaster

False Worship Of Mary

According to the Bible, the mediation of God's grace and salvation to human beings is through Jesus Christ- not Mary, as Catholics claim. Not until the 4th century is there any mention of Mary worship; the early tradition of the church did not consider her worthy of worship. It is surely inappropriate to reason that later, some church tradition demanded her worship; for this would imply that her actual status changed once the church claimed she deserved worship. If church tradition is to guide our views of who Mary essentially is, then we have a problem- for that tradition changed over time. The only unchangeable source of authority is the Bible alone- the word of God rather than the changing word of men.

The Bible is very clear that Jesus was the seed or son of Abraham and David. The first verse of the New Testament makes this point (Mt. 1:1), and Paul says that this is crucial to the Gospel of Jesus (Gal. 3:8,16). Jesus was made of the seed of David (Rom. 1:4), and this was only possible because His mother Mary was also a literal descendant of David and Abraham. He had to be of our human nature in order to be able to manifest God in the flesh (1 Tim. 3:16), to show us God in human terms; and in order to do battle with our human sin. On account of this, He became our Saviour from sin, because He was truly our representative (Heb. 2:14-18; 4:15,16). Mary's humanity is brought out by the way Lk. 1:42 calls her blessed *among* women- not *above* women.

"Mother Of God"

This phrase first occurred in 431AD, at the Council of Ephesus. Until then there had been no mention of this phrase, neither in the Bible nor in church writings before that date. One wrong doctrine lead to another, just as a mistaken interpretation in any area leads to further erroneous understanding. The idea of the trinity, with its supposition that Jesus is God, lead to the assumption that Mary must therefore have been the mother of God. And this does indeed logically follow, if indeed Jesus is God. It likewise follows that Joseph was the step-father of God, Elizabeth was God's aunty, John the Baptist was God's cousin, Heli was God's grandfather etc. All this is rejected by Protestants and Catholics alike. And yet it is the logical inference from the idea that 'Jesus is God'. The difference between Catholic and Protestant views is therefore, in my opinion, hard to understand. They both alike made the basic mistake of adopting the unbiblical doctrine of the trinity; and were left with the logical corollary that therefore, Mary was the mother of God. Protestantism just blindly denies it, whereas

Catholicism accepts it. I have shown elsewhere that Jesus is not God Himself, and that the Bible knows nothing of the word 'trinity'. The Biblical title of Mary is the "mother of Jesus", but not the mother of God. Note too that Jesus never called Mary "mother" but rather "woman". All worship was to Jesus, not to Mary- even when she was present [note especially Mt. 2:11, and the gifts of the wise men to Jesus, not Mary). Repeatedly, God's people refused worship that was offered to them and redirected it towards God (Acts 10:25,26; 14:14,15; Rev. 22:8,9).

When Constantine made 'Christianity' the official religion of the Roman empire, he faced a problem. The people preferred to worship their existing pagan gods. And so he turned their pagan worship into Christian worship. Thus the feast of December 25th was turned into the celebration of the supposed birth of Jesus, even though Jesus was not born on that day. The pagan people of the time had many beloved female deities- Isis, Ishtar, Diana, Athena, Aphrodite etc. These were simply transferred to Mary. The statues to them became statues to Mary. And to this day, Catholicism continues to absorb local heroes as saints, and turns local goddesses into the image of the Madonna. An example would be how the Virgin of Guadalupe, worshipped by pagan tribes in Mexico, was turned into the Virgin Mary. This is why the statues to her there show her without the babe in her arms, to heighten the similarity with the previously worshipped Virgin of Guadalupe. It is significant that Catholics call Mary "Queen of Heaven", when the only reference to this in the Bible reveals that this was a pagan goddess of fertility, Astarte- and Israel were condemned for praying to her (Jud. 2:13; Jer. 7:18; 44:17-19,25).

The following table seeks to express how far the Catholic view of Mary is in direct contradiction to the Bible text, quoting from *The Glories of Mary* by Cardinal Alphonse de Ligouri (Brooklyn, NY: Redemptorist Fathers):

Catholic View of Mary	Biblical View of Mary
"She is truly a mediatress of peace between sinners and God. Sinners receive pardon by…Mary alone…Mary is our life" (pp. 80-83)	"There is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ…I am the way…the life…Christ…our life" (1 Tim. 2:5; Jn. 14:6; Col. 3:4)
"Mary is called…the gate of Heaven because no one can enter that blessed Kingdom without passing through her" (p. 160)	"I am the door. By me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved" (Jn. 10:1,7,9)
"The way of salvation is open to none otherwise than through Mary…our salvation is in the hands of Mary" (p. 160,169)	"No man cometh to the Father but by me…neither is there salvation in any other" (Jn. 14:6; Acts 4:12)
"All power is given to thee in Heaven and on earth [so that] at the command of Mary all obey…even God" (pp. 180,181)	"All power is given unto me in Heaven and in earth…in the name of *Jesus* every knee should bow" (Mt. 28:19; Phil. 2:9-11; Col. 1:18).
Mary is "the advocate of the whole human race" (p. 193)	"We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ" (1 Jn. 2:1,2; Jn. 16:23,24)
"Mary is the peacemaker between sinners and God" (p. 197)	"In Christ Jesus, you, who were sometimes afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace…" (Eph. 2:13,14)

The obvious conclusion from all this is that Catholicism has replaced the unique Priestly achievement of Jesus with their traditions about Mary. But how did this travesty develop? It seems to me that the Catholic image of Jesus is of a grim faced, suffering body, tortured in order to appease the wrath of an angry God. Mary is then presented as the balance to this- a sweet faced, merciful, saintly woman who can turn the hearts of an otherwise angry and dissatisfied Father and Son toward us. But this is all based on an unbalanced reading of the Bible text. God *is* angry with sin, but He is a God who delights to forgive and who takes no pleasure in punishing sin. The whole Old Testament portrays God as something of a 'softie', countless times showing quite undeserved mercy to His people. And the Lord Jesus *did* suffer of course, but with the half glance of imminent victory surely in His face, as the athlete straining to victoriously finish the race. Biblically, He is portrayed as the joyful victor, generously sharing the prize with us the unworthy. His love and the Father's grace is quite enough- it needs no kindly Madonna to balance it out. Jesus Himself was "moved with compassion" during His ministry- He hardly needs Mary to prompt Him to be more merciful, as Catholic theology teaches. Likewise, He is the only Mediator with God- it doesn't need Mary to do this, because of the implication that He isn't sympathetic enough (1 Tim. 2:5; Jn. 14:6; Acts 4:12; Heb. 7:25; 9:15; Rom. 8:34; 1 Jn. 2:1). This travesty of understanding all arises from a refusal to accept that Jesus was truly of our nature, and *for this reason* He can be compassionate on our weaknesses (Heb. 2:14-18; 4:15,16). A sacrifice is needed to atone for sins and to mediate with God- and Jesus, not Mary, was this sacrifice. This is why Jesus was our only saviour. Yet Popes Benedict 15 and Pius 11 both call Mary the "co-redeemer" of humanity, along with Jesus. This to my mind is the most fundamental problem with Catholic Mariolatry- the fundamental and unique work of Jesus has been denied by it.

Duncan Heaster

12-1-2 Catholic Opening Statement By Philip Bartlett: The Catholic View Of Mary

(Note: Mr. Bartlett was previously a Presbyterian at the time of his debate about the Sabbath transcripted elsewhere)

Important Preliminary Bases of Discussion

A common objection by those of the Protestant heretical faiths expressed in opposition to the fundamental Catholic Marian dogmas is that it is idolatrous. What I intend to prove, and what the intent of this debate is, is to defend the Marian dogmas of the Catholic Church as legitimate, and to defend the veneration of Mary as a legitimate activity. The fullness of the Christian church, which is the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church (commonly known among Protestants as Roman Catholicism) has defended the doctrines of Mary from her very inception. While the doctrines themselves may not have been as fully explored by the faithful, they were totally and entirely present from the very beginning, yet not expressed so clearly and consistently as we have them today. The clearness and consistency came over the course of many centuries as the doctrines and devotions were compared over and against heretical groups that formed and opposed the truth.

Before we can even engage in a "Biblical" discussion of Marian truth, we have to examine the origins of the Bible, and the authoritative interpretation of it. Without an authorized interpretation of a document, it is very easy for different renditions and meanings to derive themselves out of that same document according the likings of the individuals and persons who are interpreting the words. This has been the technique of the heretic, starting from the

Gnostics, and ending with the many heretical Protestant groups we find present today. The fundamental doctrine of "sola scriptura" championed by most Protestants, is inherently fallacious and renders it absolutely impossible to come to a definitive truth on any issue since vague words can be interpreted many ways, and it is impossible to deduce the preconceptions of the author of words with 100% accuracy.

Where does the Bible come from? The Bible and its books were selected by the Catholic Church infallibly with the aide of the Holy Spirit in 383AD. Books including the Peters, Revelation, and the Johns were all highly disputed as to whether or not they were authentically from the apostles. In addition, letters like the Epistle of Clement, the Didache and others were seen by many as worthy of insertion into the Bible's "table of contents", especially that of the New Testament. Amidst all of this controversy, the Catholic Church determined infallibly precisely which books belonged in the Bible. Since no one could be absolutely certain which books came from the apostles, in the end people trusted that the Holy Spirit guided the Catholic Church infallibly in its determination of the contents of the divine revelation. The final authority on all matters was the Catholic Church's interpretation of the sacred scripture, even as it had the authority to define the parameters of that scripture. It would be absurd to posit one without the other. All interpretations contrary to the universal Catholic Church's interpretation would of course be heretical, and to this day are still heretical.

That said, the only value that can be derived from a Biblical discussion is a discussion preset within the parameters of divine authority, and as defined by the proper interpretation of the text. It has already been proven that sola scriptura is inconsistent and contradictory (because it cannot determine the truth of any matter with certainty). However, the catholic understanding of how to discern the divine will (the interpretation of the Catholic church founded and established on Christ and the apostles) is far more logically consistent, and of course provable through tests of logical consistency.

And of course, one more important point needs to be raised before we delve into the crux of the matter. Catholics do not rely on scripture alone to discern the will of God. The will of God for the Catholic, since the time of the apostles themselves, extended beyond the written scriptures, and into the oral Word of God as passed from the apostles in custom, words, and signs. This oral word would of course be protected and preserved by the Holy Spirit. How do we know that this oral word is authoritative? Very simply, because it is based on the only logically consistent methodology of discerning God's will. Sola scriptura obviously is NOT logically consistent, as was demonstrated before through the problem of multiple interpretations.

So where does this place Mary. I will now offer to the world, and to my opponent Duncan Heaster and his heretical sect of the Christadephians, the Catholic interpretation of the scriptures relating to Mary, as enriched by its tradition and oral teaching. Please note that I have already proven that one is forced to accept the Catholic interpretation if he wishes to be logically consistent in his understanding of reality.

Do Catholics Worship Mary?

Catholics do not worship Mary. Catholics venerate Mary. This is a very important point that cannot be emphasized enough. Let us begin looking at the bible by examining this following important and essential verse where the angel comes and says to Mary:

Luke 1: 28 And the angel being come in, said unto her: Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.

As we can see from this verse, we have an angel of God most high saying the following words: "Hail, full of grace…. Blessed art thou". This is almost the precise wording of the Catholic Hail Mary prayer. Now is the angel in this verse worshipping Mary as the angel worships God? Absolutely not! Rather the angel is venerating (respecting) Mary and giving her honor, but an honor that is less than the worship he gives to God. Catholics do the precise same thing. Informed Catholics will tell you that the worship of Mary as a goddess, or as God, would be a serious error and a very wicked sin. Rather, Catholics merely venerate Mary. We venerate her, and because as Christ said

Matthew 22:31 And concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read that which was spoken by God, saying to you: *32 I am the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob? He is not the God of the dead but of the living.*

We can safely conclude that Mary is living and that she hears the prayers that are directed to her. Mary of course does not assist directly as God, but rather intercedes for us with prayers to Christ on our behalf. As the scriptures record "the prayer of a righteous man [in this case a righteous woman] availeth much". Does this mean that Christ is no longer sole mediator between God and man? Absolutely not! Christ is the sole mediator between God and man in the covenant sense of the New Covenant, and the satisfaction and redemption of our iniquities. This, ladies and gentlemen, is the proper interpretation of the sacred scripture.

Old Testament Types and Shadows

A common method of examining the scripture is to demonstrate from the Old Testament the hidden kernels that point to truths that will be fully revealed in the New Testament. For example we have the crossing of the Red Sea representing baptism, the Passover Lamb representing the sacrifice of Christ. Let us look at a very important type of Mary as an essential mediator for the people of God. Let us also look at her role as Queen of Heaven, or Queen of the Kingdom of Heaven, as presented in this type. Mary carries a special distinction among the saints of heaven who are presently alive with Christ in Glory.

1 Kings 2:12 And Solomon sat upon the throne of his father David, and his kingdom was strengthened exceedingly. *13 And Adonias, the son of Haggith, came to Bethsabee the mother of Solomon. And she said to him: Is thy coming peaceable? He answered: It is peaceable.14* And he added: I have a word to speak with thee. She said to him: Speak. And he said: *15* Thou knowest that the kingdom was mine, and all Israel had preferred me to be their king: but the kingdom is transferred, and is become my brother's: for it was appointed him by the Lord. *16* Now therefore, I ask one petition of thee; turn not away my face. And she said to him: Say on. *17* And he said I pray thee speak to king Solomon (for he cannot deny thee any thing) to give me Abisag, the Sunamitess, to wife. *18* And Bethsabee said: Well, I will speak for thee to the king. *19* Then Bethsabee came to king Solomon, to speak to him for Adonias: and the king arose to meet her, and bowed to her, and sat down upon his throne: and a throne was set for the king's mother, and she sat on his right hand. *20* And she said to him: I desire one small petition of thee; do not put me to confusion. And the king said to her: My mother ask, for I must not turn away thy face. *21* And she said: Let Abisag, the Sunamitess, be given to Adonias, thy brother, to wife. *22* And king Solomon answered, and said to his mother: Why dost thou ask Abisag, the Sunamitess, for Adonias? ask for him also the kingdom; for he

is my elder brother, and hath Abiathar, the priest, and Joab, the son of Sarvia. *23* Then king Solomon swore by the Lord, saying: So and so may God do to me, and add more, if Adonias hath not spoken this word against his own life. *24* And now, as the Lord liveth, who hath established me, and placed me upon the throne of David, my father, and who hath made me a house, as he promised, Adonias shall be put to death this day. *25* And king Solomon sent by the hand of Banaias, the son of Joiada, who slew him, and he died.

What is present here is absolutely fascinating typology. We have Bethsabee, the mother of Solomon, the "Queen mother" who in the kingdom of Israel was always the king's mother, being petitioned by a member of the house of God (Israel) to speak before the King and present a request, knowing that the weight of the Queen mother has great authority. The petition is not granted of course because Solomon in his wisdom can see that this is a plot that Bethsabee is not aware of, but even so, the dynamics of the situation present the greatest interest. It apparently was custom for people to seek the Queen mother as a very important and influential channel to the King, and to sway the King into the favour of the petitioner. This is what Catholics today find in Mary. Mary, with her righteous prayers, as Queen of the Kingdom of Heaven (Queen Mother of the New Israel), presents the requests that we give her to Christ (hence "pray for us now and at the hour of our death"). Because she is especially favoured by Christ, she can obtain for us what our prayers may not be because of our sinful condition before God, or because of our lack of grace. This of course does not detract at all from Christ being "sole mediator" of the New Covenant, as long as we understand what the scripture means by the words "sole mediator", and what the apostle Paul intended by them.

We of course have the example in Exodus of Moses petitioning God and mediating between God and Israel that God would spare Israel despite its worship of the golden calf. Did this in any way detract from the sole mediatorship of Jesus Christ? The answer of course, is absolutely not. The sacrifice of Christ was the central sole mediation between God and men in the Old Covenant as in the New, as represented through the blood of the slaughtered animals. Once again, the prayer of a righteous man avails much.

Ask Christians we ask each other for our prayers. This is nothing other than asking our fellow Christians to mediate or intercede with God for us. This of course does not detract from Christ's sole mediatorship as covenant head and representative. The heretic might object "do not we stop praying for each other after we die?" The answer is found in Revelation, and that answer is no. We have clear descriptions of the saints and angels in heaven offering prayers for the saints in earth, their prayers being offered up to God as incense and a sweet sacrifice:

Revelation 5:1 And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven, as it were for half an hour. *2* And I saw seven angels standing in the presence of God: and there were given to them seven trumpets. *3 And another angel came and stood before the altar, having a golden censer: and there was given to him much incense, that he should offer of the prayers of all saints, upon the golden altar which is before the throne of God.4* And the smoke of the incense of the prayers of the saints ascended up before God from the hand of the angel. *5* And the angel took the censer and filled it with the fire of the altar and cast it on the earth: and there were thunders and voices and lightnings and a great earthquake. *6* And the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound the trumpet.

Revelation *6:10* And they cried with a loud voice, saying:

How long, O Lord (Holy and True), dost thou not judge and revenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?

Was Mary Conceived Without Original Sin?

The answer to this question is yes. Going back to the first scripture quote in this essay, we find the words “hail full (or filled) with grace”. This proves that Mary from birth was completely filled with the grace of God. Nevertheless, this does not stop her from calling the Lord her “saviour” later on in Luke. How then is God her saviour if she was born filled with holiness and grace, and without any hint of sin? Because God counted Christ’s merits to her before she was born, that is why. With all other people, of course, God counts Christ’s merits at baptism, when the grace of God first enters the soul and original sin is washed away through the covenantal waters, as the ultimate expression of a living vibrant faith.

Was Mary Perpetually Virgin?

The answer to this question is absolutely. The scriptures cannot prove the issue either way, since all references to “brothers” of Christ can easily be interpreted in the original languages to mean cousins or relatives in general. There is no word that specifically means brothers. Therefore, since the language is so vague, it comes down to a matter of interpretation. And of course, there is only one authentic interpretation of scripture.

Conclusion

As we can see, the catholic interpretation of Mary is thoroughly rooted in the scriptures, the scriptures that the Catholic Church determined were scriptures of course. Without the Catholic Church, there would be no canon of the New Testament. In the same way, without the Catholic Church, there can be no authentic and completely accurate interpretation of the New Testament and the doctrines of Mary. The Catholic dogmas of Mary are true and completely holy, and no Catholic need be ashamed of even one of them. I end with some quotes from the early fathers in their interpretations of the sacred writ:

Ephraim the Syrian

" You victorious martyrs who endured torments gladly for the sake of the God and Saviour, you who have boldness of speech toward the Lord himself, you saints, intercede for us who are timid and sinful men, full of sloth, that the grace of Christ may come upon us, and enlighten the hearts of all of us so that we may love him" (*Commentary on Mark* [A.D. 370]).

Origin

" The Book [the *Protoevangelium*] of James [records] that the brethren of Jesus were sons of Joseph by a former wife, whom he married before Mary. Now those who say so wish to preserve the honor of Mary in virginity to the end, so that body of hers which was appointed to minister to the Word . . . might not know intercourse with a man after the Holy Spirit came into her and the power from on high overshadowed her. And I think it in harmony with reason that Jesus was the firstfruit among men of the purity which consists in [perpetual] chastity, and Mary was among women. For it were not pious to ascribe to any other than to her the firstfruit of virginity" (*Commentary on Matthew* 2:17 [A.D. 248]).

Augustine

" In being born of a Virgin who chose to remain a Virgin even before she knew who was to be born of her, Christ wanted to approve virginity rather than to impose it. And he wanted virginity to be of free choice even in that woman in whom he took upon himself the form of a slave" (*Holy Virginity* 4:4 [A.D. 401]).

" It was not the visible sun, but its invisible Creator who consecrated this day for us, when the Virgin Mother, fertile of womb and integral in her virginity, brought him forth, made visible for us, by whom, when he was invisible, she too was created. A Virgin conceiving, a Virgin bearing, a Virgin pregnant, a Virgin bringing forth, a Virgin perpetual. Why do you wonder at this, O man?" (*Sermons* 186:1 [A.D. 411]).

" Heretics called Antidicomarites are those who contradict the perpetual virginity of Mary and affirm that after Christ was born she was joined as one with her husband" (*Heresies* 56 [A.D. 428]).

12-1-3 Duncan Heaster's response to Philip Bartlett's opening statement

Mary And Catholic Interpretation

The Question of Authority

Mr. Bartlett's statements are in *italics*

Without an authorized interpretation of a document, it is very easy for different renditions and meanings to derive themselves out of that same document

This would imply that there is only one true interpretation of each Bible verse, supplied by the Catholics. But Catholic interpreters contradict themselves, and have never published an authoritative exposition of the Bible. The problem of Biblical interpretation is solved by the Catholic by saying that the Church is the interpreter. But this is in essence the same thing done by Mormons, J.W.s and the like- the Bible is accepted, but must be interpreted by the church and their other documents. On what basis, then, should one chose to believe the Catholic interpretation of the Bible as opposed to, say, that of the J.W.s? Personal preference and background seem to be the only factors. Yet I submit that the only true way to interpret the Bible is by reading it for oneself, comparing Scripture with Scripture. This was indeed the attitude of Jesus, when He bade men "search the scriptures"; and it was the example set by the Bereans, who searched the Scriptures daily for themselves, to know whether Paul's preaching was indeed true (Acts 17:11).

At ordination, Catholic priests promise to interpret Scripture according to "the unanimous consent of the fathers". But the early church fathers held contradictory views- e.g. concerning whether Jesus would personally return to

Jerusalem and reign there 1000 years. The Popes too have contradicted each other- e.g. Gregory the Great said that to use the title "Universal Bishop" was anti-Christian. But other Popes used it. So if the Catholic is to interpret the Bible in accordance with the past interpretations of the church fathers…well, he can't do it. Because they contradict each other. The doctrine of the immaculate conception of Mary was denied by great Catholic scholars like Anselm, Bonaventura and Thomas Aquinas. There would, therefore, be little point in the average Catholic reading the Bible for themselves. This is why traditionally the Catholics have forbidden lay people to read the Bible for themselves. One is merely required to be obedient to the church, not to search Scripture for oneself, as Jesus and Paul so often encouraged us to do.

Where does the Bible come from? The Bible and its books were selected by the Catholic Church infallibly with the aid of the Holy Spirit in 383AD.

But the Catholic Church as it is now was not in existence in 383. The first 'pope' was Gregory 1, who was called that only in 604. It was not until about this time that the bishops of Rome began to claim spiritual superiority over the whole Christian world. At 383, it was the Eastern churches who were far more dominant that the Western, Roman church in all such decision making. The canon of the New Testament had been decided in practice well before 383; the conferences of churches at that time merely put a stamp of approval on what already was available. Mr. Bartlett is quite wrong to say that "The Bible" was selected by the Catholics. The Old Testament canon had been fixed well before the time of Jesus. The Catholics had no part to play in formulating that canon. And the Bible came from God, by inspiration of men- not from the Catholic church.

The final authority on all matters was the Catholic Church's interpretation of the sacred scripture, even as it had the authority to define the parameters of that scripture.

So one error has lead to another. It doesn't mean that because someone played a part in deciding the composition of Scripture, their supposed spiritual descendants therefore must have the right interpretation of it. And as I have shown, the Catholic church didn't exist when the canon of the NT was decided, and it certainly didn't exist when the OT canon was decided. So on Mr. Bartlett's logic, the Catholic church has in any case no right to pronounce upon matters of interpretation in the OT.

The Catholic Interpretations of the Bible Text

Matthew 22:31: "And concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read that which was spoken by God, saying to you: I am the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob? He is not the God of the dead but of the living". We can safely conclude that Mary is living and that she hears the prayers that are directed to her.

Jesus goes on to say in the parallel Lk. 20:38: "For all live unto him". Because God is outside of time, He can look forward to the resurrection as if it is has happened, and in that sense He considers the faithful who have died to be alive- so sure is their hope of a future resurrection to life. Thus because "God… quickeneth the dead [He] calleth those things which be not as though they were" (Rom. 4:17). I have elsewhere shown [*Bible Basics* chapter 4] that death is unconsciousness. Mary is not now alive, so she isn't mediating prayers.

What is present here is absolutely fascinating typology. We have Bethsabee, the mother of Solomon, the "Queen mother" who in the kingdom of Israel was always the king's mother, being petitioned by a member of the house of God (Israel) to speak before the King and present a request, knowing that the weight of the Queen mother has great authority

This seems to me to be intellectually desperate- to claim that Bathsheba was a type of Mary. Bathsheba wasn't a virgin, she was an adulteress. Is this true of Mary too…? Any mother who influenced her son is going to be seen by Mr. Bartlett as a type of the Mary he imagines. But the New Testament nowhere suggests to us that we should read Bathsheba as a type of Mary.

We of course have the example in Exodus of Moses petitioning God and mediating between God and Israel that God would spare Israel despite its worship of the golden calf. Did this in any way detract from the sole mediatorship of Jesus Christ? The answer of course, is absolutely not.

We have NT authority for seeing Moses' mediation as a type of that of Jesus- but not of Mary.

"hail full (or filled) with grace". This proves that Mary from birth was completely filled with the grace of God.

The passage says nothing about her being strangely filled with grace from birth. John the Baptist had the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb, but he was still an ordinary person like us. The more common translations read: "Hail, thou that art highly favoured" (Lk. 1:28). She was highly favoured to be the mother of God's son. The only other time the Greek phrase translated "highly favoured" occurs is in Eph. 1:6, where we learn that we are made accepted or favoured in Christ. Mary didn't have any special favour or filling with grace which other human beings can't have.

12-1-3-2 Was Mary A Perpetual Virgin?

The answer to this question is absolutely. The scriptures cannot prove the issue either way… As we can see, the catholic interpretation of Mary is thoroughly rooted in the scriptures

This is mutually contradictory. If the Bible doesn't clearly say whether Mary had other children or not, then how can it then be claimed by Mr. Bartlett that the Catholic view is rooted in Scripture?

I am aware that the references to the "brothers" of Jesus are read by the Catholics as meaning His relatives / cousins- even though there is a distinctly different Greek word translated "cousin" in Col. 4:10. But this is by no means certain. Psalm 69 is full of reference to Jesus, and is quoted in several parts of the New Testament about Him (Jn. 2:17; 15:25; Rom. 15:3; Mt. 27:34; Acts 1:20). Verse 8 speaks of how "I am become a stranger unto my brethren [= Jn. 7:5], and an alien unto my mother's children". This would support the more natural reading of the NT texts as meaning that the "brothers" of Jesus were indeed the children of Mary. He was her first son (Lk. 2:7), and Joseph did not have intercourse with her until she had brought forth Jesus (Mt. 1:25). She rejoiced in "God my saviour" (Lk. 1:47), and she seems to call Jesus her "Lord" in the same passage. Note that Jesus was Mary's 'firstborn' son. The Greek *prototokos* is used, rather than a word [*monogenes*] which could easily have been used if Jesus had been her *only* child (Lk. 2:7). And observe that when Luke wants to speak of an only child, he does so specifically (Lk. 7:12; 8:42).

As I showed in my first statement, Jesus was the son of David and Abraham through Mary. Therefore she too was one of their descendants. She was therefore also "in Adam", and "in Adam all die" (1 Cor. 15:22). She needed redemption- hence her thankfulness for a saviour. She brought the sin offering for her purification as required by the Law on childbirth (Lk. 2:22-24 cp. Lev. 12:6-8). Augustine said that Mary's flesh was "flesh of sin" and that "Mary, springing from Adam, died because of sin". If the Catholic is to interpret the Bible in accordance with the views of the early fathers, then he or she has to deny the later Catholic pronouncements about her immaculate conception.

This idea that Mary was sinless led to the statement by Pope Pius 12 in 1950, that Mary's body rose from the grave shortly after her death and she ascended to Heaven. But the Bible knows nothing of this. If Mary died, then she was mortal. And why was she mortal? Because she was a descendant of Adam. So she could not have been somehow separate from the rest of the human race. There is no way that Catholics can claim that this feature of their belief about Mary has any Biblical support. It is purely church dogma.

The Weakness of Mary

The following incidents all reflect the weakness of Mary's understanding, and the need for Jesus to almost rebuke her at times. I quote these to show us her humanity, so that by her being the more real, she might be the more credible and inspiring to us:

When the shepherds came to worship, Mary pondered within herself what it all meant, as if she was now rather lacking in comprehension (Lk. 2:19).

12 years later, when Jesus is lost in the temple, she scolds Him that his father [Joseph] and her have been seeking for Him. Hence Jesus gently rebuked her that He was about His true Father's business, in His true Father's house. Her description of Joseph as "thy father" is surely worthy of the Lord's rebuke. She had allowed the views of the world to influence her view of the Lord. Jesus told them that they should have sought Him in His true Father's house- and this may not only be a reference to the temple, but to the way in which they had

assumed He was somewhere with the house / family of Joseph in the convoy; and perhaps they had gone round Joseph's relatives in Jerusalem hunting for Him.

Mary and Joseph were "amazed" (Lk. 2:48). She shared Joseph's amazement; and the word is only used of the amazement / incomprehension of the crowds- Mt. 7:28; 13:54; 19:25; 22:33; Mk. 10:26. Slowly she became influenced by the world's view of her son- not totally, but partially, to the extent that she lost that keen perception and height of spiritual ambition which she had earlier had.

Lk. 2:50 records that "she understood not", using the same phrase as is on the lips of the Lord in Mt. 13:13, speaking of those without who " hear not neither do they understand"; and ominously, Mary stood without and asked to see Jesus, only to be told that His real mothers were those women sitting around Him listening to His words. When she stands outside the house asking to speak with Jesus, she is identified with her other children who considered Jesus crazy. Jesus says that His mothers are those who hear the word of God and do it. There is a rather unpleasant connection between Mk. 3:32 "they stood without" and Mark 4:11 " unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables" . And further, Lk. 13:25 speaks of how the rejected shall stand without [same words] knocking and asking to speak with the Lord.

The incident at Cana shows her lack of perception of the true nature of her son's work at that time. He hadn't done any miracles before, so was she asking Him to begin His ministry with a miracle? She knew He had the power to do them- she had perceived that much. When the Lord explains to her that His hour has not yet come, He is clearly alluding to His death. For this is how "the hour" is always understood in John's Gospel (Jn. 4:21, 23; 5:25, 28, 29; 7:30; 8:20; 12:23, 27; 13:1; 16:25; 17:1). So Jesus replies to Mary's nudge 'make them some wine!' by saying that the time for His death has not yet come- she was premature in her request, she didn't fully understand. Note how He assumes that by 'wine' she means His blood. He assumes she is on a higher level of spiritual symbolism than she actually was.

The Bible reading Catholic will simply find that the actual Biblical account of Mary is simply at variance with the dogmas of their church. And thus they are thrown up against a tremendous question, of eternal import: to accept the word of God, or the word of men. Our prayers, our love, our desire, are firmly with all those who now perceive that choice.

Duncan Heaster

12-1-4 Questions to Mr. Bartlett from Mr. Heaster

Mary As A Mortal Woman

1. If Mary died, as Catholics claim, then she was a mortal woman. How could she have been mother of God, who is immortal?

2. How was Jesus the son of David and Abraham if Mary was not an ordinary woman conceived of their lineage?

3. If the Catholic view of Mary is based on their interpretation of Scripture, what Scripture are they interpreting in claiming that Mary was 'assumed' up into Heaven bodily after her death?

4. Mr. Bartlett claims we must accept the Catholic interpretation of the Bible because the Catholics chose the canon. But this only applies to the New Testament. Are we free to interpret the Old Testament without reference to the Catholic church?

Concluding Statement from Duncan Heaster

This debate is essentially about authority. The only authority for the individual Christian can be the Lord God and the word of His Son. The authority which is vested in their word, the Bible, is a rational, benevolent authority under which we can find our authentic human freedom. The authority which is wielded by the Catholic church is, I submit, a false authority, an authority which crushes humanity, which dehumanizes people. And the very fact we are created in God's image means that we should not dehumanize our fellow man in any way. It is my observation from living many years in fiercely Catholic Lithuania and Poland that this is sadly the effect Catholic authoritarianism has upon people. The mind is free only under the authority of truth, under the personal yoke of Jesus who is "the truth" (Mt. 11:29.30). There can be no ultimate truth in any human organization- and the fact that the Catholic church has provenly changed its mind over what is truth is evidence enough that 'the church' can be no ultimate authority.

Note: Mr. Bartlett declined to continue the debate after the first round.

Endpiece

In Lk. 9:18-20, the Lord Jesus asks His men: "Whom say the people that I am?". Why did He ask this? Surely, with His sensitivity and insight into people and society, He knew full well the various theories that first Century Palestine entertained about Him. It seems to me that He asked this question for the disciples' sake; He wanted them to reflect upon the wide range of wrong theories which there were concerning His identification. And this led on to His next question: "But whom say ye that I am? Peter answering said, The Christ of God". Surely the Lord Jesus knew what they thought of Him, without needing to ask them. Philip and Nathanael had earlier revealed that they considered Jesus of Nazareth to be the Messiah and "the Son of God" (Jn. 1:45,49). So, why did the Lord ask this question? Again, it was surely to focus His disciples upon the reality of the fact that despite all the various wrong theories, they actually knew the truth about Him.

But the Lord then goes on to His essential point: "Tell no man that thing; saying, The Son of man must suffer many things…and be slain, and be raised…If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me…For what is a man advantaged if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?" (Lk. 9:21-25). The Lord told the disciples to "Tell no man" by saying that "The Son of man must suffer…". I submit that "Tell no man…" is almost hyperbole; surely He means 'For now, focus more on the fact of my forthcoming death and your response to it, than telling others. If you gain the whole world for me in your preaching but lose your own salvation, what are you advantaged?'. After His resurrection they were to tell others; as the great commission made plain.

And there is a powerful message to us all here, especially to those who concern themselves with large amounts of preaching. We should not be so caught up in listing the errors of others

that we fail to appreciate the huge personal import of the truth that we do surely know. Indeed, the Lord sought to focus His men upon the Truth they knew by asking them firstly to consider all the wrong theories about Him. He then went on to bring home to them the radical, transforming impact of that Truth if it is properly believed and acted upon. Luke seems to draw attention to this theme again in Lk. 10:20, where the disciples return from a successful preaching mission to be told to focus their elation instead upon the reality of their own personal salvation: "Rejoice not [i.e. not so much] that the spirits are subject unto you: but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven". We are not to turn a blind eye to others' misunderstandings; the tragedy of the errors of Islam, Judaism, Hinduism etc. should not pass us by. But neither are we to remain obsessed with them. We are to be led by such reflection to rejoice in the basic truth of Jesus which we have been blessed with.

And hopefully this will be the result of the consideration of truth and error which comes before the reader in this present study.

12.2 The Roman Catholic Church and the New Testament Canon

The impression is often given by Roman Catholics that their church decided which books should go into the New Testament. Critics of the Bible claim that the New Testament can't be taken seriously because the choice of books was made by men. Some were rejected, some were accepted.

These claims all depend upon setting up an impression that a group of men sat down at a conference, with a pile of books in front of them, and decided which ones they would put into the New Testament canon- throwing some into the bin, and accepting others as Divinely inspired.

However, this is simply *not* what happened! There was no single 'Council' or conference which decided which books should be put into the canon [i.e. the list of inspired books which make up the New Testament]. The history of those 'Councils' makes it clear that they were more a case of confirming that the books already widely accepted as inspired were in fact inspired and should be included in the canon of the New Testament which was then being produced. Initially, Christianity began amongst largely illiterate folks. They heard the words of the Old Testament prophets read to them, and then they had copies of the Gospels and letters read to them. But as everything had to be copied out by hand, producing a whole copy of the New Testament was a major job. As things became more organized in the church, there had to be a decision as to which set of documents was going to be copied out and made into a 'book'. And so decisions had to be made. But they were largely a *confirmation* of the books which were already widely accepted as inspired. In any case, those Councils usually only had local authority over a few churches- none of them universally decided once and for all for the whole world, which books should be accepted: " Synodal judgments and episcopal pastoral letters concerning the contents of the Bible become usual only in the fourth century, and at first are of only local importance. They encourage uniformity between the various areas of the church, but are unable to bring about a completely uniform canon until the Middle Ages" [(1)].

How, then, did it come about that the early church knew which books were inspired and which weren't? Paul and Peter were aware that there would be false prophets within the early church as well as true ones (2 Pet. 2:1). These false prophets wrote down their false teachings and claimed they were inspired. So there had to be a system of deciding whether a prophet

was true, or false. There was a Holy Spirit gift which enabled the early church to 'discern the spirits'- to know for sure who was inspired and who wasn't (1 Cor. 12:10; 1 Jn. 4:1). 1 Cor. 14:29 suggests that as soon as a person claimed to be 'prophesying' from God, then the person with the gift of discerning spirits was to be present with them and to confirm their words. And Paul goes on to say that anyone who doesn't submit to this, doesn't really have the Holy Spirit gifts.

Testing The Prophets

There were other tests of these prophets- if they didn't accept that Jesus was Lord, they didn't have the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:3). If they held false teaching about whether Jesus came in the flesh, and walked in hatred of the other Christians, they also were to be rejected (1 Jn. 4:1-10). When Paul says that God and the Holy Spirit witness to the truth of what he is writing, he is presumably referring to how those with the gift of discerning spirits had tested and approved what he was saying (Rom. 1:9; 9:1 cp. 2 Cor. 11:31; Gal. 1:20; 1 Tim. 2:7). What all this means is that as soon as a genuine New Testament prophet gave a prophecy, it was *immediately* recognized as such, because all these methods of 'testing the spirit' had been followed. This, by the way, explains the very 'dogmatic' and self-assured tone of some of the writers. They insist that their commands have God's authority (1 Thess. 4:2; 2 Thess. 2:15), and therefore must be obeyed (2 Thess. 3:14). They can insist that what they are saying is actually the will and command of the Lord (1 Cor. 14:37); and their inspired preaching was "of the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor. 2:13). These claims would have come over as arrogant and baseless- unless there had indeed been the process of confirmation of their words explained above. The writers can ask for their letters to be read at the gatherings of the early church- which initially would have been based around the synagogue practice of reading from the Old Testament Scriptures. Their writings were clearly accepted on a par with those writings- as soon as they were issued (1 Thess. 5:27; Col. 4:16; Rev. 1:3).

The testings of the various claims to Holy Spirit inspiration are to be found in Gal. 1, 1 Cor. 14 etc. But the letters of John, written at the end of the New Testament period, have the most warnings about the need to test the various claims of Holy Spirit inspiration- understandably, as John was writing towards the end of the period when inspired writings were being given (1 Jn. 4:2,3; 5:6; 2 Jn. 7).

Quick Acceptance

All this is why we find a very significant feature in both the New Testament itself, and in the historical, uninspired writings of the early Christians: *they speak about the New Testament writings as being inspired Scripture just as they speak of the inspired Old Testament writings.* So Peter, writing in A.D. 68, speaks of Paul's letters as being amongst " the other Scriptures" (2 Pet. 3:16), i.e. on the same level of acceptance as the Old Testament Scriptures. In 1 Tim. 5:18, Paul combines two quotations, one from the Old Testament and another from the Gospel of Luke, and calls them both "Scripture": " For the Scripture saith ' 'Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn ' [Dt. 25:4]; and, 'The labourer is worthy of his hire'" (Lk. 10:7). Polycarp, writing in about AD115, combines the Old Testament Psalms and Paul's letter to the Ephesians in a similar manner: " In the sacred books.... as it is said in these Scriptures, 'Be ye angry and sin not,' and 'Let not the sun go down upon your wrath." ' Some years later, the [uninspired] second letter of Clement (2:4) quotes Isaiah and then adds: " And another Scripture, however, says, 'I came not to call the righteous, but sinners'" -quoting from Matthew. The first epistle of Clement, dating at the latest to AD95, quotes from many of

Paul's letters and from the Gospels; but very significantly, it doesn't quote from any of the books which later were rejected at the Councils. So, the 'new' writings of the New Testament were accepted on an equal footing as the Old Testament Scriptures, from soon after they were first circulated. Notice that this was all *before* the Councils met to assemble the canon. The books were widely accepted as inspired *before* them! They didn't give those books an inspired status. It's also apparent that the 'new' books didn't go through much of a process of being recognized as inspired. As we outlined earlier, they were accepted as inspired immediately.

Debate?

There were a few books which *were* debated at the Councils, especially the letter to the Hebrews. All of them have one thing in common: they don't make clear, or there is debate about, who actually wrote them, and whether the writers were apostles of Jesus. Hebrews doesn't mention who wrote it within the text of the letter. But it had been accepted as inspired from the beginning, using the tests explained above. The Councils discussed it, only because of the lack of stated authorship. But there was no debate over the majority of the books that entered the canon. Again, the picture of men agonizing over whether or not to include every book we now have in the New Testament is simply a caricature of the situation. Even from the beginning of the second century, there were references by early Christians to a collection of books called the "Gospel and apostles". Clearly a body of letters and the the four Gospels had already developed- well before the Councils even met [(2)]!

Roman Catholics make the point that their church not only decided what went into the New Testament but also added the Apocrypha, which Protestants don't accept. But it's historically inaccurate to say that the Roman Catholics decided what went into the New Testament- the decision was made well before the founding of Roman Catholicism as we now know it. This religion started from the church at Rome. Their leaders claimed that their church should have universal ('Catholic') control over all other churches. They decided that the leader of the church of Rome, now known as the Pope, spoke directly from God; his decrees were to be treated as the word of God. They showed by this that they utterly failed to take into account the Biblical teaching about 'discerning the spirits'. In this and many other matters, they showed themselves to be completely out of harmony with the word of God. It is therefore a baseless claim to suggest that they, who consider their leader to speak God's word, should have any right to define what is or is not inspired. The simple fact is that the canon of the New Testament was fixed well before the development of 'Roman Catholicism'.

Concluding Thoughts

A few concluding thoughts. God wants to communicate with us His creatures. It would make no sense for Him to inspire some books but allow them to be mixed up with books which He didn't inspire. He wants to speak to us clearly. There can therefore be no doubt that He worked *through* the various church Councils, towards the end result of us having the New Testament which we now have.

God has shown us throughout the Old Testament how He works. Yes, He can do great miracles. He could have made the New Testament float down from the sky, complete with printing apparatus. But He didn't. He has always preferred to work through the 'still small voice' rather than through anything dramatic (1 Kings 19:11). He is of course God and not man, and He does and can do miracles; but He works with what has been rightly called 'an

economy of miracle'. He works through normal historical processes, through people, misguided people, bad people, good people. They all play their role. Given this, how He worked in order to give us the New Testament is exactly in keeping with how He has worked before. There was the miraculous, Divine element- in the writing of the books and the gift of 'discerning of spirits'. And then there was the normal historical process- the books being gathered into groups, and then published more widely, and finally being fixed into the canon of the New Testament which we now have.

Notes

(1) Hans Von Campenhausen, *The Formation of the Christian Bible* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968) pp. 331,332.

(2) There was a collection of " New Books" (Ignatius), called the " Gospel and Apostles" (Ignatius, Marcion), seen even then as part of the " Oracles" of God (Polycarp, Papias, 2 Clement), or " Scriptures" (1 Tim., 2 Pet., Barnabas., Polycarp, 2 Clement), or the " Holy Books" or " Bible" (Testimony of the 12 Patriarchs). All these writers quoted were writing *before* the Councils met.

12.3 An Appeal to Roman Catholics

There is an all-controlling conservatism in Catholicism which is very attractive to many people. Rather than discussion of truth, there is acceptance of dogma. The risky, exciting, challenging personal issues that arise out of a direct relationship with the Father and Son are never allowed to be experienced. It's a form of Islam- 'submission' to an ideology, a system of thought, an authority, an inherited position and worldview that is assumed to be right, regardless of whether one personally accepts it or not. The meaning and value of individual persons becomes crushed beneath the edifice of a desperately required uniformity and conformity. In this sense, Catholicism, Islam and Communism, indeed many other religions and political philosophies, have much in common. By contrast, true, Bible based Christianity places a huge value upon the meaning and value of the individual. Jesus told a story about a shepherd with 100 sheep, who loses one of them. He leaves the 99 in the wilderness, and goes off to look for the lost one. Most shepherds would think that 1% loss was quite OK. But this shepherd- who represents Jesus- is most unusual. He is consumed with passion for the salvation of the individual. And that individual lost sheep represents you and me. Yes, I know, you likely think that because you're a church member, you're therefore OK, and you're not lost at all. But in our hearts, we know the truth- that no human organization can solve the deep feelings of lostness and loneliness which so many Catholics feel within them. Amidst the crowd of people entering church on Sunday, there are so many feeling lost… simply lost. Their lifestyles, words and even the look in their eyes indicate this is true. No performance of ritual can change this. But coming to Jesus personally, learning of Him directly from the Bible… this can and does radically transform human life in practice.

It may be objected that the Roman Catholic church do appeal to the Bible to justify their rituals and dogmas. This is true; but it is also true that people can justify anything from any book, including the Bible. A leading Roman Catholic, Raymond Brown S.S., explains: " In the Roman understanding a church usage of Scripture shows how a passage is relevant to church life, but is not necessarily indicative of what the original author meant when he wrote

the passage" (*The Epistles of John* p. 208). This is another way of saying, in simpler terms: 'We look at our church life, our rituals and dogmas, and take hold of any Bible verse, even obviously out of its context, to justify what we are doing'. If we read or use the Bible text like this, then the cynic's view, that 'you can prove anything from the Bible', is indeed true. One moment we can use the Bible to justify the holocaust [as the Catholic church did]; the next moment we can use the Bible to justify pacifism. We'll never come to God's truth if we use His " word of truth" [as He calls it] like this. We must read the Bible and try to understand what the inspired authors really meant; and, whether it is convenient to us or not, seek to live our lives by what God really is telling us. This is the wonder of 'inspiration'- that the words we read in the Bible, the black print on the white paper, is indeed God speaking directly to us, not through any priest, not through or via anybody or anything else- but God Almighty speaking directly to *you*.

So we'd like to encourage you to read the Bible *for yourself*. Nobody can do this for you- no priest, church, human organization. Of course, it's a scary thing- to face God alone, through the pages of His word. When God wanted to speak to His people Israel directly, He assembled them in front of Mount Sinai and came down to speak with them. But they were scared, and wanted to have a mediator. And so it is with so many people- they'd rather hide beneath a hierarchy of priests and bishops, rather than come to God Himself. There is only one mediator between God and us- and that is "the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5). We need no priest, Mary, church etc to mediate for us. This means you can pray to God directly, through Jesus- with your own words, not those someone else tells you to say.

You see, God Himself, the God who really is there, existing beyond the billions of kilometers of space, beyond all the galaxies… that God who is a real being, not an idea, not a black box in our brain we call 'God'… that God invites *you* to have a personal relationship with Him. And He wants you to know Him, to get to know Him, to have Him as a Father. And as in any personal relationship, this requires personal communication. Not going into a building and saying the words you are told to say. But coming to Him, in the darkness of your own bedroom, or in the middle of the day, in your office or kitchen, saying your own words, asking Him to reveal Himself to you, telling Him you love Him, believe in Him and want to know Him more… And if you do this, He *will* hear your prayers and reveal Himself to you. And in the end, you will come to want to be baptized into His Son. Maybe you think 'Baptism? I was baptized as a kid! I'm OK!'. According to the Bible, baptism is something done by an adult, when they of their own free will decide they want to identify themselves with the death and resurrection of Jesus. The word 'baptism' as a word means to completely dip in water- because when we go under the water, we are connected with the death / burial of Jesus, and when we come up out of the water, we are connected with His resurrection. Then we are truly united with Him, "in Christ" as the Bible calls it, and we have the sure and definite Hope of eternal life with Him when He returns to earth. If you really believe these things, it gives you a wonderful perspective on life.

Whether we're lucky or unlucky in this life, healthy or sick, rich or poor, that's all just for this life- our real life, the eternal life, is what we look forward to, and this gives a different perspective to our present human experience. Of course, eternal life is hard to imagine- but just try, for a moment. Because this is what God is offering you. As a child, I used to think of this life as just a few millimeters, compared to an eternally long piece of string, that goes on and on and on and on…. and on. And I still can't think of any other way to think of it. But the point is, this is the life of the Kingdom of God, not life as we now know it- which wouldn't be much of a reward! In fact, to live for ever with our present experience of life would be a

punishment if anything. No, the eternal life God is offering is not just eternal, it is the life which He and Jesus now live, the life of eternal joy and fulfillment and ultimate meaning. And we can start living it… right now.

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Chapter 13: Approaching The Orthodox Mindset

The Russian Orthodox mindset is growing. The Centre of Sociological Research of the Lomonosov Moscow State University conducted a public opinion poll among 1,000 adults in Moscow and 3,000 in the rest of Russia during 1996. They determined:

43.3% of adults consider themselves Russian Orthodox. (This rose to 66.1% in Moscow)

50.6% of adults consider themselves Christian believers

7.1% say that they attend church monthly; (This rose to 20.3% in Moscow)

3.9% say that they attend weekly. (This compares to about 40% for Americans, 20% for Canadians, and less than 10% for most of the other industrialize nations. The actual percentage of attendees is about half the stated amount.)

And these figures have without doubt risen sharply since 1996. And broadly the same figures have been seen in other parts of Eastern Europe, where Orthodoxy has replaced Communism as the dominant 'faith' of the common people.

13- 1. General Approach

It's been my experience from many years of preaching in the Orthodox world that one really won't win converts by merely throwing doctrine at them. On the other hand, faith comes by hearing, and hearing is a hearing of the word of God, i.e. the Gospel. Doctrine must have a place in our witness; but a bald presentation of those doctrines, with the inevitable implicit criticisms which there are within them of Orthodox doctrines, will be unlikely to make much impact. A lecture on 'There is one God not three' held in Moscow, Bucharest, Sofia, Belgrade, Athens...is unlikely to produce much response. And yet people from an Orthodox background are lining up to be baptized in some of those areas, Russia especially. Why? How? They know true Bible doctrine; they have rejected the Orthodox mindset. What made them do it? Surely the answer is that there has been a genuine attempt at bridge building between us and them, real relationship building, an offering of something relevant to the harsh realities of life in the Eastern bloc, a leading people onwards into an understanding of the gripping, transforming power of the Truth in daily life. So anyone aiming to convert people from this background simply has to know something about the Orthodox mindset.

13-2. Authority In The Orthodox Church

The preacher also needs to be able to prove that the Bible is indeed the inspired word of God. A read through Alan Hayward's *God's Truth* [which is also available in Russian and forthcoming in other Slavic languages] is essential. Even though Biblical inspiration is theoretically admitted by the Orthodox, the implications of it are not accepted. For if the Bible's words are inspired, then we must be guided by what we read there above all. Contrast this with the Orthodox attitude to authority, quoted from a contemporary Orthodox website:

"If we have any instruction to offer, it must always rest on an understanding that no lesson, no bit of
knowledge about the Church, can be significant unless it first counsels the believer consciously to embrace the Orthodox Church as the True Church and her Holy Tradition as inspired and divinely established, whether that Holy Tradition be expressed in the basic dogma of Orthodox ecclesiastical primacy or something so seemingly insignificant as how we Cross ourselves. If by stating the truth we seem to divide, this is only because those who have deviated from or revile the truth are already separated from the spirit of Orthodoxy".

The Orthodox argue that their churches have traditions which are inspired, and because they are the largest and most long established churches in their country, therefore they must be correct. To quote some relevant words from Ron Abel:

"It is relevant to show that there is no necessary connection between size and duration of a religious organization and the truth of its claims. Jesus said, "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Mt. 7:13–14). Judaism and Buddhism are both older than Roman Catholicism [and, we might add, Orthodoxy] but this does not necessarily mean that their religious claims are true" (*Wrested Scriptures*).

One Orthodox website reminds readers: "Don't forget to play Orthodox music when reading the Fathers and the Church's prayers. Disks can be ordered from various booksellers". This is the same mistake as Pentecostalism and many other religions; the Bible alone is not allowed

to interpret itself. There has to be background influence to lead to truth. www.orlapubs.com is full of such Orthodox music. The same site makes the point that: "In vain will a newcomer to Orthodoxy look for a book on doctrinal theology that is really what many from other backgrounds will be looking for". Thus truth cannot be defined; submission to the church is what is required. One can make the point: Orthodox believers generally don't know what they believe. Nor do their priests preach it outside of their own country. Why not...if it is truly the good news that saves? The site continues: "Interestingly, conversion stories have nevertheless proved more compelling in practice for many seekers than have other writings; and lives of the Saints have inspired more seekers than many a theological treatise". This sounds again like Evangelicalism in its weaker forms. We need to strike a balance; real life accounts of transformed lives *do* mean a lot to our contacts; but we mustn't forget to point out that this transformation has come about because of what they have learnt and believed from the Bible.

13-3. The Orthodox Church And Phronema

All religions, true Christianity included, result in the development of a mindset. But it is often unconsciously achieved. Yet Orthodox Christians are subjected to the unashamed development of an Orthodox *phronema*, or mindset. For this is what Orthodoxy is all about- consciously developing the Orthodox *phronema*. You can see why Orthodoxy so readily replaced Communism in the Eastern bloc after the collapse of the USSR- the people were accustomed to having a consciously developed mindset thrust upon them. To exist within such a system became the norm, indeed in practice for most people, it was the only psychologically feasible way to live life. Of course a few broke out of it, or wanted to; there's one in every crowd who wants to walk the other way. And even more so today, where the penalties for doing so are not so severe as under Communism. And it is to this minority that our teaching has a real, credible appeal.

The *Phrónema* concept is a big thing with the Orthodox. It's a Greek word that refers to living the orthodox life with a particular mindset or outlook- with an Orthodox mind. It is closely related with
sanctification or Salvation- which is through Grace (the uncreated Energy of God's Life), and whose three major phases include, in succession, CATHARSIS or PURIFICATION, ILLUMINATION, and THEOSIS or DIVINIZATION. It should be noted that the Orthodox consider that even approaching the beginnings of the first phase is a rare feat among Christians today. Most of us (with the exception of some Saints) who desire and try to live for Christ, fail to get through the first phase; all three phases will be truly accomplished only in the next life. This reminds me of what I consider to be one of the major faults of Buddhism and Hinduism- a seeking for something which by definition is impossible. It results in the mindset that we are all miserable sinners with no real chance of attaining anything much in this life. Thus loyalty to the church is the only hope of salvation, and a salvation which one cannot in any case be very certain of... We need to stress that the New Testament speaks of real, actual transformation through the genuinely human Jesus, whose sacrifice gives us right now "victory". Yes, our hope for God's nature will only be realized in the future, but there is a transforming power about God's truth here and now. We aren't inevitable sinners, vainly trying to be spiritual. We can have a definite hope of eternity through grace, as the Orthodox admit (and we do well to point out any similarities of position which there are), but this results in a real change in our present living.

The Mind of Christ

Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos speaks of the *phronema* in his book *The Mind of the Orthodox Church*: “in the biblico-patristic Tradition the whole turn of mind which prevails in a man from the way in which he lives...if the nous [i.e., the spiritual intellect, not to be confused with " reason"] is darkened, then the whole mind is carnal. But if the nous is illuminated, which means that is has the Holy Spirit within it, then the whole mind is a mind of spirit and, of course, a mind of the Church.... When we speak of having an orthodox mind we mean chiefly that our nous is the nous of Christ, as the Apostle Paul says, or at least that we accept the experience of the saints and have communion with them. This is the way of the life of the Orthodox Tradition and the way of life of Christ's life. The orthodox mind is expressed by the dogmas of the Church, because, on the one hand, the dogmas express the life which the Church has and the revelation which the saints have received, and on the other hand, they lead the passionate people and the babes in Christ to unity and communion with God”.

Realize what is going on here. The mind of the church is equated with the mind of Christ. Christ has become the Orthodox church. Yet before we reject this out of hand, we must recognize that the true church is indeed the body of Christ. But the mind of Christ is the mind of Christ, not the mind of the church. The dogmas and traditions of the Orthodox church are equated with the mind of Christ. This is so wrong. We find the mind of Christ in the Gospels. We must discover for ourselves the mind of Christ from our Bible reading, and seek to become a new creation in His mental image. Yet the Orthodox are approaching it from the other way- they are saying that the church defines who Jesus is. If we want to know who Jesus is, the Orthodox say, then look at the church. We say: look at the Gospels and reconstruct in your own mind who Jesus really was and is, and seek to conform our lives to that image. The real Christ has been replaced by the Orthodox church fathers; Christ has been replaced by dogma just as in so many religions.

Whilst on the surface it may appear commendable that the Orthodox teach the need for the mind of Christ, their teaching on this point comes close to the idea of the dissolution of the individual in God which is found in the Asian religions. The idea is that through 'Theosis', the divinization of the individual, the person's self is replaced with Christ. Hence the large scale of Orthodox architecture, which like Communist architecture, sought to dwarf the individual into insignificance. Just as Communist planning built huge, unnecessarily tall apartment blocks to house works on remote collective farms, so Orthodoxy builds churches far bigger than required in small villages. Yet this dwarfing and replacement of the individual self isn't Biblical. The Bible and the teaching of Jesus especially gives enormous value to persons; for we ourselves shall by God's grace be saved, we shall rise again at the Lord's return, we shall be given a personal body, we shall relate as persons with others. And this needs emphasis in all our discussions with Orthodox believers.

13-4. The Nature Of Salvation In The Orthodox Churches

The Orthodox churches have little interest in evangelizing outside the country in which they operate; for their belief is that they alone are the people of God. Immediately, though, a huge logical gap appears in their credibility- a gap which is worth pointing out. If, e.g., according to the Russian Orthodox Church only Russians are the chosen people of God, or the Macedonians according to the Macedonian Orthodox, then how about these questions:

- According to the Bible, the Jewish people were the people of God. He was their God alone in the Old Testament, having built up a covenant relationship with Abraham's family. The Russians weren't then the people of God. So how did they become the people of God?

- 'God rejected the Jews and chose *our* nation' is the usual anti-Semitic, Orthodox reply. In passing, see how anti-Semitism comes into all this. But the New Testament is pretty clear that through Israel's "fall" salvation was made possible for *all* nations. There are ample NT passages which stress how *all* nations now have the opportunity of blessing- through baptism into Christ, whereby all racial distinctions become irrelevant (Gal. 3:27-29). So how can it be argued that any one ethnic group on earth now are God's people, on the basis of ethnicity? Each of the Orthodox churches basically teach that *they* are the new Israel. This is how the Bulgarian Orthodox church explain it: " It is precisely this " small remnant" of the children of Israel-the Israel of the New Testament-who are characterized by a " correct and saving confession of the faith," the sole criterion of true Orthodox unity. Scorned, slandered, and often even persecuted by those who supposedly hold to the same faith-individuals who pretend to be Orthodox- this " small remnant" is nothing less than a " stumbling-stone" (Romans 9:32) for ecumenism and a solid buttress of Orthodoxy. Small in number, perhaps, but true to the faith of the Fathers, the Old Calendar Bulgarian Orthodox Church rallies unreservedly around this " small remnant," which responds, to be sure, to the inspired words of the Archbishop Seraphim (Sobolev) of Blessed Memory: " Ecumenism will not celebrate its victory". Note how they refer to the Bishop as speaking "inspired words". Here is the problem. The words of men are treated as inspired, thereby leaving the inspired words of Scripture itself reduced to mere background status.

- The Russians, e.g., only accepted Christianity some centuries after the death of Jesus. Isn't this strange, if God rejected the Jews for crucifying Jesus and then chose, e.g., the Russians as His chosen people?

- You could well labour the question: 'Why do the Orthodox churches not seek to take salvation to others if salvation, according to the Bible, is for all?'. For the Orthodox have never done missionary work apart from amongst their own Diaspora. If the good news / Gospel they have is real and valid, well, isn't it natural to share good news- if you *really* have it?

- Is all this not just evidence that the Orthodox churches are hopelessly tied up with local nationalism- hence their heavy involvement with politics? They are arguing that, e.g., the Macedonians are the true people of God and that therefore all others within the country are apostate and alienated from God- e.g. Albanians in Macedonia, or Chechens in Russia. Yet this is mere politics. The connection between church and state politics is reflected in the way the faithful are often told who to vote for. And to the discerning minority, this is immediately a major warning light as to the validity of the Orthodox churches as truly Christian organizations. In practice, it may be as well to point out early on in our relationship building what the true Christian attitude is to 'the world', politics, military service, voting etc.

The Orthodox churches are not the only people who think that their racial group is the chosen people. They're actually only continuing the primitive theme of so many religions throughout history. The ancient Egyptian word for "Egyptian" meant 'a human being'; they assumed that all other peoples were not fully human as they were. The Greeks mocked the way non-Greeks spoke- they called them *barbaroi*, because non-Greek language sounded to them like gutteral 'barbar' nonsense. And so they came to call all non-Greeks 'barbarians'. This sort of thing is

totally dehumanizing- and it is radically refuted by the way the New Testament teaches that people of *all* nations are equal before God as humans, and are united together in the only true humanity, which is the Lord Jesus (Gal. 3:27-29).

13-5 Orthodox Church Doctrines

We can do well to point out some essential similarities between our approach and that of Orthodoxy, and then seek to bring our contacts from that common position forward into ground which will be new for them.

13-5.1 The Second Coming

The Eastern Christians look forward with great longing to the return of Jesus Christ; they expect the new heavens and the new earth with a glorified, deified mankind. This aspect of Orthodox theology is something which we can play upon. We too look forward to the Lord's return.

13-5.2 Truth

Orthodoxy stands for truth; and we can plug in to this immediately. We too stand for truth. But the problem is that for the Orthodox, truth is only to be found in the past dogmas of the church. We need to inspire in our contacts a spirit of discovery, of excitement about personal Bible study, instead of nonsense like the following: " The Church's decisions also carry force across time; and for this reason, the decisions of the Holy Fourth Ecumenical Synod are of such binding character that the Church can make no disparate decisions without refuting Herself. In keeping with this spirit, the phrase, 'We now clearly understand...,' has no place among Orthodox. The classical Patristic dictum, 'Following the Holy Fathers...,' is the only one which expresses how Orthodox understand themselves" -*The Non-Chalcedonian Heretics,* by the Holy Monastery of Saint Gregory (Monastery of Gregoriou), Mount Athos, Greece. Translated and published by the Centre for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, Etna, CA (1996).

Yet despite this attention to 'truth', it is noteworthy that it is almost impossible to find a definition of the concept of the Orthodox church. One of their theologians asks: "Who can give a definition of the divine being? Who can express clearly what is a dear and caring mother? It is the same with the church". This lack of definition stands in stark contrast to the concept which we have of a "*system* of truth revealed in the Bible", expressed as we have it something like the Statement of Faith or books or a correspondence course. Again, we have to lead our contacts onwards from this basic interest in 'truth' towards actually finding out for themselves what that truth is; not merely assenting to the value and need for 'truth', but actually seriously setting themselves to find it from the actual words of Scripture. We do well to remind our contacts of the simple statement of Jesus: "Thy word is truth" (Jn. 17:17).

13-5.3 Doctrine

Orthodoxy places great emphasis upon doctrine, and is eager to condemn any who deviate from their teachings even on relatively minor matters. The language they use is often unChristian, and we can draw this to our contacts' attention. Consider these statements from an Orthodox website: "In practical terms, this declaration has opened the road to union with

the non-Chalcedonian heretics , who have in no way renounced their heresy or accepted the decrees of the Fourth, Sixth, and Seventh Ocumenical Synods. Anyone can understand why, according to the tenth Apostolic Canon, one who comes into communion with a Priest rightly deposed by the Church is himself deprived of communion, since he has " trodden upon the Church of God." Thus, it is important that we not shirk our responsibility with regard to God and with regard to the holy Orthodox Truth, in searching out excuses that are wrongly based on the individualism of contemporary man". We can readily agree that doctrine matters. But for different reasons; because the Bible is the word of God. Where, we can ask, do the various Bishops and previous Orthodox writers take their authority from? Is this not following man-made religion, just as Hinduism and Buddhism have done, endlessly striving to correctly interpret the interpretations of the interpretations of previous church writers?

The idea of an exclusive fellowship is common within Orthodoxy. Again, to quote from one of their websites: "By contrast, it is one who opposes heresy and separates himself from it who truly demonstrates that he has endeavoured to preserve the unity of the Church. For canonical separation in such an instance has as its object the defence of the Orthodox faith and the preservation of the unity of Orthodoxy itself". This is tough stuff, akin to some of the more extremo statements one hears from some Protestant splinter groups. The purpose of separation is not because we have to maintain unity. The true church cannot be divided, for there is only "one body". Truth can never in that sense be 'lost', and can scarcely be 'maintained' merely by aggressively separating from the apostate. We need to explain the real meaning of fellowship- a sharing in common. If we know the real, true Christ, and are baptized into His body, we are in fellowship with all others who are in His body. For there is only one body. We are in one family with them; for the true brothers and sisters of Jesus are whoever hear His words and do them. So the sense of fellowship between true believers is a purely natural process; again, tell our contacts about the inexplicable unity there is at Bible Schools held in the Orthodox nations, especially Russia and the Ukraine. The unity of the church / ecclesia is developed naturally, because we all believe the same things. Yes, this is why we separate from wrong teaching, but it's a natural outcome of our unity together. It tends to happen naturally, and certainly without the vicious condemnation meted out by the Orthodox. Maybe tell the contacts about cases of those who have parted company with us, so they see that even in such cases the Spirit of Christ prevails amongst us.

Doctrine, however, and apostasy, are defined in terms of breaking with the traditions of the elders, rather than in relation to Biblical statements. Consider how one Orthodox website condemns the Orthodox Church of Finland (largely comprised of the Russian population in the border area]: "The unity of Orthodoxy, expressed in the common celebration of Pascha, is ruptured by this Church, which is self-condemned by inviting the severe sanctions appointed by the canons (the seventh Apostolic Canon [which deposes any clergyman for deviating from the universal formula for the celebration of Pascha-Tr.]; the minutes of the First Oecumenical Synod [which reiterate Canon VII of the Apostles-Tr.]; and Canon I of the Council of Antioch [which, in addition to reiterating Canon VII of the Apostles, calls those who resist the rules for the common celebration of Pascha " alien" to the Church-Tr.])". Apostasy is defined as departing from the minutes of meetings of previous Bishops! We need to stress the implications of believing that the Bible which we hold in our hands is indeed the word of God.

Yet the Orthodox do recognize that doctrine affects life in practice: "the dogmas express the revelation and the life which the Church has and they also cure man and lead him towards deification. They are spiritual road signs. In this sense we can say that the dogmas save man

and sanctify him. This happens
because they cure him and give him the right orientation on his way towards God" (Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos, *The Mind of the Orthodox Church*). Again, one can play on this. We agree that Biblical doctrine- not Orthodox dogma- does indeed transform human life in practice, and this is our whole point- that doctrine is important for this reason. But mere assent to dogma or doctrine will not save anyone; they must be lived out in practice. And again, we can give examples of this- e.g. believing in a Jesus who had human nature inspires us to faith in prayer (Heb. 4:15,16), whereas a pale faced, iconic, haloed Christ of Orthodoxy has little inspiration for us in practice.

13-5.4 Gnosis And The Orthodox Church

However, the Orthodox emphasis upon doctrine disguises a very basic problem which we have to point out to them. The Orthodox Saint John of Damascus wrote: "God then, is Infinite and Incomprehensible, and all that is comprehensible about Him is His Infinity and His Incomprehensibility". Straight away we see that the idea of truth and ever being able to attain to "the truth" has gone out of the window. Yet "the truth" is a fairly common New Testament term. We need to make it clear that we do not think that that if people acquire all intellectual knowledge they will have knowledge of God. The Orthodox stress that this is the Western approach to theology which they despise; and in a sense we can agree with them. Knowing God is about having a relationship with Him based upon that knowledge, not just knowing facts about Him. From an Orthodox perspective, true 'theology' is spiritual knowledge or *gnosis* - knowledge of a realm far superior to intellectual knowledge. However, whilst we agree that we cannot make knowledge of God a function of the intellect, we also have to show our disagreement with the Orthodox perspective that the intellect can only know about God, it is incapable of knowing God. It *is* possible to know God- you can find many Bible verses that say so. And the issue of that knowledge is in a life lived with Him. Much of what the Orthodox say about *gnosis* is critiqued in John's letters. But it may well be that the average Orthodox contact we have isn't going to be helped by our bringing this point out. But some may be- for I observe that the Orthodox are increasingly teaching their members more of what they are supposed to believe. "The great challenge for Orthodoxy in the near future is not to find new and better ways of adapting to the dominant culture by assimilation and thus becoming " relevant" ; the challenge is to establish and maintain genuine continuity with the Saints and Fathers of the past. This means more education, for ignorance of the Faith among many Orthodox today is appalling and is the single greatest factor in the crisis we are now facing" -Fr. Alexey Young, Book Review of *Facing East*, in Orthodox America (Feb., 1997).

Robin Amis goes so far as to say that "the schism between the two churches [Eastern and Western] was at root a schism between head and heart" (*A Different Christianity: Early Christian Esotericism*
and Modern Thought, p. 29).This is I think to some degree true, in that the Orthodox churches are more emotional and less oriented towards things like Bible study. The celebration of Easter and other festivals in Russia involves, from what I have seen over the years, a lot of very genuine from-the-heart tears by genuine Orthodox members. We need to strike a balance here. We can't just preach cold doctrine and expect people to accept it as if we are merely getting them to sign up for a new theological position- when most of them aren't even into theology at all. There has to be an element of passion and emotion in our appeal. The doctrines must have meaning in practice; as Robert Roberts wrote, "If a man is not emotionally moved by the truth, he is not of the truth".

This focus on the heart rather than the head in Orthodoxy is well presented in the following quote:

" It is not enough to be acquainted with the texts and to know how to draw from them quotes and arguments. One must possess the theology of the Fathers from within. Intuition is perhaps more important for this than erudition, for intuition alone revives their writings and makes them a witness. It is only from within that we can perceive and distinguish what (actually) is a catholic testimony from what would be merely theological opinion, hypothesis, interpretation, or theory" -Fr. Georges Florovsky, " The Ways of Russian Theology" in *The Collected Works of Georges Florovsky*, Vol. IV,
Aspects of Church History (Belmont, MA: Nordland, 1987), pp. 191, 192. Now again, we must strike a balance. It is true enough that mere "quotes and arguments" of the type that traditionally we have used in their preaching to fellow Westerners will not be very powerful when dealing with Orthodox contacts. But on the other hand, we have to make the point, surely agreeable by most of our hearers, that we can't just let our feelings / intuition guide us alone; or else we will end up believing whatever we 'feel' is right. We will have become the authority... and as we must constantly stress, the Bible alone is to be our authority.

13-5.5 Resistance Of Pagan Influence

The Orthodox insist that during the West's 'Dark Ages', Christians in the West lost awareness of the highest realm of knowledge. In the thirteenth century, the West was reintroduced to Greek pagan philosophy through its contact with the Arab culture. Unfortunately, the Orthodox claim, these pagan philosophers were embraced in a way the Christian East had never done. Now here of course we would have plenty of common ground initially. We too strongly believe that Christianity got corrupted through pagan philosophy. But what to do about this problem? Our solution is to get back to the Bible, thanking God that the text has been miraculously preserved. The Orthodox solution is to turn to their Bishops and traditions. We can easily show that immortal soul, Jesus born on December 25th, the trinity etc. were all pagan ideas brought into Christianity.

13-5.6 Human And Divine Nature

Bear in mind that one of the main initial differences between the Eastern [Orthodox] churches and the Western church was that the East followed the teaching of Irenaeus, and the West that of Augustine. Augustine had the idea that both the world and our own natures were inherently evil and wicked, deserving to be destroyed; the wrath of God was against a baby from the moment the foetus developed. Irenaeus, by contrast, saw humanity as created in God's image, who could realize their potential by responding to God's word. It's as well to tell folks this- because most of them won't know it. And to make the point that actually, we agree with Irenaeus. We're not meaningless pieces of filth existing on this planet, with no chance of rising above "our station and our place". Indeed, paradoxically, it was Eastern European Communism which veered towards that position. Instead, we really *are* created in God's image, and we really can be transformed into the image of His Son. In this we can disagree with the West and agree with the East. It's a significant point, worth making to those from an Eastern Orthodox background.

Another tension between Eastern and Western theology is the idea of "deification"- that people can in some sense be raised to Divine nature. The West strongly rejected that. And although Eastern Orthodoxy took it too far, it is still true that our teaching about God

manifestation in persons is far closer to the original Eastern ideas than to the Western ones- and again, it's a point worth making. That we can truly become God manifest right now, and rise up to Divine nature in the future, after the pattern of our Lord. One Orthodox writer put it like this: "…This does not mean that human beings are able to become God in his essence. But it does mean that they can become "gods" by grace even as they remain creatures of a human nature" [(1)] . We may not totally agree with this form of words, but our belief in God manifestation is something that can be explained to people from an Orthodox background and ought to be easily accepted by them. And again, the point can be made that standard Western theology was mistaken in this area right at the start of the division.

Notes

(1) Vigen Guroian "The Shape of Orthodox Ethics", *Epiphany Journal* (Fall 1991) p. 9.

13-6 Unity And Disunity In The Orthodox Churches

Orthodox priests warn their flocks in bitter terms against the likes of ourselves, claiming that we are breaking up their nation. We approach Orthodox people with this cloud hanging over us. But this again is mere politics; the priests believe the whole [e.g., Bulgarian] nation are their flock by reason of birth, and that salvation depends upon loyalty to their organization. To counter this we need to explain to our contacts that we advocate faithfulness to the laws of the land in which we live; and yet we are not seeking to create just isolated believers. We are part of the world-wide family of Abraham. Explain to people, show them photos, pull out letters from your Bible...to show what our world-wide fellowship means in practice. We are a family. We agree with unity! And my observation is that this is one of the key things which leads people to join us. It shows the power of our doctrine in practice. I often show them a copy of *Gospel News*, and they are amazed that people from throughout Africa, America, Russia and the Arab world, with all that stands between them, are brought together in the uncanny unity of the Gospel. And of course the Lord predicted just this; that by our unity, the world would know Him in truth. This is why it happens that many of the people who read *Bible Basics* on the www.biblebasicsonline.com website also spend time browsing around *Gospel News*, according to our web usage statistics. The nature of the community is the proof of our doctrinal validity. Which is why our disunity is the biggest disadvertisment we could possibly make.

Another point worth making is that the Orthodox stress on unity is nothing more than a mechanism to obtain and retain power. 'We all must have the same view, otherwise, there will be disunity'- and so any dissenting voice is to be silenced in the name of unity. Discerning people are not slow to realize that this is going on. They also know full well that this is why the Orthodox criticize other parts of the Orthodox movement and indeed any other religious group with a venom which is clearly unChristian, so much so that it raises big questions in the minds of the thinking minority- questions which we can easily plug into and give credible answers to.

Consider this quote from *Orthodox Unity Today* by the Right Reverend Photios, Bishop of Triaditza
[Translated from the French by Bishop Chrysostomos of Etna]: "I am speaking about ecumenism (and its midwife, modernism). Briefly, modern ecumenism is both a movement

and an ecclesiological heresy. It poses a grave threat to the very " pillar and foundation of the Truth" (1 Timothy 3:15) itself-the Church... the Orthodox Church is not *a* church, but *the* Church...Thus, the proof of Orthodox unity is, above all, " the correct and saving confession of the faith" . There is much here that we can plug into. We too, unlike many Western Christian missions, are not preaching *a* church, i.e. we are not [or should not] be doing a mere publicity exercise for our church. We are preaching *the* true church, a community of believers who have lived and believed the faith of Abraham all down the millennia, into which community we enter through baptism into Christ. We too are against 'ecumenism'; but, let us emphasize, for different reasons. Not because we in some parochial sense want to preserve the power of our little 'church', but because we are convinced that the inspired Bible teaches doctrines which comprise the one true Faith, and that Faith is essential for the true belief, baptism and walk with the Lord which ultimately saves.

And of course, the question of authority keeps intruding into all such discussions. The Orthodox are not united, neither within each country nor internationally. This, we submit to our contacts, is because the basis for authority is upon men, upon a line of tradition and interpretation of various Bishops, rather than the plain man reading his Bible. Each country has their own exclusive church- the Macedonian Orthodox for the Macedonians, Serb Orthodox for the Serbs, Russian Orthodox for the Russians etc. They each teach that their ethnic group are the true people of God- so, axiomatically, they have to be divided from the other Orthodox churches. They have made various irrelevant 'doctrinal' points the bases for these divisions, especially the dating of Easter and the arrangement of the liturgical Calendar. But it's all just justifying their power games; and this is why there can be no genuine going into all the world with the Gospel for all nations. It may be as well to mention in passing our obedience to the great commission, resulting in the mixture of all nations and tongues which we have in our wider community- it's an impressive thing for an Orthodox person to hear about. Macedonian believers mix with Serb believers, Russian ones etc. in a genuine unity- which is enough to convert the world. So we agree in outline with the Orthodox position that unity is related to having "the correct and saving confession of faith" of which Bishop Photios wrote. We might also point out that the Orthodox mentality and following of previous tradition is exactly what led Judaism to lose the true hope of Israel, and to crucify the Son of God.

Examples of disunity

- The Orthodox Church of Finland celebrates the Feast of Pascha (Easter) according to the new calendar, separately from all of the other Orthodox Churches, but at the same time as the Catholics and Protestants.

- Most of the Orthodox Churches, the Bulgarian especially, are divided into mutually exclusive factions over the issue of which Calendar to use for their liturgy, and how to celebrate Easter. Orthodoxy simply hasn't brought about unity- neither between nations, nor within them. Their usual reply is that if everyone accepted their view, then there would be national unity. Yet this is just another version of Stalinist-Leninist-Marxist ideology, and in most Slavic consciences this fact will be readily recognized. And Orthodoxy by its very nature means that there can never be any international unity of believers of the type which the New Testament so often glories in. For each Orthodox church claims that their ethnic group alone are the true people of God.

- The division between the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) and the Russian Church Abroad (RCA) is well known. It has resulted in RCA churches being firebombed, their priests murdered etc., often with state support. These incidents have often been reported in the Russian press; everyone knows about them. Likewise the Moscow Patriarchate has often been out of step with the ROC Patriarchs in other parts of the huge expanse of Russia, again issuing in violence- all in the name of unity. One naturally makes the connection with the Northern Irish war between Catholic and Protestants, also fought in the name of unity. We need to explain and show that true unity both Biblically and in true Christian practice is a natural process, brought about by a common covenant relationship with the Father. It isn't something that can be achieved by politics, hurtful behaviour nor violence.

- The ROC and RCA have recently sharply divided over which 'martyrs' from the Communist period should be made saints [canonized]. They have no common authority, therefore, they divide so bitterly. The advantage of having the Bible as our sole authority and the way we have no hierarchy or controlling organization needs to be emphasized very early on in our discussions.

- Leonid Regelson in his book *The Tragedy of the Russian Church* (Paris, 1977) brings out many of these divisions. He writes on p. 495: "The Moscow Patriarchate has, since Stalin's time, according to its own basic assumptions, called upon the Russian Church Abroad to return to " the saving bosom of the Mother Church." The same call echoed again in 1987. They have even said that the parishes of the Free Russian Church must be " flushed into the sewer where all unclean elements are drained off" (Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate, No. 9/1990, p. 33)". The RCA teach that the Russians can fall from grace and no longer be the people of God unless the RCA is accepted as the true church rather than the ROC: "The fate of Russia is in the hands of God and the hands of the Russian people, if they desire to remain the people of God". The ROC teach that the Russians are inalienably the people of God whatever.

It may be helpful to remember that some leading popular Russian writers, some with almost cult status in Russian society, have been highly critical of the Orthodox church. Here are a few examples worth quoting from Tolstoy:

Tolstoy called the trinity a "ridiculous, immoral dogma…incompatible with reason and knowledge….which cannot be accommodated in a healthy mind" [(1)]

" Humanity can only be saved from disaster when it frees itself from the hypnotic influence the priests hold over it, and from that into which the learned are leading it. In order to pour something into a full vessel one must first empty it of its contents. Likewise, it is essential to free people from the deception they are held in, in order for them to adopt the true religion: i.e. a relationship with God…which is correct and in accord with the development of humanity, together with the guidance for conduct that results from this relationship"[(2)]

Notes

(1) Leo Tolstoy: *A Confession, and other religious writings* (London: Penguin, 1987 ed.) p. 116

(2) *Ibid* p. 118

13-7 Barriers To Preaching To The Orthodox

All this said, there are major barriers between the Orthodox mindset and the Truth which I suppose in the majority of cases are not pulled down by our preaching to the Orthodox. The true Gospel is capable of pulling down strongholds- and Paul clearly has in mind the massive structures which men allow to develop in their worldviews. Yet the majority refuse to let the Gospel exercise its power. They prefer to remain with the old, for the old always seems better. The Lord criticizes the basic conservatism of the human condition; and yet it is this conservatism which the Orthodox so glorify and justify. It's worth turning people to the Lord's parable about the old and new wine, and making this point to them.

For the Orthodox, seeing and viewing is more important than hearing. Therefore there are countless icons, symbols, and symbolic actions. Generally in their churches there are no sermons; their faith is made visible and dramatized in the liturgy. Against this we have to insist that faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God in the Gospel. Point out to contacts that the crowds asked Jesus to come down from the cross, that they might see and believe. But the Lord didn't come down. He knew that faith isn't related to seeing. Remind them of the definition of faith in Hebrews 11:1,2- that faith is seeing what cannot be seen literally. This, to me, is one of the most basic barriers which we encounter. However, we would do as well to openly admit that we run the risk of intellectual understanding becoming more important than feeling, and this leads us to the danger of rationalism. Admit the problems of our tendencies, in the hope that an Orthodox contact will admit the dangers of theirs.

Orthodoxy spread to Russia, Bulgaria etc. by travellers visiting the Christian churches in Constantinople and being impressed with their beauty. They were enchanted with the icons, frescoes, and mosaics, the many types of artworks, and beautiful songs in the solemn liturgy. In that way the Russians came into contact with the culture and religion of the powerful, rich, artistic, and art-loving Byzantine empire. At the end of the tenth century they consciously chose in favor of the Byzantine type of Christianity and asked Constantinople to send missionaries to their country. So the whole Orthodox world-view was based around that which is visible, rather than Bible reading. The Russian Prince Vladimir visited the Church of the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople in 987, and witnessed the Divine Liturgy. On returning to Russia he commented: "We knew not whether we were in heaven or on earth, for surely there is no such splendour or beauty anywhere upon earth. We cannot describe it to you: only this we know, that God dwells there among men, and that their service surpasses the worship of all other places. For we cannot forget that beauty". You'll realize that essentially, the Orthodox church of today hold the same basic view. The simple fact that God doesn't dwell in temples made with hands, but in humble hearts, has simply not been given its due weight. The Orthodox idea is that God *does* dwell in houses made by human hands, *if* those houses are made beautiful enough for Him. A simple quoting of the relevant passages about God preferring *not* to live in such houses but rather in the hearts of those who tremble at His word ought to provoke Orthodox adherents to serious reflection.

This type of Christianity fitted the religious mindset of the Russians, who by nature had and still have a feeling for mysticism, beauty and art. I have heard requests from Russian brethren and sisters for things like identifying badges, and for guidance regarding gravestones- there is a desire for a uniform symbol to be placed on them. We ought to go along with these requests. We can't impose the Western way upon the East. There is nothing wrong in itself with a more 'visual' approach to faith, so long as the faith itself is Bible based.

In the Russian churches, just as in the other Orthodox churches, the worship or liturgy is central. The services are long and festive, but without the proclamation of the word. One nearly never hears normal speaking in the services. Everything is presented by a priest or male choir by singing verses without musical accompaniment. Yet once a person can be encouraged to know the joy of personal Bible study, of personal exploration and discovery, it becomes apparent to them that a religion not based around the Scriptures is not a valid way to reach for the Father who has given us His word through which to know Him.

Noteworthy is the teaching of icon worship. When a believer worships an icon of Christ, Mary, or a saint, he connects with the heavenly, divine world, because there is a mystical bond between the icon and the person in heaven who is represented; even more: the person portrayed is truly and in reality present in his representation, so that the Orthodox speak of a kind of "union in essence". Icons as we know are 'out' for any Bible-respecting faith. I have found that doing character studies of Bible characters, with close attention to the Bible text, is found to be an exciting thing for those from an Orthodox background. We can do this even before attempting to tackle major doctrinal issues; for such studies demonstrate that the Biblical rather than the merely visual is the essence of true faith. Yet all the same, we need to seek to make Biblical matters come 'alive', and as much visual support as we can muster is vital. The wildly popular 'stick men' illustrations of David Pearce, beloved and popular Eastern European Bible school teacher, are proof enough of this.

Another major barrier is that Orthodox people find it hard to give up their deep respect for tradition. Indeed, whoever participates in a service in a beautiful and artistically appointed cathedral, comes under the impression of its loftiness. An unforgettable atmosphere is created not only by the singing of the choir, but also by the attire of the priests and bishops, the sparkle of thousands of candles, illuminating gold and silver objects on the altar, and the devotion of the attending believers. We have nothing to compete with this. All I can say is that we must stress that faith comes from hearing God's word, not seeing things; it isn't about merely observing, but actively participating in the true tabernacle, which is invisible to mortal eyes. And the true traditions are those which are in Scripture; we are in that sense followers of a deep and long tradition, although not of human making.

Finally, we have to point out one more difference, namely, that in the East the community is given a central place. The deeply rooted sense of solidarity and union overarches the entire religious and personal life. Indeed one can speak of a "holy collectivism." The West, on the contrary, is individualistic: there is more concern for the individual and his freedom and rights than for the community. Therefore, in the East there have been constant warnings against destructive individualism, in which people see a threat to the ideal of the community. To counter this we need to point how the teaching of Jesus stressed the value of persons, a recognition of the immense value to Him of each individual- the parable of the lost sheep, searched for whilst the 99 were left in the wilderness, is a good starting point. Yet we also need to stress that we are not merely a loose-knit collection of individuals who broadly have the same intellectual, theological understanding of the Bible. We are a living family. Show some photos of Bible Schools, where ex-Orthodox people from throughout Russia and Eastern Europe come together as one dynamic family. By doing so we allow the Lord's prophecy of John 17 to come true- that by our unity, the whole world will know the reality of He whom we preach.

14-1 The Justice Of God

Tutoring Bible students has revealed that a number of related questions often occur by the time the course of study has been completed. These all focus around the justice of God. Examples include:

'It isn't fair that not everyone is called by God to know the Gospel'.

'Why did God allow Adam and Eve to sin, and so bring suffering and difficulty into the lives of their billions of descendants?'

'Why did God just choose Israel as His people in the Old Testament, rather than giving everyone a chance?'

Such problems will occur to all of us, at whatever stage of relationship with God we are at. Finding these things hard to come to terms with is not in itself a reason to delay our response to God's call. This side of Christ's return, we will never come to a position of ultimate knowledge concerning them. Two thousand years ago, a man "cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief" (Mk.9:24). We all have this split personality; part of us believing, but another part labelled 'unbelief' desperately needing the Lord's help to silence. In the days or weeks before baptism, this is a very commonly felt emotion, and to some degree it will recur all our days.

Our 'unbelief' will often take the form of the types of questions to God listed above. The fundamental thing to be aware of is that it is unthinkable that we should accuse God of being unfair or unjust. If we do so, we are judging Almighty God in terms of *our* perceptions. We are saying that if *we* were God, we would act in a different way to how God does. It is one of humanity's greatest failures not to appreciate the extreme sinfulness of man, and the ultimate rightness of God. If God is not ultimately right, then there is no moral touchstone in the whole of existence. There is therefore *no* true concept of right or wrong. The whole idea of religion ('re-binding') with God is therefore pointless. As children can only reason against adults within their own limited perceptions and paradigms of reasoning, so do the children of God with their Father. But beyond this; as a dog is to a man, so is a man to God. Jeremiah questioned God's ways, but in an effort to understand more deeply a God whom he accepted to be ultimately right:

"Righteous art thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee: yet let me reason the case with thee" (Jer.12:1 A.V.mg., cp. Ps.89:19,34,39,52).

The suggestion that God may be unfair implies that we have certain rights, which somehow God is violating. The fact that God was our Creator and is our constant Sustainer means that we have *no* rights. We live *constantly* in His mercy, not just when we sin. 'Human rights' is a human concept, created by humans to justify themselves. We came into this world with nothing, and we will exit with nothing. All that we are and have is a total gift, given for a short time to see how we will respond to it. If God calls us to a closer relationship with Him, we should joyfully respond. To refuse to do so because others have not been invited to this, is to hurt God in one of the most painful ways possible.

We are all animals by nature (Ecc.3:18-20). We could say, 'Why has man been chosen to have a relationship with God, rather than any other animal?' The exact reasons we would not be able to comprehend even if we were told. The same is true of the Genesis record of creation. The scientific explanation of how God created matter and organized it into the

infinite wonder of our universe is well beyond the possibility of human science to ever appreciate. God has therefore expressed His acts of creation in language which only the child-like can accept. The same is true of the moral dilemmas which we listed at the start of this appendix. This book has outlined Bible teaching concerning these issues. Our mind is not naturally humble to God's word; we will have difficulty accepting some of these things in the way the Bible expresses them. But we need to recognize that the problem is *ours*, not God's. We largely lack the self-knowledge required to accept that our thinking is basically flawed and faulty. We must come to terms with the fact that we are severely mentally impaired in comparison with God. Our way of thinking is not just a step down from God's; it is a fundamentally *different* thought process to His. For this reason we are asked to take on the mind of Christ, to learn from God's word to appreciate His way of thinking, and attempt to make it our own.

We will all admit that there are many elements of God's creation which are clearly very good; there is evidently some concept of righteousness which emanates from our creator, and is manifest in His creation. The problem is, there are other things in our human experience which are clearly evil and negative. It is this which causes some confusion as to the justice of God.

Sadly, many then go on to doubt God's rightness, and even whether He exists. Yet is it not far better to say that we believe God is fundamentally good and right, as He claims in His word, but *we* have problems *understanding* the place of evil in His creation?

"The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us" (Dt.29:29). The Gospel is called "that which may be known of God" (Rom.1:19), implying there is much else that cannot yet be known. There are certain true principles which we can clearly see in God's word; and there are many other facets of God's character which these lead on to. But there are countless other "secret things" about God's ways, to which we have no access in this life. Thus Paul could say that in one sense he knew Christ and God, as can we (2 Tim.1:12; 2 Cor.5:16; Gal.4:9; Heb.10:30; 1 Jn.2:13), especially through personally experiencing God's love and responding to it (1 Jn.4:7,8); but in another sense he only "knew in part" (1 Cor.13:9,12), longing for the return of Christ, "that I may (then) know him, and the power of his resurrection" (Phil.3:10).

As we are increasingly exposed to the righteousness of God through the study of His word, we will increasingly long for the coming of His Kingdom, when at last His righteous characteristics will be plainly, physically manifested in a way which all His people will joyfully understand and love. That time will see the ultimate resolution of all the traumas which now afflict God's children - intellectual, moral and physical: "for now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now we know in part; but then shall we know, even as also we are known" (1 Cor.13:12,13).

14-2 Jesus For Unbelievers

Duncan Heaster

Our modern civilization [so called] with its addiction to money and power has left so much unaddressed; our need for beauty, for poetry, for art, for mystery and dreams, to find love, the meaning of life, for personal contact with God. The rush of modern life has left each of us with the niggling conscience that this is the sort of life we want to have, indeed, that we ought

to follow. But not only do we not follow our conscience; we don't know where to find something, some philosophy, some religion, which somehow synthesizes all these needs together. People today- young people especially- are so often asking the ultimate questions, looking for the right things, but in the wrong places. The metanarrative of modern art, in all its forms from movies to songs to novels, records the distraughtness of humanity, our malaise, the hidden longing for deliverance and redemption which there is not far beneath the surface of us all. But with all due respect to the forms in which this is expressed- the fineness of the art, power of the wordsmithing, the screenplay... modern men and women are groping like the blind in search of a wall of support, desperate for some familiar guide towards the true path. The self-introspection of internet blogs, humanity's increasing preoccupation with itself, is the result of a failure to find that path. They rage in vain against a society which has lots its spiritual roots.

But I'm bold enough to suggest that in God and in His Son Jesus, as the Bible reveals them, stripped of all the theology of men, the accretions of nominal Christian culture… we find just what we need and were unconsciously looking for, even longing for, all our lives. I can only say 'taste and see…'. For all other commentary or persuasion would be bathos compared to the real Christ and the real God as they truly are. So this is the approach I take to those who call themselves unbelievers. I don't actually think anyone is a total unbeliever. And I will not give you reasons X,Y and Z to believe that God or Jesus exist; for faith, by its definition, is not faith if the evidence sits visibly in front of us. Rather I want to discuss with you the results of believing in them. But to begin with, I need to explain what God and Jesus stand for; because there are so many wrong ideas about them. My understanding of them is unashamedly based upon the Bible alone. I can't recommend you too strongly to get a Bible and read it for yourself.

Grace

Salvation, eternal life, forgiveness of our sins, is a pure gift from God, unattainable by our own efforts. Through this grace, God looks at us as if we are as perfect as His perfect son, Jesus. This is what love between persons is all about- seeing another person in a positive way. Realizing that we are in the grace of God, justified by Him through our being in Christ, leads us to a far greater and happier acceptance of ourselves as persons. So many people are unhappy with themselves. It's why we look in mirrors in a certain way when nobody else is watching; why we're so concerned to see how we turned out in a photograph. Increasingly, this graceless world can't accept itself. People aren't happy or acceptant of their age [they want to look and be younger or older], their body, their family situation, even their gender and their own basic personality. I found that when I truly accepted my salvation by grace, when the wonder of who I am in God's sight, as a man in Christ, really dawned on me… I became far happier with myself, far more acceptant.

The extent of grace is that not even sin, which on one hand separates from God, can actually separate us from the love of God in Christ. We are often plagued by a desire to separate out the things for which we are justly suffering, and things in which we are innocent victims. We struggle over whether our cancer or her depression is our fault, or whether we only got into unhealthy behaviours as a result of others' stressing us... etc. This struggle to understand the balance between personal guilt and being a victim of circumstance or other people makes it hard for some people to free themselves from guilt. Seeking to understand is especially acute when we face death, suffering, tragedy, or experience broken relationships. How much was I to blame? In how much was I merely a victim? My determined conclusion is that it is

impossible, at least by any intellectual process, to separate out that suffering for which we are personally guilty, and that suffering which we are merely victims of. The cross of Jesus was not only to remove personal guilt through forgiveness; all our human sufferings and sicknesses were laid upon Him there. Our burdens, both of our own guilt and those which are laid upon us by life or other people, are and were carried by Him who is our total saviour.

Salvation From Death

The Bible has so much to say about death, depicting us as having a "body of death" (Rom. 7:24). And yet by being baptized into the death and resurrection of Jesus, we have the hope of resurrection when Jesus returns to earth. And yet humanity generally doesn't want to seriously consider death. Yet death is the moment of final truth, which makes all men and women ultimately equal, destroying all the categories into which we place people during our or their lives. If we regularly read and accept the Bible's message, death, with all its intensity and revelation of truth and the ultimate nature of human issues, is something which is constantly before us, something we realistically face and know, not only in sickness or at funerals. And the realness, the intensity, the truth… which comes from this will be apparent in our lives.

And yet the fear of death grips our society more than we like to admit. A psychologist described the huge "number of people who dream that they are locked in, that everywhere they come up against iron-bound and padlocked doors, that they absolutely must escape, and yet there is no way out". And in Christ we find a freedom from that fear. Because the Lord Jesus was of our human nature- and here perhaps more than anywhere else we see the crucial practical importance of true doctrine- we are freed from the ranks of all those who through fear of death live their lives in bondage (Heb. 2:15). For He died for us, as our representative. How true are those inspired words. "To release them who through fear / phobos of death were all their living-time subject to slavery" (Gk.). Nearly all the great psychologists concluded that the mystery of death obsesses humanity; and in the last analysis, all anxiety is reduced to anxiety about death. You can see it for yourself, in how death, or real, deep discussion of it, is a taboo subject; how people will make jokes about it in reflection of their fear of seriously discussing it. People, even doctors, don't quite know what to *really* say to the dying. There can be floods of stories and chit-chat… all carefully avoiding any possible allusion to death. This fear of death, in which the unredeemed billions of humanity have been in bondage, explains the fear of old age, the unwillingness to accept our age for what it is, our bodies for how and what they are, or are becoming

Really believing the things of which we have spoken here can change us fundamentally. Faith in the good news about Jesus leads us to an acceptance of our salvation, of who we are as persons, acceptance that we are sinners, acceptance of everything around us that cannot be changed until the Kingdom comes on earth at Jesus' return. Acceptance, in the end, of grace; an acceptance that merges into faith, faith in its full and final sense as we soberly contemplate our death, judgment to come, and the awesome prospect of utter infinity shared with the Father and Son.

Truly Believing In God

It may well be that all the unanswered questions which there are about God, the world, life, creation... somehow are a barrier to you. But a person who decides to trust only what is [apparently] explainable or controllable ends up a geek, losing the sense of mystery and

wonder which we once had as children. So there is no need to fear the unanswered questions... the only alternative is to endlessly seek power, control, cold rational explanation. And this too is ultimately unattainable, and the essentially unanswered questions will always remain. When Moses had the 'hard questions' ('Why have you chosen me? Why have you done this?'), God doesn't chide Moses for asking those questions (Ex. 5:22-6:1). Instead, He patiently bears with Moses. And so He will do with us in our age.

Believing in God's very existence of itself affects a man's behaviour. " The *living God"* is a phrase often used in the Bible by men in prayer or desperate straits. God *is*, He is the living One, and He therefore is a rewarder of those who seek Him. Dostoevsky in *The Brothers Karamazov* [through the mouth of one of his characters] aptly observed: " If there is no God, everything is permitted" . And the reverse is so true: seeing there *is* a God, all aspects of life come under this imperative.

But it's not just a matter of saying that 'God exists'. What we need to know, of course, is not just that God exists, not just that beyond the steely brightness of the stars there is a cosmic intelligence of some kind that keeps the whole show going, but that there is a God right here in the thick of our every-day lives. It is not objective proof of God's existence we want but, whether we use religious language for it or not, the experience of God's presence. For it is in the apparent trivia of life that we see God the most clearly, hour by hour.

The Value Of Persons

The Bible reveals God as a person. Having a personal relationship with a personal God means that we in that process develop as persons after His image; for there is something magnetically changing about being in relationship with Him. At times it seems that we cannot separate ourselves from the world to which we belong. We're stuck with an unbelieving or unhelpful partner, sniffly kids, long hours at work, the TV always on, the phone always ringing. But we as unique and individual persons can *personally* relate to the *personal* God and His Son, thus finding the ultimate privacy and isolation which being human in this world appears to preclude. But further, it's actually in the very razzamattaz of our mundane, frustrated experience in this world that we can come to know God, and in which God reveals Himself to us. And how does all this happen in practice? To experience God is to know Him. So often the prophets speak of 'knowing God' as meaning 'to experience God'. Because God is love, to love is to know God (1 Jn. 4:8). Quite simply, how deeply we have loved [and I am speaking of 'love' in its Biblical sense] is how deeply we have known God- and vice versa. And that love is worked out in the very earthliness and worldliness of human life in practice.

The fact that we have been created by God means that life and existence around us has a purpose. Job was told that the very fact he had been created by God and his breath was in God's hand meant that his apparently inexplicable trials had indeed come from God and had a purpose (Job 12:10). If He created us in the first place, then we can expect that His hand will continue to mould our lives through trials in an ongoing, creative way.

Because of the work of God as creator and the power of the Word that formed it all, we should likewise stand in awe of Him and recognize the power of His word (Ps. 33:6-9). The word we have in our Bibles has the same creative power as the word through which the world was created and exists even now. Because we are created in God's image, the structure of our very bodies is an imperative to give ourselves totally to His cause (Mt. 22:19-21). Whatever bears God's image- i.e. our very bodies- must be given to Him. " It is he that has made us, and

[therefore] we are his" (Ps. 100:3). We must be His in practice *because* He is our creator. God as creator created man in His own image; and therefore we shouldn't curse men (James 3:9). By reason of the image they bear, we are to act to all men as we would to God Himself; we are not to treat some men as we would animals, who are not in the image of God. Quite simply, respect for the person of others is inculcated by sustained reflection on the way that they too are created in God's image.

David's motivation for praise was simply because God has created him: "I will praise you; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made" (Ps. 139:14). Only those who believe that we were created by God and have the possibility of eternal redemption can truly perceive the value of persons. Only they can grasp the worth of human beings, that we are not mere animals, but there is a wonder to human life which inspires us to seek to save humans through the preaching of the Gospel. When human beings are devalued, everything in society goes sour. Women and children are despised; the sick are regarded as a nuisance, and the elderly as a burden; ethnic minorities are discriminated against; capitalism displays its ugliest face; labour is exploited in the mines and factories; criminals are brutalized in prison; opposition opinions are stifled; there is no freedom, dignity, or carefree joy; human life seems not worth living, because it is scarcely human any longer. But when human beings are valued, because of their intrinsic worth, everything changes: women and children are honored; the sick are cared for and the elderly allowed to live and die with dignity; minorities protected; workers are given a fair wage, decent working conditions, and a measure of participation in the enterprise; and the gospel is taken to the ends of the earth. Why? Because people matter, because every man, woman, and child has significance as a human person made in the image of God. This is why the stories of Jesus about the lost sheep and lost coin reveal the huge value of the individual person. He told a story about a shepherd who lost one sheep, and therefore left 99 in the desert, and went off to look for the one lost one, until he found it. He didn't think that 1% loss was OK; he was passionately concerned to save the individual. And that shepherd is Jesus, and you and me are the lost sheep.

My Appeal

And so, in the light of all this... *try praying*. Yes, just close your eyes and talk to God. Tell Him how you are, what's going on in your life, your inner feelings, and ask Him to help you come closer to Him. I do appeal to you, to study these things, and give yourself no rest until you have come to surely know the true Gospel. I do so hope you will study our free Bible study course; and set yourself the aim, to be baptized one day, by dipping in water. Then you will surely have the hope of eternal life. OK we can't imagine eternal life. I can only suggest we imagine a long, long line, with no end, stretching on into the distance; and we in this life are just a few millimetres at the start of it. This really is our hope, if we are baptized into Jesus and live in Him. I plead with you, to take all this seriously, and not treat it as mere religion, as just something ordinary.

14-3 OUR ATTITUDE TO LEARNING BIBLE TRUTH

It is quite possible to study all the basic Bible doctrines and yet still fail to appreciate the personal reality of their message. This fact can be very distressing for those who use a manual like this for the instruction of others who then seem to fail to grasp the principles covered.

There was much genuine response to the preaching of the Gospel in the first century. People "*gladly* received" the Gospel and were *therefore* baptized (Acts 2:41). Without a heartfelt response to the message - an "affectionate belief", as Robert Roberts often described it - there is no point in baptism. Those who receive it solely because of pressure from their partner or parents are unlikely to stay the course. Seeing we are interested in bringing people to salvation rather than in the number of baptisms, it is worth taking time in our preaching of the Gospel to ensure that our converts come to baptism with the right attitude.

Those at Berea "received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily" to check out what Paul was preaching (Acts 17:11). This manual - indeed any human literature - is only an attempt to accurately reflect Bible teaching. For there to be a true response to the Gospel, there must be a mind sensitive to the Word, truly desiring to search Scripture on a personal level. This is something which the preacher of the Gospel cannot necessarily bring about; we can only draw attention to the relevant Bible passages. The believers at Rome "obeyed *from the heart* that form of doctrine which was delivered" unto them, before they were baptized (Rom. 6:17).

Those who stubbornly persist in the ways of the flesh will never be able to properly grasp the true message of the Gospel; they will end up having "a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof...ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Tim. 3:1-7). We will never understand what we do not want to. If we have no real love of righteousness, no true desire to bring our lives under God's control, we will never be able to "come to the knowledge of the truth", despite all our Bible reading; our study will just be an academic exercise.

There are several examples of people reading Scripture, but in a way not reading it. This is a disease which we are all prone to. The Jews at the time of Christ appeared to have a great zeal for God's word; they trusted in the Old Testament writings as being inspired (John 5:45; Acts 6:11); they knew that through studying these Scriptures they could have hope of eternal life (John 5:39), and every week they publicly read them (Acts 15:21). In addition, some of them closely studied these passages during the week. However, they totally failed to grasp the real significance of these Scriptures, in that they pointed forward to Christ. Jesus told them plainly: "Search the Scriptures...for had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words? (You) hear not Moses and the prophets" (John 5:39,46,47; Luke 16:29-31).

We can imagine the Jews' indignation: 'But we *do* read the Bible! We *do* believe it!' But, because of their closed-minded attitude, effectively they did not - they read, but they did not understand; they looked, but they did not see. There are truly none so blind as those who do not want to see. At all stages in our spiritual development we must be on our guard against this.

14-4 A Sample Baptism Service

To give some idea of how a baptism can be performed properly, the following is an account of a baptism service performed by the the present writer in Hartlepool, England on a Saturday afternoon in November, 1990. However, it must be noted that baptism is fundamentally an immersion in water following a true repentance and belief of the Gospel. The ‘service’ is just an optional extra to give a suitable sense of importance to the occasion. The order of proceedings was as follows:-

- Opening prayer

- Reading of Romans chapter 6

- Short address about baptism (printed below; real names changed)

- Prayer

- Immersion of the person in a swimming pool

- Prayer

BAPTISM ADDRESS

There can be no doubt that today is the most important day in Dave’s life; in a few moments he will go under the water and rise fully “in Christ”, a seed of Abraham, having those glorious promises which make up the Gospel made to him.

The extreme simplicity of this act can be deceptive, yet Dave and all of us here fully believe that this dipping in water will associate him with the death and resurrection of Jesus, as we have read in Romans. 6 vs. 3-5.

“Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptised into Jesus Christ were baptised into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised

up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection".

For a few moments let us try and imagine the scene at the resurrection of Jesus, because we have seen that when Dave comes up out of the water he will be associated with the rising up of Jesus from death.

We can imagine the freshness and silence of the night air, and the glorious feeling of new life within Jesus. He would have been able to see the lights of Jerusalem shimmering away in the distance; the people there were completely unaware of the wonderful thing that was happening so close to them - that a man was rising from the dead to newness of life.

And so as Dave rises from the water, the world around us has no appreciation of the glorious thing that is happening; all they can see, if they bother to look, is a small group of men and women walking to a swimming pool and one man dipping another. But as the Angels rejoiced at the resurrection of Jesus, so now, unseen to us, the Angels rejoice at one sinner who repents.

We have read in Romans 6 that we should "*walk* in newness of life" - the joy that Dave will now have should go with him as he walks onwards through life. As we have read, he will no longer be a slave of sin, but of God, doing His will as it is revealed in the Bible. It is tempting to reason that we should want freedom for ourselves, but by serving ourselves we are not free, we are slaves of sin. Dave is now changing masters, to serve God. At times it will seem that the apparent restraints which living the new life impose upon us are too much to bear, and we are tempted to try to be free of them. But if we do so, we will not be free, we will be serving sin again.

Paul explains in 1 Cor. 10:1,2, that our passing through the waters of baptism is like Israel passing through the waters of the Red Sea. They were baptised "in the cloud and in the sea" - there was water on both sides of them, and above them in the cloud. As they went through, "the clouds poured out water" (Ps. 77:17) - they were probably soaked through in the downpour. A kind of parable can be developed from this, with many lessons for us. Israel had been slaves in Egypt, living a pointless life, working hard in their slavery and serving the idols of Egypt. Through their experience of life they cried to God to find some way of escape, although they probably had no idea how He would answer them.

In reply God sent Moses to lead them out of Egypt, through the Red Sea and then through the wilderness, to enter the Promised Land. Israel in Egypt were like Dave and all who come to baptism; now Dave has been led, as it were, to the shores of the Red Sea. Once he passes through the water, he will not immediately be in the Promised Land of the Kingdom, he will join the rest of us here in walking through the wilderness. God led Israel through the wilderness by an Angel, who was constantly with them by day and night. So, too, each of us has an Angel encamping around us, leading us through our lives towards salvation (Ps. 34:7; Heb. 1:14).

Israel were fed each day with manna, which Jesus interprets in John 6 as both Himself, and God's Word. If they had not eaten it they would soon have died in that wilderness - there was no other food there to eat. For this reason we cannot commend to you strongly enough the "Bible Companion" reading tables, whereby you read the Bible each day, getting the whole

context of passages as you read through, and especially, feeding *on Christ*, whom you will find "in all the scriptures". It is vital to make space in our daily routine, preferably at the same time each day, to read those chapters and reflect on them.

In passing, Israel were told not to try to gather several days' manna in just one day, but to make the effort to go out and collect it each day. Our feeding on the Word needs to be daily. As we just would not forget about eating our natural food, so we should instinctively make the daily effort to feed on the Word of God; indeed, Job could say that he valued the words of God "*more* than my necessary food". Israel also drank from the stream that flowed from the smitten rock; 1 Cor. 10 tells us that this represents "Christ".

So we should feed and drink in the example of Jesus, which we can do by the memorial service each week. Speaking of meetings, it should be our natural desire to meet with others who share our Hope. A traveller in a literal wilderness would jump at any opportunity to meet another traveller to discuss the possible problems which may lie ahead, to share experiences. So we in the wilderness of life in this wicked world should make every effort to keep in contact with each other. Often such meeting is not possible in the flesh as much as we would like, but we should take every opportunity to keep in touch by letter-writing, reading of the magazines, etc.

We have spoken about the responsibilities of the new life, but it would be wrong to give the impression that if we do certain things, such as the daily Bible readings, then God will have to reward us. It is God's good pleasure, His will, to give us the Kingdom as a gift, not as a wage for our works (Rom. 6:23). It would be wrong for us to feel that baptism is a good idea because now we have a fair chance of entering the Kingdom. The Truth and the love of God, the victory of Christ, make it all far more positive than that. God really *wants* Dave and all of us here to be in the Kingdom. This fact is so glorious that we have to remind ourselves time and again that it really is true and that in the light of it we should be making some kind of response to God's love.

When Israel came out of the Red Sea there was tremendous rejoicing; Moses sang his song and all the people rejoiced. Psalm 105:35-41 well expresses this, showing how God provided everything that was necessary for their journey:-

"And (the Lord) did eat up all the herbs in their land (Egypt), and devoured the fruit of their ground. He smote also all the firstborn in their land, the chief of all their strength. He brought them (Israel) forth also with silver and gold: and there was not one feeble person among their tribes. Egypt was glad when they departed: for the fear of them fell upon them. He spread a cloud for a covering; and fire to give light in the night. The people asked, and he brought quails, and satisfied them with the bread of heaven. He opened the rock, and the waters gushed out; they ran in the dry places like a river".

That joy is the joy of us, your future brethren and sisters, who are here to witness your baptism. It is the joy of God, of Jesus and of the Angels who are intensely watching us at this time. May we each keep this Hope and this rejoicing "steadfast unto the end", that we might walk together in the Kingdom.

We will now make our way down to the changing rooms, and then into the swimming pool...

Further Reflections On The Exodus As A Type Of Baptism

One of the big themes of the Exodus record is: 'Who shall Israel serve?'. Time and again the point is made that they are the servants of Pharaoh; but God wants them to come out from there and serve Him (e.g. Ex. 1:13,14; 4:23; 5:9-21). And so it is in the waters of baptism- this is a changeover point, a change of masters, as Paul stresses throughout Romans 6. When we enter Christ through baptism, we become a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17). And so the Red Sea deliverance is described in terms of a new creation- the waters separated, dry land appearing etc. (Gen. 1:9,10). But of course the whole process required faith- to walk through a sea canyon, between those walls of water, would've been a scary experience. The Red Sea / baptism experience was so wonderful that it simply had to have some consequence in practice. To resolve to faithfully break bread in memory of Christ's deliverance is one such consequence. There is a word play in Ex. 12:17,24- as God had kept watch over or observed Israel on Passover night and thus spared them from death, so they were to keep / observe the feast of Passover. The path chosen for Israel from the Red Sea to the promised land was carefully chosen- they didn't go the most obvious, direct way, as God foresaw that they would fall to temptation and weakness in that path; and so God's knowledge of the weakness of each one of us who is baptized leads Him to plan out a relevant and appropriate path for us through the desert of this life, a way which we can handle, and in which we are daily and nightly led by the Angel. Note how God left the mountain of Sinai and came and lived with Israel in a tent / tabernacle, just as they lived in tents (2 Sam. 7:6,7). The language used about God's presence on Sinai (Ex. 24:15-18) becomes that used of God's presence in the tabernacle (Ex. 40:34-38). After our baptism, as we set off into the desert guided only by clouds and promises, God is very much with us.

According to the Exodus parallel, straight after baptism, you're going to enter the wilderness and fall into temptation. Be prepared! For this isn't merely a piece of fascinating Bible suggestion- it's been the experience of so many. Israel must've wondered at times: 'Who can live by words alone?'. They longed for visible evidence, they had such weak faith, and even wished to do the unthinkable- return to Egypt. They complained that they lacked water, decent food etc.- but ultimately Moses could remind them: "These forty years the Lord your God has been with you; you have lacked nothing" (Dt. 2:7). If we stay the course, we will be able to look back and say the same.

14-5 The Level Of Knowledge Required Before Baptism

Many readers will have been confronted by those in ‘Evangelical’ churches who reason that doctrine is unimportant for salvation, and that a mere verbal confession that ‘I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God’ is the basic pre-requisite for salvation. Superficially this sounds plausible because of the way conversions are recorded in the Acts, whilst also appealing to the ideas of ‘love’ and ‘tolerance’ which are the spirit of our age. This study makes a more detailed analysis of the importance of doctrine.

WHY SO QUICK?

There can be no doubt that a quick reading of Acts gives the impression that many baptisms were carried out with precious little instruction in the basics of the Gospel, and with only a brief confession of belief in Christ as God’s Son. Just saying the four words ‘I believe in Christ’ is obviously meaningless as a way to salvation - and the majority of ‘Evangelicals’ will concede that there must be some other knowledge or appreciation in the mind of the

person saying those words for them to be meaningful. This point should not be hard to establish. It is difficult, then, to argue that the passages which record confessions of faith in Christ as the Son of God prove that saying those words is all that is needed. It is almost common sense that just saying a brief sentence, regardless of one's other feelings and beliefs, cannot put a man on the road to salvation. The following points may be helpful in explaining these apparently quick conversions:

- The record in Acts - as in much of Scripture - is necessarily highly condensed. It makes an interesting exercise to read out loud some of the speeches recorded in Acts and note the time it takes to do so; it is fairly certain that they would have taken much longer in reality, including much that is not recorded. A few examples:

- Paul's defence in Jerusalem takes four minutes to read (Acts 22); that before Felix one minute; before Agrippa four minutes; Peter's Pentecost address takes only four minutes; that to Cornelius three minutes; the Lord's speech after feeding the 5,000 (Jn. 6) six minutes; the sermon on the mount 18 minutes. Peter's preaching in Acts 3:12-26 takes about two minutes to read out loud; but in reality it was long enough for news about the content of his preaching to be taken to "the priests, the captain of the temple and the Sadducees" and for them to come on the scene (Acts 4:1). The content of Paul's preaching to Ephesus is briefly recorded; later, the men of the city complained that he had taught "that they be no gods, which are made with hands" (Acts 19:26); but this part of his message is not recorded in the brief summary which describes his preaching "the things concerning the Kingdom of God…the word of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 19:8,10). But to preach *God's* Kingdom and the height of the exalted Lord Jesus involved teaching men to reject the false superstitions of men.

- Thus the fact that more lengthy 'instruction' of baptism candidates is not mentioned is no proof that it did not happen. An argument from silence is very dubious in this case.

- There is reason to believe that the mass baptism of Jews in Jerusalem at the beginning of Christianity was a special case. When Peter appeals for them to repent and be baptised, the crowds, he said, had already heard the preaching of Jesus (Acts 3:20). He was asking them to accept in practice a message they had earlier heard. There is no evidence that such methods and volume of baptisms were performed later in the first century. If conversions had continued at that scale then the whole of Jerusalem would have been Christian within a few years. These people being Jews it would have meant they had a fair knowledge of the Old Testament and the ways of God. The depth of the Letter to the Hebrews and Peter's letters show that their readership were capable of grasping the many Old Testament allusions they make. It is staggering that, in Hebrews, Melchizedek is described as the milk of the word. The writer laments that he could not go into more detail about him because of their spiritual immaturity (Heb. 5:11,12). That indicates their level of knowledge at the time of their conversion, as Paul charges them with not having grown much since that time. It seems that those letters were primarily written to the Jerusalem ecclesia, most of whom would have been baptised in the early days recorded at the beginning of Acts.

- We hope to show that preaching the name of Christ and confessing that as described in Acts was equivalent to understanding quite a detailed body of doctrine.

- It would appear from 1 Cor. 1:17 that Paul (and other apostles?) operated in harness with an effective team of follow-up instructors and baptisers, so that he only spent a relatively short time in each place where he preached.

- 1 Cor. 15:24-28 presents our only solid information about the events at the end of the Millennium, yet these facts are spoken of by Paul as if they were common and basic knowledge amongst his readership. Whilst the basic doctrines of the one faith are all recorded in the Bible, there was probably more teaching of them in the early church and in their witness to the Gospel than is recorded.

THE NAME OF JESUS

The Name of God includes much teaching about Him and His ways - God's Names and titles express His character and purpose. The name of Jesus Christ is also not just an appellation but a deeper statement of doctrine.

Belief in the name of Jesus is paralleled with being baptised (Jn. 3:5,18,23). In Rev. 2:13, Jesus parallels "my name" with "my faith"; preaching 'the name of Jesus' includes preaching the faith of Jesus, not just repeating His actual Name as if there is something mystical in it as a lexical item. Gal. 3:26,27 makes faith in Christ inextricably linked with baptism into him: "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. FOR as many of you as have been baptised into Christ have put on Christ. Further examples of this link between belief and baptism will be found in Acts 19:4; 10:42 cf. 48; 2:37,38; Lk. 24:47. Apollos "knew" John's baptism (Acts 18:25), showing that baptism is not just an act, but involves knowing certain teaching.

"Philip...preached Christ unto them" (Acts 8:5) sounds as if he just said 'Believe on Jesus'; but "Christ" is defined in Acts 8:12: "When they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptised". Note that "things" is in the plural; not just a brief statement about Christ; and to 'preach Christ' also included the doctrine of baptism. Jn. 6:40 tells us that it is the will of God "that every one which seeth (understands) the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life"; while later Jesus says that "If any man will do (God's) will, he shall know of the doctrine" (Jn. 7:17). Thus knowing the doctrine is the same as 'seeing' the Son. Christ's words "Thou hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name" (Rev. 3:8) also show that the word of Christ is parallel to his name. Thus believing on Christ is a process of understanding followed by obedience, rather than a quick verbal confession 'I believe in Christ'. This is borne out by Jn. 6:35: "He that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst", which equates believing on Christ with *coming* to him - showing that belief is a process.

Preaching "Christ" therefore involved a series of doctrines. "Christ" is put for the doctrine about Him (2 Cor. 11:4; Gal. 1:8; 2 Jn. 7-12), and for the things of His Kingdom (Mk. 10:29 cf. Lk. 18:29 and Mt. 16:28 cf. Mk. 9:1). Lk. 9:11 describes Christ preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God (cf. Mt. 4:23), whilst the parallel account in Mk. 6:34 refers to Him teaching them "many things". The Gospel includes "many things" - not just a brief statement about Christ which can be made in a minute. Thus we read phrases like, "When they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many" (Acts 14:21), equating preaching and teaching. Such language would be unnecessary if the Gospel was just a few simple statements. Paul's preaching at Berea resulted in the people searching the Scriptures daily (with the synagogue copies of the Old Testament?) to check what Paul had taught them (Acts 17:11). The Gospel taught by Paul was therefore based throughout on the Old Testament, and it was because of the people's process of Bible study after hearing him that they believed - "Therefore many of them believed" (Acts 17:12). When we are dealing with people who have

little knowledge of the Bible and do not often search it daily after a discussion, it is not surprising that times of instruction are far longer than in the first century. "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God" (1 Jn. 5:1) clearly corresponds with verses like "Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth" (James 1:18), "Being born again...by the word of God...the word which by the gospel is preached unto you" (1 Pet. 1:23,25). This shows that to believe that Christ is the Son of God is an epitome of the fact that one has understood the Gospel contained in the word of God.

THE KING OF THE KINGDOM

The emphasis on 'believing in Christ' becomes more meaningful once it is appreciated that the title 'Christ' can be read as synonymous with the Kingdom of Christ in some passages. Thus our Lord told the Pharisees that they need not go round looking for Messiah to come, because he was already standing in their midst. He expresses this in the words "...the Kingdom of God is among (A.V. mg.) you" (Lk. 17:21), showing that "The Kingdom" is to be equated with the king of the Kingdom. John's preaching that the Kingdom of God was near therefore refers to his heralding of the manifestation of Christ. The phrase "Kingdom of heaven" in Mt. 3:2 is rendered by the Diaglott: "The royal majesty of the heavens", i.e. Christ. Likewise in Lk. 17:21 "the Kingdom of God" is "God's Royal Majesty" in the person of Jesus Christ. The stone hitting Nebuchadnezzar's image represents God's Kingdom (Dan. 2:44); it is the stone/Kingdom which "shall break in pieces and destroy all these (other) kingdoms", showing that the stone is the Kingdom when it smites the image, as well as after its destruction. In similar vein Ezekiel's parable of the vine describes a "tender one" of its twigs being cropped off and planted, so that it became a great tree, "and under it shall dwell all fowl of every wing" (Ez. 17:22,23). This must refer to Christ, the "tender plant" of Is. 53:2; yet there are obvious connections with His parable of the mustard seed, in which the Kingdom of God is likened to a small seed which grew into a great tree, under which all types of bird came to live. This connection between the word of the Kingdom and Jesus Himself personally shows that He saw Himself as the living word of the Kingdom. In the light of this it is understandable that 'believing in Christ' and believing in the full Gospel of the Kingdom of God are identical.

WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

We now come to discuss in more detail what was considered essential doctrine amongst first century believers. It must be recognised that there was a body of doctrine in New Testament times which was roughly equivalent to our "Statement of Faith". Another important factor to bear in mind was the existence of brethren with the gift of prophecy - 'forth-telling' of direct revelation from God under inspiration. There is reason to believe that with time some of these inspired utterances were added to this body of doctrine.

A BODY OF DOCTRINE

Paul could say that those at Rome ecclesia at least had "obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you" (Rom. 6:17) before their baptism. The Greek for "form" is the same translated "example" and "pattern" - as if it referred to a body of teaching that was copied elsewhere. Paul's reference to this indicates the importance of a defined body of teaching to be understood before baptism, and also that it was not just a few brief statements that were mentioned before baptism. Some within the ecclesia would have "a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof" (2 Tim. 3:5), perhaps suggesting that they might hold

the basic doctrines of the faith but not recognise the real power of the Truth in their daily lives. Paul could remind the Galatians that "Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you" (Gal. 3:1). The Greek for "set forth" means literally 'depicted in written words', as if the initial instruction of the Galatians had been through some written form of instruction manual.

When defining the doctrine of the resurrection, Paul could say: "I delivered unto you...that which I also received, how that Christ died..." (1 Cor. 15:3), showing how he had received a revelation about these things, and had delivered it to them as doctrine to be accepted as fundamental. 2 Pet. 2:21,22 falls neatly into place here: "It had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than...to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But...the sow that was washed (in baptism) (has returned) to her wallowing in the mire". Here "the way" and "the holy commandment" which were "delivered" to them are associated with the washing of baptism, as if the way and commandment were known before baptism. We have shown that there was not just one command to be understood before baptism; therefore the "commandment" in the singular may suggest that there was a body of teaching very clearly defined that had to be understood before baptism. There are several passages which speak of 'receiving' teaching about doctrine and "the Gospel": Gal. 1:9,12; Phil. 4:9; Col. 2:6; 1 Thes. 1:6; 2:13; 4:1. This confirms that 'the Gospel' was comprised of a specific body of teachings that had been 'received' firstly by the apostles and then by those to whom they preached.

"THE FAITH"

Jude also speaks of "the faith which was once (for all) delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). "The faith" is thus parallel to the "form of doctrine" that was delivered to them before baptism, and it would have been another phrase in the first century vocabulary which referred to this body of doctrine. Paul's exhortation to "hold fast the profession of our faith" (Heb. 10:23) may be alluding back to their public profession of belief in "the faith" before their baptism. Preserving "the faithful word" (Tit. 1:9) would have primarily referred to upholding this 'Statement of the faith' which they had originally been taught. "The common faith" (Tit. 1:4) shows how this body of doctrine was shared by all believers; there was only "one faith" (Eph. 4:5). "The faith" and the name of Christ are connected in Acts 3:16. We have seen that the name of Christ is another name for the same teaching contained in "the faith". Both in matters of practice (1 Tim. 6:10) and doctrine (1 Tim. 4:1) Paul warned that some would "depart from the faith". The first stage in that apostasy would be to say that "the faith" was impossible to define.

MATTERS OF PRACTICE

Matters of practice were also part of this body of doctrine. "The faith in Christ" included reasoning about "righteousness, temperance and judgment to come" (Acts 24:24,25). Paul talks of the instructions about the breaking of bread as he does of the teaching concerning the resurrection: "I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you" (1 Cor. 11:23). There seem to have been a group of these practical things, which Paul later extended to include teaching about the place of sisters in the ecclesia: "Ye...keep the ordinances as I delivered them to you. But I would have you know that...the head of the woman is the man...." (1 Cor. 11:2,3). This indicates that the explanation of these things should be before baptism, and were part of the body of doctrine that was insisted on in the first century. The Greek for "ordinances" is also translated "tradition" in 2 Thes. 3:6 and 2:15:

"Withdraw...from every brother that walketh..not after the tradition which he received of us...stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by (inspired, prophetic) word, or our epistle". These show the vital importance of holding on to this body of teaching, and the need to separate from those who do not obey it: "Holding fast the faithful word (another description of this same corpus of doctrine) as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers" (Tit. 1:9).

We know there were "false prophets" in the early ecclesias, claiming to have had revelations from God about doctrine which should be added to the accepted body of teaching. Thus Paul stresses what are "faithful words" of inspired revelation of doctrine (Tit. 1:9; 3:8; 2 Tim. 2:11; 1 Tim. 4:9), which are "worthy of all acceptation" (1 Tim. 1:15; 4:9) - i.e. into the body of doctrine comprising "the faith". This is why John warned not to "Believe...every spirit" who claimed inspiration (1 Jn. 4:1).

SPECIFIC DETAILS

The following are some clear examples of where doctrines other than a simple 'belief in Christ' were taught as part of the basic Gospel which was to be understood before baptism:

- "God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my Gospel" (i.e. the one Paul preached; Rom. 2:16). The doctrine of the judgment seat and responsibility is therefore considered to be a 'first principle' - see also Acts 24:25; Heb. 6:1,2.

- The idea that circumcision was necessary for salvation was described by Paul as "another Gospel" (Gal. 1:6). Thus knowing that we should not keep the Law of Moses, e.g. the Sabbath, is part of understanding the true Gospel.

- "The Gospel of the Kingdom" is not only about Christ but also about his coming Kingdom; Is. 52:7 (cf. Rom. 10:15) describes the preacher of the Gospel speaking of the time when it can be said to Zion "Thy God reigneth"- i.e. in the Kingdom.

- The correct understanding of the 'finer points' of Christ's nature was a matter of fellowship (2 Jn. 7-10); because of this the Gospel involved the "things", plural, about Christ (Acts 8:12). Again, just saying we believe in Christ is not enough.

- The importance of the promises about the Kingdom is a vital part of the Gospel; it was through the promises that the Gospel was preached to Abraham (Gal. 3:8) and Israel (Heb. 4:2). Thus Paul spoke of his preaching about the promises made to David as "the word of this salvation" (Acts 13:23,26). They were therefore a vital part of the message of salvation. Thus he says: "We declare (same word translated 'preach' elsewhere) unto you good tidings (the Gospel) of the promise made unto the fathers" (Acts 13:32 R.V.). Similarly Rom. 1:1-4: "The Gospel of God...concerning His Son Jesus Christ, which was made of the seed of David".

To understand the promises requires a certain knowledge of the history of Israel. A study of Paul's preaching at Antioch in Acts 13 shows him outlining the history of Israel with special emphasis on the promises, stressing how they were fulfilled in Jesus. His preaching was thus based on the history of Israel, and was what we might call 'expositional', concluding with a warning of the consequences at the judgment of not responding to the word he was preaching (Acts 13:40,41). The content of our preaching should be similar.

CONCLUSIONS

The importance of all this cannot be over-emphasised. "Take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (1 Tim. 4:13-16). Lists of important doctrines like those given in Appendix 1 of this book are obviously not inspired, but in the writer's opinion it does seem a fair summary of many of the specific items mentioned in the Bible passages which speak of things which are part of "the faith", "the traditions" etc. This study hopefully has shown that there is a definite need for a body of doctrine which we all accept and are not slow to affirm our allegiance to. The contents of this body of doctrine should comprise our instruction of candidates for baptism, and it is only fair to them to check by way of discussion before their immersion that they fully understand what they have been taught. Frequently the believers were encouraged to cling to "the faith" in times of trouble. "The foundation of God standeth sure". Our familiarity with the first principles, with the marvellous way the full purpose of God holds together, should be an encouragement to us in itself. Only by our regular preaching or re-studying of these things will this benefit and deep sense of assurance be ours, so that like Paul in his hour of darkness and loneliness we can say: "I have finished my course, I have kept the faith...I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him (our life, our all) against that day" (2 Tim. 4:7; 1:12).

CONFESSING THE LORD JESUS

"If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Rom. 10:9).

The following points need to be made:

- To understand the resurrection of Christ involves a knowledge of Bible teaching about hell and the nature of man.

- Rom. 10:8,9 appear to be parallel with v.13: "For whosoever shall call upon (himself, Greek) the name of the Lord shall be saved". Paul is described as being baptised and thus calling upon himself the name of the Lord (Acts 22:16); only baptism gives us entrance into the name of the Lord (Mt. 28:19).

- Having stressed the importance of baptism a few chapters earlier in Romans 6, it is impossible that Paul would now teach that it was unnecessary for salvation in chapter 10.

- Rom. 10:9 is preceded by v.6-8: "Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven...Who shall descend into the deep?...But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach". "The word of (the) faith" was therefore what had to be confessed, and is parallel to "the Lord Jesus" in v.9. We have seen that "the faith" describes the whole body of doctrine which comprised the Gospel. Paul is quoting from Dt. 30:11-14: "This commandment which I command thee this day…it is not in heaven...neither is it beyond the sea ('the deep')...but the word is very nigh unto thee". He seems to interpret "the word...this commandment" as referring to Christ. In the same way that if Israel kept the word they would be blessed (Dt. 30:16), so if the new Israel believed in the word about Christ they would be saved. Confessing Christ with the mouth therefore corresponds to assenting to this teaching about Christ. "If thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord" (Dt. 30:10) is matched in Rom. 10:9: "If thou shalt confess with thy

mouth the Lord Jesus". This parallel again shows that "the Lord Jesus" is a title summarising the basic teaching of the word of God.

14-6 The Literality Of The Kingdom Of God

The very literal descriptions of the Kingdom found in the Old Testament prophets are often ridiculed by theologians and members of many denominations. It is claimed that the language is figurative of some place of reward other than the earth, seeing that this planet is going to be burnt up.

In answer to this, it must be understood that a ground rule of Bible study is that we should always take the Bible literally unless there is good reason to impose a spiritual interpretation. For example, the first verse of the book of Revelation informs us that the vision is largely symbolic (Rev. 1:1), which should guide us in our view of it. There is also a certain sense of aptness and realism in the use of language which can indicate whether or not a passage is to be read symbolically. Thus when we read of the earth staggering like a drunken man (Is. 24:20), it is obvious from the kind of language used that we are intended to read this symbolically. By contrast, the language used to describe the future Kingdom is very easy to understand literally; there is no hint that we should take it symbolically.

It would appear that due to men's inability to summon enough faith to believe that such a time really will come here on earth, they have devised theories which explain it away. Their alternative of a spiritual, or heaven-based kingdom, is vague and lacking in detail, therefore there is little to believe in, and little faith is either required or encouraged. If indeed the descriptions of lame people being cured, or deserts being made fertile, are only symbolic, then the question must be specifically and convincingly answered: 'Symbolic of what?" These passages are describing God's Kingdom. If we are unsure what exactly they are symbolic of, then we do not know the Gospel ('good news') about the Kingdom, and therefore cannot expect any place in it.

Further, it should be quite clear from all the evidence presented so far, that God has an eternal purpose with man upon this earth; He would not destroy the planet which He had promised to Abraham's seed for ever. We should therefore expect there to be literal descriptions in the Bible of the Kingdom which is to come upon the earth.

The following passages confirm this:-

- "God himself that formed the earth and made it; he has established it; he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited" (Isa. 45:18). The creation of earth will have been in vain if God destroys it; but, by contrast, it is God's purpose to inhabit it with immortal people.

- "The earth abides for ever" (Ecc.1:4).

- "He has also established them (the elements of the solar system) for ever and ever: he has made a decree which shall not pass" (Ps. 148:6).

And again, others have come to this same conclusion: "The Biblical promise is rather of 'a new heaven and a new earth' (Is. 66:22; Rev. 21:1). And the word which it uses for 'new', kainos rather than neos, implies the renewal or restoration of all things, rather than a fresh

start, as it were, on another site" John Robinson, Bishop of Woolwich, *On Being The Church In The World* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1960) p. 20.

14-7 Summary Of The History Of Israel

ABRAHAM was called out of Ur of the Chaldees; the first Jew. God made promises to him regarding the land of Canaan, and his seed. He died not having received these promises.

ISAAC. Abraham was prepared to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice. Because Abraham was faithful, God confirmed His promise to Abraham by an oath. Isaac's willingness to die in obedience to his father's command is a type of Christ. The promises were renewed to Isaac (Gen.26:3-5)

JACOB was Isaac's son. The promises were repeated to him too. He had 12 sons - Reuben was the eldest, Benjamin the youngest. Levi was the one from whom the priests descended. Joseph was the favourite.

JOSEPH . As a lad he had two dreams which depicted him as the ruler over his brethren. They became jealous, and sold him as a slave into Egypt. There he became a ruler, and organized the conservation of corn to be used during seven years of famine which afflicted the region. During this time, Jacob and his sons came to live with Joseph in Egypt. They and their descendants lived in Goshen, part of Egypt. A later Pharaoh persecuted the people of Israel, making them slaves.

MOSES was born at this time; he was hidden in bulrushes as a baby, and then found by Pharaoh's daughter and adopted by her. While a young man, he killed an Egyptian who was beating an Israelite. Moses then fled into Midian, where he worked for 40 years as a shepherd with Jethro. God then appeared to him in a burning bush. He was told to go to Pharaoh and demand deliverance for Israel. He did miraculous signs to prove that he was really sent from God. However, Pharaoh would not let Israel go, therefore ten plagues were sent upon Egypt, e.g. frogs, darkness, hail, and finally the killing of the firstborn males. The Israelites had to kill a lamb and sprinkle the blood on the door of their houses. This pointed forward to how the blood of Jesus can save us from death. This feast became known as the Passover.

EXODUS. The Israelites were at last allowed to leave Egypt. They travelled guided by God's Angel in a pillar of cloud in the daytime, and a pillar of fire by night. Pharaoh's army pursued them up to the Red Sea. The waters opened miraculously to let the people go through, and then the waters returned to drown the Egyptians. Israel then travelled through the wilderness towards the promised land of Canaan. God gave them water to drink from a rock, and bread in the form of manna was provided every morning. When they reached the mountain of Sinai, God gave them the ten commandments and the Law of Moses. They were then constituted God's Kingdom. They were commanded to make a special tent, called a tabernacle, in which God could be worshipped. They were given a High Priest and priests who could offer their sacrifices to God. All the elements of the tabernacle and priesthood pointed forward to Jesus.

THE PROMISED LAND was eventually approached. 12 spies were sent out, ten of whom returned saying that it was too difficult to possess the land of Canaan. The other two spies, Joshua and Caleb, said the truth - that the land could be possessed by them, if they had faith in God's promises. Because the people shared the attitude of the ten spies, Israel had to

wander in the wilderness for 40 years until all those who were over 20 when they left Egypt were dead.

JOSHUA was Moses' successor, and led Israel into the land of Canaan. The first city to be taken was Jericho, where Rahab lived, and then Ai. Once they were established in the land, they were ruled intermittently by JUDGES, although God was their real king. These included men like Gideon, Jephthah and Samson. They all delivered Israel from their enemies, when they repented of sinning against God. The history of Israel is full of examples of Israel being disobedient to God, being punished by invasions from neighbouring nations, repenting of their sins and God delivering them - and then sinning again. The last judge was Samuel. In his time, the people of Israel rejected God as their King by asking for a human king, like the nations around them.

THE KINGS. Their first king was Saul who, although starting well, turned out to be a wicked man, who was disobedient to God's commandments, and persecuted David. After his death, David became the next king, and was one of Israel's best. God made great promises to him. After him came his son Solomon who, after a good start, was turned away from the true faith by his many wives who he had taken from the surrounding nations. After his death the kingdom split into two - ten tribes formed the kingdom of Israel, initially under Jeroboam; the other two tribes, Judah and Benjamin, formed the kingdom of Judah, initially under Rehoboam, Solomon's son.

The Kingdom of Israel (the ten tribes) had no good kings. They were continually rebellious against God. He sent them many prophets to plead with them to repent, but they would not. Therefore the Assyrians invaded them, and took them away into captivity. They were scattered throughout the world.

The Kingdom of Judah (the 2 tribes) had a few good kings (e.g. Asa, Hezekiah), but they, too, were generally disobedient to God. The Babylonians were therefore sent to invade them, and took them into captivity in Babylon for 70 years. They never again had a king. After 70 years, some returned to the land of Israel under the leadership of Ezra, Nehemiah, Joshua (the High Priest at the time) and Zerubbabel the Governor. They were ruled over first by Persia, then by Greece, and finally by Rome. They were under Rome when Jesus was born. As a result of the Jews rejecting him, God sent the Romans to destroy Jerusalem in AD70, and eventually all Jews were expelled from the land of Israel.

In recent years, the Jews have started to return to the land, in partial fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecies. The revival of the State of Israel is a sure sign that soon Jesus will return to re-establish the Kingdom of Israel as the Kingdom of God.

14-8 The Destruction of Heavens and Earth

(Rev. 21:1; 2 Pet. 3:6-12)

God’s purpose being to establish His Kingdom here on earth, it is inconceivable that He would destroy this planet, and Study 3.3 has demonstrated that He has consistently promised not to do such a thing. The above references to the destruction of the heavens and earth must therefore be taken figuratively.
The passage from Peter is showing the similarities between the judgements on the earth at

Noah's time and what will happen at "the day of the Lord" in future. "The world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: but the heavens and the earth, which are now... are reserved unto fire against the day of judgment" (2 Pet. 3:6,7).
Peter is pointing a contrast between water being the agent of destruction at Noah's time, and fire which will be used at the second coming. "The heavens and the earth" of Noah's time were not literally destroyed - "all flesh" which was sinful was destroyed (Gen. 7:21 cf. 6:5,12). 'Heavens and earth' therefore refers to a system of things or of human organisation. It has been commented: ""Heaven and earth" is a Hebrew expression for "world"- there was no single Hebrew noun for 'world' until a relatively late period" (Raymond Brown, *New Testament Essays* (New York: Image Books, 1968 p. 300)). Those who misunderstand this passage tend to overlook the destruction of the 'heavens' which is spoken about. This cannot be taken literally - they are God's dwelling place (Ps. 123:1), where there is no sinfulness (Hab. 1:13; Ps. 65:4,5), and which declares God's glory (Ps. 19:1). If they refer to something figurative, so must the 'earth'.
The following passages demonstrate how 'heavens and earth' in other parts of the Bible are not to be taken literally, but refer rather to a system of things on the earth:
? "I beheld the earth, and, lo, it was without form, and void, and the heavens, and they had no light...For thus has the Lord said, The whole land (of Israel) shall be desolate...For this shall the earth mourn, and the heavens above be black" (Jer. 4:23-28). This is a prophecy of the judgements to come upon the 'heavens and earth' of the land and people of Israel, for which they (not the literal heaven and earth) would mourn.
? Moses had earlier addressed all Israel: "Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth" (Dt. 32:1). It is emphasised that there were two categories of people to whom he spoke: 1) "The elders of your tribes" and 2) "all the congregation of Israel" (Dt. 31:28,30). The elders would then equate with the 'heavens' and the ordinary people with the 'earth'.
? Isaiah opened his prophecy in similar style: "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth... Hear the word of the Lord, you rulers...give ear unto the law of our God, you people" (Is. 1:2,10). Again there is a parallel between the heavens and the rulers; and between the earth and the people.
? "He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge His people" of Israel (Ps. 50:4). This speaks for itself.
? "I will shake all nations...I will shake the heavens and the earth" (Hag. 2:7,21) likewise.
? "For my sword shall be bathed in heaven: behold, it shall come down upon Idumea...The sword of the Lord is filled with blood...for the Lord has ...a great slaughter in the land of Idumea" (Is. 34:5,6). 'Heaven' is here equated with Idumea; the previous prophecy that "all the host of heaven shall be dissolved" (Is. 34:4) therefore refers to the dissolution of Idumea.
? The heavens and earth mentioned as dissolving in Is. 13 refer to the people of Babylon. In a series of statements about Babylon we read that God "will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place...it shall be as the chased roe...they shall every man turn to his own people, and flee every one into his own land" (Is. 13:13,14). The fleeing away of the heavens and earth is thus paralleled with that of the people. Heb. 9:26 speaks of the "end of the world" as occurring in the first century A.D. - in the sense that the Jewish world was ending then.
With all this held firmly in mind, it is to be expected that New Testament references to a new heaven and earth at the return of Christ will refer to the new system of things which will be seen when the Kingdom of God is established.
Closer examination of 2 Pet. 3 confirms this. Having described how the present 'heavens and earth' will be ended, v. 13 continues: "Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness". This is quoting His (God's)

promise of Is. 65:17: “Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth”. The rest of Is. 65 goes on to describe this new system of things as being a perfect situation here on this earth: “Behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing...They shall not build and another inhabit...the child shall die an hundred years old (i.e. life-spans will be increased)...the wolf and the lamb shall feed together” (Is. 65:18-25).
These blessings are clearly relevant to God’s coming Kingdom on earth - the new ‘heavens and earth’ which will replace the present miserable set up.

14-9 With What Nature Are We Resurrected?

We have shown that eternal life and being changed to God’s nature are granted to the faithful after the judgment. Christ will firstly resurrect those responsible to his judgment, and then judge them after they have been gathered to him. Seeing that the reward of immortal nature is given at the judgment, it follows that all those who are raised have mortal nature first of all. If they are raised with immortal bodies, then there is no reason for a judgment seat at which to dispense the rewards.
We enter the Kingdom of God straight after the judgment seat (Mt. 25:34); the faithful are therefore not in God’s Kingdom before the judgment. “Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God (so)...we shall all be changed...For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality” (1 Cor. 15:50,51,53). It follows that this change of nature, from mortal to immortal, occurs at the judgment seat, seeing that is where we enter the Kingdom.
However, the inspired apostle Paul often speaks of “the resurrection” in the sense of “the resurrection of life” - the resurrection of the righteous, who will then receive eternal life after judgment. He understood, of course, “that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust” (Acts 24:15). He would have been aware that the responsible “shall come forth (from the grave); they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation” (Jn. 5:29).
In his positive way, Paul seems to have often referred to this “resurrection of life” when he speaks of “the resurrection”. The righteous come out of their graves “unto the resurrection of life” - after emerging from the earth they will be judged and then given eternal life. This whole process is “the resurrection of life”. There is a difference between their “coming forth” from the grave, and “the resurrection of life”. Paul speaks of his striving to live the Christian life, “if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead” (Phil. 3:11). Because he was responsible he will be raised to give account at the judgment in any case; that he strove to “attain unto the resurrection” must therefore mean that “the resurrection” here refers to the “resurrection of life”.
Other examples of “the resurrection” meaning the “resurrection of life” (cf. Lk. 14:14) include Lk. 20:35; Jn. 11:24; 1 Cor. 15:21,42; Heb. 11:35; Rev. 20:6. In Ps. 17:15 David speaks of receiving his reward the moment he “awakes”. He had the same view of the resurrection, although he knew there would be a judgment. The usage of this phrase, “the resurrection”, like this in 1 Cor. 15 helps explain 1 Cor. 15:52 - “the dead shall be raised incorruptible”. It is noteworthy that the phrase “the dead” sometimes (and especially in 1 Cor. 15) refers to the righteous dead, who will be raised to receive eternal life at the judgment: 1 Cor. 15:13,21,35,42; 1 Thes. 4:16; Phil. 3:11; Rev. 14:13; 20:5,6.
1 Thes. 4:16,17 lists the events associated with Christ’s return.
1. Christ visibly returns
2. The dead are raised
3. The responsible who are alive at the time will be snatched away to judgment

The granting of eternal life is after this gathering together (Mt. 25:31-34; 13:41-43); therefore immortality cannot be given at the resurrection, seeing that this precedes the gathering together. We have shown that all the righteous will be rewarded at the same moment (Mt. 25:34; Heb 11:39 40). This would be impossible if immortality was granted at the resurrection, seeing that the resurrection precedes the gathering together of the living responsible.
It should be noted, however, that our conception of time is very human; God is not bound by it at all. It is possible to go too far in trying to work out a specific chronology of events which will occur around the time of Christ's return. The resurrection and our change to immortality at the judgment seat are described as occurring "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye" (1 Cor.15:51,52). It is a common Biblical principle that each of those responsible to the judgment will give an account of their lives at the judgment seat. The Bible teaches that eternal life will be granted at the judgment seat rather than the resurrection. For this reason 1 Thes. 4:17 speaks of the righteous being called away to the judgment by a trumpet blast, whilst 1 Cor. 15:52 speaks of the same trumpet being associated with their being given immortality. This also explains why Paul thought of the resurrection as identical with acceptance at the judgment seat (e.g. Phil. 1:23).

14-10 British Israelism Considered

14-10-1 H.W. Armstrong's "Britsh Israelism"

14-10-2 The Brit-Am / Yair Davidiy Movement- Are Australians One Of The Lost Ten Tribes?

14-10-3 Are The Jewish People Ethnically Pure?

14-10-1 H.W. Armstrong's "Britsh Israelism"

The Claims Of 'British Israelism'
The idea has been put forward by the likes of H.W.Armstrong that the promises to Abraham have been fulfilled in the British and American peoples, who, it is claimed, are the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh. Members of the 'British Israelite' movement believe that the kings and queens of England are descended through the line of Judah which began with king David. In order to justify their theories, they have had to conclude that the Jews have been rejected as God's people and the British peoples chosen instead.

If the reasoning of Study 3 has been followed, it should be apparent that Biblically these claims are in no way justifiable. The following are just a few of the many additional points which could be made:

- All human beings are equally under the curse of sin (Rom.3:23), and therefore Christ died to enable people from all nations to have the opportunity of salvation. Whatever national background we are from is irrelevant if we have been baptized into Christ and become part of spiritual Israel (Gal.3:27-29). We have been commanded to preach the Gospel to all nations, baptizing those individuals who believe it (Mark 16:15,16); thus the new Israel is comprised of people from all nations, not just the British.

- It is very difficult to prove the origin of the British and American peoples; they are a mixture of people from many parts of the world. Just because someone was born in those countries does not mean that they are God's chosen people.

- British Israelites claim that the blessings promised to Abraham's seed have been fulfilled in the British peoples, regardless of their obedience to God. This runs contrary to the repeated principle that the blessings of God are conditional on obedience. The whole of Lev.26 and Dt.28 outline the blessings which would come upon Israel if they were obedient to His word, and the curses which would result from their disobedience. To claim that God has given Britain these blessings regardless of their obedience to His word, and often in the face of their distinct disobedience to it, surely does violence to the terms on which God offers these blessings.

- The implication that God has cast off His people of Israel and replaced them with the British flies in the face of passages like Rom.11:1,2: "Hath God cast away His people? God forbid. For I (Paul) also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham...God hath not cast away His people which He foreknew".

- The Kingdom of God was the Kingdom of Israel in the past (2 Chron.9:8). It was overturned because of their disobedience, but the Kingdom will be re-established (Ez.21:25-27). The Kingdom will return to Jerusalem (Mic.4:8) when Jesus reigns there on David's throne (Lk.1:32

- The presently scattered people of Israel are to be regathered from the various parts of the earth where they have been scattered: "I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone...and bring them into their own land; and I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel" (Ez.37:21,22). This is being fulfilled in the form of the natural Jews returning to their land; its complete fulfilment will be in the Kingdom, which Israel's present return to the land indicates must soon come.

The Brit-Am / Yair Davidiy Movement- Are Australians One Of The Lost Ten Tribes?

Yair Davidiy in his books *Origin: You Too Are From Israel* and *Ephraim: The Gentile Children Of Israel* makes the claim that the Anglo-Saxon peoples are the lost ten tribes of Israel. His reasoning differs from Armstrongism, but seeing his views are increasingly popular and have the appearance of academic integrity, we feel we have to make a comment.

We've chosen to mainly just analyze his statements that Australians are Israelites. Our concern is particularly with his research process, and it is this which we wish to critique, as what we say in this area could be repeated on every other claim he makes.

Yair repeatedly makes the equation: Australia = "the land of Sinim" of Isaiah 49:12. Stones found in Australia have Phoenician writing on them, he claims, which mentioned "Yahweh". Source- some unheard of local newspaper ["Maggies Farm"] in rural Queensland, of which we see no mention on the internet at all. The source of primary evidence is thus both obscure, and impossible to verify. There is a rock music radio station in Queensland called "Maggie's Farm" according to the internet, maybe Yair is referring to that. For that to be at all validly researched there would have to be a) dating of the rocks. If Yair had done that, or if someone had done it, well, the reference would be natural to give. There's none b) Evidence the form of Phoenician matches a certain era of Phoenician language in history, to establish the date [as languages are all dynamic]. c) The obvious objection that these are stone monuments of the type Aborigines created all over Australia would have to be

deconstructed- e.g. 'Well THESE monuments are SO different to any the Aborigines did'... etc etc. d) Why can nobody show the actual mention of the word “Yahweh” in the inscriptions? If, as Yair claims, Israelites started going to Australia after 600 B.C., isn’t it rather strange that they would use *ha shem*, the Name, so glibly? And why are the inscriptions supposedly in Phoenician and not Hebrew?

Yair quotes Barry Fell as a specialist who proved that Phoenicians went to Australia. According to http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barry_Fell Fell was no specialist in Australian origins, his supposed work on their history isn't even quoted there in his academic summary, rather he wrote about native Americans, even though actually he was a biologist at Harvard and not an ethnographer at all; but got into serious problems for unprofessional twisting of primary data relating to native American inscriptions, and resigned from academic life- can't Yair find someone more credible to quote?

Yair quotes "Rex Gilroy" as an authority who has a Phoenician inscription in his "museum" in Tamworth NSW . There appears to be no such museum. You can search the net yourself on "Rex Gilroy" and see what sort of 'authority' he is... seems he has a few things in his home he shows visitors. We don't call that a "museum". If you poke around online you can see the inscriptions- and they are typical Aboriginal inscriptions. OK I am not an expert of course on Australian ethnic archaeology, but when serious research debunks the people quoted, and when they are falsely made out to be authoritative, I have a problem. I don't mean 'experts must be right'. Not at all- look how many scientists are utterly wrong re evolution! What I mean is that any claim made must be backed up by verifiable evidence, and when that "evidence" is provided by non-specialists who pose as specialists, and is carefully debunked by people who are specialists... well for me that obviously is significant. It's the process of research, however, which is my concern. If Yair's hermeneutic and research pattern was solid, e.g. serious presentation of sources, not making major but unsupported and unreferenced claims in some areas, considering the obvious counter-arguments before arriving at a conclusion and offering it to others to accept, then the objections of the specialists could be re-worked and re-considered. But Yair simply doesn't do this- he makes wild claims, contradicting a lot of evidence, quoting unverifiable sources or sources which simply lack integrity, and then presents his claims as hard, researched fact. And he presents a map showing Australia as the "land of Sinim"- a map which has absolutely no basis for that identification, because it's produced by Yair himself or his publisher.

Of course he tries to cover himself at times- e.g. "According to the Latin Vulgate translation *the intention is* that they will return "from Australia"... the Hebrews had knowledge of Australia". [pp. 88,89 , *Ephraim*]. "The intention is..." ? Well the Vulgate speaks of the land of the South, following a Jewish *interpretation* rather than *translation*, but every Biblical reference to that phrase is not to Australia but to Egypt. "The intention is... "- well, in Yair's mind, yes, but I am sure the Vulgate translators were not "intending" a reference to Australia when they did it in AD400 [at the latest]. I'm sure they had no clue where Australia is, it would've been unknown to them.

Yair says, in claiming to interpret the Bible and prove Australia is mentioned in it, "One Midrashic source implies..." . Well Jewish Midrash contains interesting stuff, but it's not an authority at all. And we're told "it implies..."? Why not give the quote from the Midrash referred to, so we can decide for ourselves whether it "implies" what he says it does? It's like saying 'A commentary on the Bible I have here on my shelf implies that verse A means B, so, there you are, that is evidence". Sorry, to me there is something basically the matter here.

As to the claim that Isaiah referred to Australia when he spoke of the "land of Sinim". How does Yair know what was in Isaiah's mind. Did Isaiah know of Australia? "Sinim" appears to be a plural of "Sinai", i.e. the area of Mount Sinai. "Sinim" is simply *not* the Hebrew word for "the south". Anyone with a concordance or basic knowledge of Biblical Hebrew can check that out. Yet Yair claims: "Sinim is an Ancient Hebrew term for Australia". Sorry, it isn't. He gives no evidence for his claim at all. How come every available Hebrew dictionary, concordance, lexicon, doesn't agree? I return to my issue of process. If Yair can make this blanket claim, knowing every authority is against him, well, why would he think that? Where's the evidence? The usual process would be to say: A,B, C etc. deny this- but they're wrong, here's why [evidence presented]. I say *this* because of *that* and *this* evidence [and present your case].

And, quite simply, Australia was the homeland of the Aborigines and not the Anglo Saxons. Even today due to more recent immigration from Asia, far less than 50% of Australians are ethnically Anglo Saxon. Are the Aborigines, then, also ethnic Jews? There seems a huge logical fallacy going on here. The Jews, we're told by Yair, went on expeditions to Australia and knew the place from 600 BC. Strangely, in a culture with such a rich written historical legacy, this was unrecorded by them. But does that therefore make the inhabitants of Australia, Jewish? Over the last few centuries, Australia has been colonized and inhabited by people from about every nation on earth. By reason of living in a country that was allegedly visited by Jews over two millennia ago, does that make those people 'Jewish'? How is ethnicity affected by the visit of Jewish people to a country?

The Root Fallacy

Another difficulty I have with Yair's process is his constant claims regarding root meanings of Hebrew and other words. Thus: "the name Sambation was understood to be another form of the term Sabbath" (*Ephraim* p. 100). Understood by whom? Why no reference to back that up? Because two words superficially sound the same is irrelevant. As has been noted elsewhere: "Easy access to Hebrew lexicons lead many Bible students to look up a word, then look at it's root, and decide that the root is therefore the meaning- especially if it fits in to their idea of what the passage under study should mean! But this isn't a true way of analyzing language. Words with different meanings can have the same root. Take the words 'unity' and 'uniformity'. Sadly, these two words are confused all too often in Christian churches- e.g., 'To create unity in the church, everyone must come to the breaking of bread meeting uniformly dressed, all wearing a certain kind of clothing'. No, 'unity' and 'uniformity' are two quite different things; and yet they come from the same root word, 'uno'." - http://www.aletheiacollege.net/mm/4-7-A_How_To_Interpret_The_Bible.htm . Yair on almost every few pages repeats this root word fallacy- p. 101 has it a few times on the same page.

Name Dropping

Yair quotes Bochart's "Sacred geography". Seeing this book is referred to by many writers as evidence that Russia=Gog / Ros, I tried *very* hard to locate this once, seeing that it was my impression they were just name dropping. Being then a member of the RGS [Royal Geographical Society] I did locate one of the very few originals, in the RGS Library up near Buckingham Palace. It's in Latin, has never been translated to English, and I very much doubt Yair ever got hold of it and read it. The original was so frail they let me open a few pages and read them [with my limited Latin] but only under their watchful eye lest I damage the original. So to me, that's just name dropping to reference it- and he gives the date of the edition as 1692, published in Frankfurt. I am almost certain he never read that original edition. He'd be hard put to get his hands on one! And, sorry, but the edition published in Frankfurt was in 1674- http://www.smitskamp.nl/644-RAR.HTM . If all these conclusions are rooted in well researched solid fact, then why resort to name dropping? That he's name dropping is again shown when he states that the word "Scotti", used by the Scots in the UK, is from a Hebrew word. And he references Bochart for reference [*Ephraim* p. 101, note 20]. When we turn to page 111 to see note 20, we read simply "Bochartus". OK, what page? If he had really gotten hold of that book and read it in Latin, then he'd have made so much effort for sure he'd give the page number! Of course it happens you read an old, hard to access author quoted in a more modern one. As Yair ought to know, the way to proceed is to say "Bochart, as quoted in [author, title, publisher, date, page]". Why the lack of transparency?

14-10-3 Are The Jewish People Ethnically Pure?

The idea that the so called Israelite peoples are a distinct ethnic group differing radically from others seems to me to be flawed by the simple fact that there are virtually no ethnically pure groups on earth today. When Yair Davidiy claims [without any serious evidence] that "the Danes" are Israelite because of the verbal similarity with the tribe of "Dan", this implies that actually the "Danes" aren't ethnically Scandinavian but Semitic. That proposition is ridiculous. Further, the implication seems to be that whoever lives in Denmark is also a "Dane" and therefore also Semitic- because so many tribes moved around and came to live in Denmark over the past few millennia. But these theories presuppose that the original Jewish

or Israelite tribes who supposedly moved to Denmark and Anglo-Saxon countries were themselves pure. A brief review of their history shows this is far from the case:

- Abraham, father of the Israelite peoples, was not an inhabitant of the land we now know as Israel. He was from far away, in modern day Iraq.

- Isaac and Jacob both took wives from tribes who were the forefathers of the Arabs. God reminds Israel of this later: "Your father was an Amorite, and your mother a Hittite" (Ez. 16:3,45)- as if to say 'Listen Israel, ethnically you're really no different from the surrounding Arabic tribes'. It is following the *faith* of Abraham which makes people his children, rather than fleshly descent (Rom. 4:12-16; Gal. 3:7-9). Hence Paul's comment: "They are not all Israel who are of Israel" (Rom. 9:6).

- Some of the children of Jacob were by his servant girls, who were also ethnically 'Arabic' rather than 'Israelite'

- Joseph married an Egyptian, Asenath- Ephraim and Manasseh his sons were half Egyptian.

- The community which left Egypt and journeyed to Canaan included a very large "mixed multitude" (Ex. 12:38, Heb. 'a mongrel people'). However there was no ethnic distinction made between them and the descendants of Jacob, neither in the Law of Moses nor in any social legislation. They were assimilated.

- Repeatedly, Biblical history laments how the children of Jacob intermarried with the local Canaanite tribes and surrounding nations.

- Solomon's mother was an Ammonitess. Yet he was in the royal line. Other kings also had Gentile mothers.

- In captivity in Babylon, the Jews quickly assimilated, adopting paganic Babylonian names. Only a minority of them returned to the land under Ezra and Nehemiah, and even these were characterized by marriage with non-Jews, to the point that their children couldn't speak Hebrew (Ezra 10 etc.).

- Much research has been done to investigate why despite the small number who returned from Babylon, by the time of Christ a few centuries later, the population of Palestine had increased so many fold. It's apparent that there was large scale immigration into Palestine of various groups who assimilated with the Jews.

- Throughout the past 2000 years, the 'Jewish' people have continued to follow a pattern of assimilation and intermarriage, persecution, separation, acceptance, assimilation...

This brief summary shows that the Jewish people are far from ethnically pure- in fact they have experienced far more dilution of their ethnicity than most other races! What is clear is that being 'Jewish', being the children of faithful Abraham, is a matter of faith and spiritual culture rather than genetics or blood ethnicity. That's why modern Israel includes black Africans, Chinese, Filipinos, Americans, pale skinned, blonde, blue eyed Scandinavians... all wearing skull caps and claiming to be Jews. That simple fact shows that the Jews simply aren't ethnically pure, and to claim that all those nations of origin are somehow legitimately 'Israelite' is therefore a genetical and ethnological fallacy.

It follows from all this that God counts people as His Israel on bases other than genetic purity. At the time of the exile, the few Jews left in the land complained that because Abraham had posession of the land, therefore they too should have such possession (Ez. 33:23,24)- and God said that this was wrong reasoning. They did not follow the steps of their father Abraham, therefore they could not claim to be His seed. The New Testament comment that "they are not all Israel who are of Israel" (Rom. 9:6) was true in Old Testament times too. This theme of being counted as Israel without being genetically pure is witnessed many times in the genealogies of 1 Chron. 1-9. The context of those records was perhaps to comfort the returned exiles who couldn't prove their ancestry- they were still "Israel" even if there had been inter-marriage in Babylon. And there are other examples of this kind of thing. Take Caleb as an example. He was a Gentile (Num. 32:13; Josh. 15:17; Jud. 1:13; Gen. 36:11); and yet in Num. 13:6; 34:19 his descendants are incorporated into the tribe of Judah. Or reflect upon Samuel, an Ephraimite (1 Sam. 1:1), counted as a Levite (1 Chron. 6:16-28). Indeed it would appear that 'genealogies' in the Bible very often reflect themes of associations rather than being literal accounts of blood descent.

The fact many Jewish rabbis assume Jewish genetic roots are pure doesn't mean that they are. An often quoted Rabbinic maxim is that "When the Holy One, blessed be He, causes His Shekinah to rest, it is only upon the families of pure birth in Israel" (1). Yet the Hebrew scriptures are clear enough that no Israelite is "of pure birth". Frequently the Mishnah and later Rabbinic writings have warned against marriage of Jews to non-Jews, lest ethnic and genetic purity be lost. Yet the fact is, Jews have already intermarried hopelessly. The Biblical warnings against marriage out of the faith are in order that the Jew would not go and serve other gods- there is no interest in preserving cultural or genetic purity. And our own position against Christians marrying unbelievers should be likewise motivated.

Notes

(1) As quoted and referenced in Marshall Johnson, *The Purpose Of The Biblical Genealogies* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2002) p. 87.

14-11 A Message For Former Jehovah's Witnesses

Our intention isn't to persuade anyone to leave one religion / denomination and join another... that strikes us as primitive. The Lord Jesus Christ never really set out to start a denomination, He was as He was, and individuals followed Him and perceived in Him the Son of God and eternal Saviour of all those who believed in Him. And in essence, that's who He continues to be today. Of course, we must ensure that we are understanding Him correctly, for we can't have a good relationship with someone we misunderstand or grossly misinterpret. The sad example of mainstream Christianity, and the glaring contradictions between it and the Bible (both practically and theologically) have left many people open to the approach of the Watchtower. For they come into our lives with an appeal to get back to the Bible alone, to search for truth and fearlessly reject human traditions... and that in itself is no bad approach. Probably most readers have said "Yes! Agreed!" to this approach. But... then we find ourselves asked to take on board a whole package of teaching which tends to make us a slave to an organization, and our initial hunger for truth becomes replaced by obedience to a human group. Some throw themselves wholeheartedly into this, and become addicted to religion rather than to the personal following of the Lord Jesus. They eagerly fill up "time reports", agonizing over whether to count the time spent from leaving their door to returning home as "witnessing" time... or whether it's just time spent actually "on the doors" that should be

noted... others by all means try to get enough hours in so they can be baptized... others sit in McDonalds drinking coffee and notch this up as "street witnessing"... And then, sooner or later, serious inconsistencies appear between the beliefs and practices of our fellow Jehovah's Witnesses, and what we know the Bible to teach. Some repress these doubts and questions, leading to deeply unhappy and unresolved lives, for all the good appearances they put on at the Kingdom Hall. Others eventually face up to reality and break out of their religious addiction. And then the problems really start. People quitting one addiction tend to turn to another- be it alcohol, or finding yet another religion or set of beliefs to which they devote themselves. It's most definitely not our purpose to give you another "religion" to throw yourself into. We're here to provide you with material which will help you decide what's good and what's bad about the beliefs you picked up from the WTBS. Only you can make that set of decisions. All we urge you to do is to not give up! For there is God, there is His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who died for you; and the Bible really is God's word. God's Kingdom really will come on earth, the Lord Jesus really will return, there is the hope of eternal life in Christ. Your association with the Watchtower is, we're sure, a significant town along the road in your journey there, a step up the ladder. It was, an experience which under God's loving hand and plan for you isn't just wasted time. For nothing is ultimately wasted when God is in our life, not even our sins, our misunderstandings, our poor decisions... God works through all these.

A Personal Action Plan

No use crying over spilt milk. In any process of grieving, there's a danger of being caught up on one of the stages in that process. This leads to unbalanced lives, unresolved anger and dysfunction in many parts of our lives and relationships. This is why so many former Jehovah's Witnesses struggle with addictions, with broken lives, withdrawal into themselves... But there is a better way. Get a grip, and consider our suggested personal action plan for former Jehovah's Witnesses...

1) Pray to God for guidance into a deeper relationship with Him and to reveal His true way to you from His word, the Bible. And of course, keep praying through all the stages below! If you wish, contact us at info {at} carelinks.net for a prayer partner who will simply pray with you through all the stages of the action plan- not giving any pressure about anything, but just someone you can be in touch with and who will pray for you and with you.

2) Recognize that you have been religiously addicted, manipulated and abused

3) Admit that you are powerless of yourself to put yourself back on track- you need God's grace to help you

4) Decide which teachings of the Watchtower / WTBS you are going to reject, accept or accept with some modifications (see below for guidance on this).

5) Think prayerfully, Biblically and carefully about the need for baptism or re-baptism. Not into any church or denomination, but simply into the Lord Jesus Christ. For more information about re-baptism, see here

6) If you would like to be re-baptized, there are local world-wide representatives of Carelinks Ministries, speaking many languages, who would be delighted to help you do this.

Truly and sincerely, may God bless you as you work through these stages!

Here's a checklist to help you work through the various beliefs and practices which you've been taught:

WTBS Doctrine / teaching	Further reading	Position of Ministries
God is one and not a Trinity	http://www.realchrist.info	Agree
Jesus as a pre-existent Angel	http://www.realchrist.info	Disagree
The devil as a personal being	http://www.realdevil.info	Disagree
The Bible is inspired and must be accepted as authoritative	here	Agree
WTBS publications must also be accepted as authoritative	here	Disagree
Jehovah's Witnesses have replaced Israel as God's witnesses	http://www.exjw.org.uk/isra2.html	Disagree
Blood transfusions are wrong	http://www.exjw.org.uk/blood.html	Disagree
Hell is the grave	here	Agree
Death is unconsciousness- no immortal soul	here	Agree
The Kingdom will be established on earth- no going to Heaven on death	here	Agree
The coming / parousia / presence of Christ is invisible and began in 1914	http://www.exjw.org.uk/parou.html	Disagree
The 144,000 refer to Watchtower elders	http://www.exjw.org.uk/rev7.html	Disagree
The New World Translation is the true Bible translation to be used	http://www.exjw.org.uk/nwt.html	Disagree
Rejection of politics	here	Agree
Breaking bread only for some, and only once a year	here	Disagree
Jehovah is the only acceptable form of God's name	http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yahweh	Disagree

14-12 Have The Promises To Abraham Been Fulfilled?

The New Testament presents the promises to Abraham as being the Old Testament version of the Gospel (Gal. 3:8). The New Testament begins with the statement that the Lord Jesus is the seed of Abraham (Mt. 1:1). Preterism and various denominations hold that the promises to Abraham were fulfilled in his lifetime and in the subsequent blessing of Israel his seed. This is indeed the case- but there are significant reasons to believe that these fulfilments were only partial fulfilments and not the only fulfillment. The words of promise came to Abraham as prophecy, prophetic words spoken forth from God. There was a simple way to check out the credentials of a prophet: "When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken: the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously, thou shalt not be afraid of him" (Dt. 18:22). But how could this be, if prophets spoke of things to be fulfilled well beyond their lifetimes? My suggestion is therefore that all prophecies had an initial, primary fulfillment, which was visible in their own lifetime; and these primary fulfilments were the reassurance that the ultimate fulfillment would surely come. Abraham's a classic case; and the promises to David about a "son" and the Kingdom of that son were fulfilled to a limited extent in Solomon, although the New Testament makes it clear that their main fulfillment was to be in Jesus. So all the arguments that the promises to Abraham were fulfilled have merit so far as they go. But there's no evidence presented that these were the only possible fulfilments of those promises.

Abraham was invited to walk around the land of Canaan, in faith that this land would one day be personally his for ever. He therefore lived as a stranger and foreigner in it: "By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed to go out unto a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he became a sojourner in the land of promise, as in a land not his own, dwelling in tents, with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for the city which hath the foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. 11:8-10). Note the language of *inheritance*, being "heirs". Something was promised which they didn't then receive. Heb. 11:13,14 are crystal clear: "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things make it manifest that they are seeking after a country of their own". "Not having received the promises" seems more than clear. Acts 7:5 says the same: "[God] gave [Abraham] none inheritance in [the land], no, not so much as to set his foot on: and [yet] he promised that he would give it to him in possession". But God keeps His promises, and Heb. 11:39,40 explains how this will happen: "These all, having had witness borne to them through their faith, received not the promise, God having provided some better thing concerning us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect". The receiving of the promise would occur when all the faithful receive it together, at the same time. Receiving the promise is paralleled with being "made perfect". This will happen when all the faithful together, at the same time, enter into God's Kingdom at Christ's return. "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats . . . Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world . . . And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal." (Mt. 25:31,32,34,46). The sheep go into the Kingdom together, at the same time. The sheep haven't yet been separated from the goats, the wheat and weeds are growing together until judgment day. Mt. 7:21,22 likewise speak of entering into the Kingdom at judgment day: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven".

Whatever primary application these passages may have had to AD70, the Kingdom of God is clearly not fully established- for "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption" (1 Cor. 15:50). The Kingdom will be fully established at Christ's return. The image vision of Daniel 2 makes this clear. When human history has run its course, then the stone comes to earth and establishes the eternal Kingdom of God upon earth. Thus Paul speaks of "the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the living and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom" (2 Tim. 4:1). In this sense, the Kingdom of God is the "inheritance" of the believers. It's not fully in our possession now- we are "*heirs* of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him" (James 2:5). Sinners "shall not *inherit* the kingdom of God" (Gal. 5:21). This language of inheritance goes back to the promises to Abraham and his children of eternal *inheritance* of the earth. Those promises haven't yet been fulfilled- we will all receive them together, at the same time (Heb, 11:39,40) when we are "made perfect". When we read that "For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 1:10-11), this is language which could've been used to Abraham; for the promises to him were in essence saying the same. The entrance into the Kingdom is yet future. This is "that blessed hope" of which Paul writes; the whole language of "hope" which fills the New Testament is hard to understand if the hope has already been fulfilled. As we know and see

all around us, "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only so, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for our adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. For by hope were we saved: but hope that is seen is not hope: for who hopeth for that which he seeth? But if we hope for that which we see not, then do we with patience wait for it" (Rom. 8:22-25). Patiently waiting for what we so hope for... this isn't the language of promises of the Kingdom which have already been fulfilled.

Whilst some aspects of the promises to Abraham were fulfilled, a closer reflection reveals that not all of them were fulfilled completely:

1. The promised land was from the "river of Egypt [the Nile] to the Euphrates" (Gen. 15:18). The nation of Israel never occupied this complete territory.
2. Abraham personally was promised the land *for ever* (Gen. 13:15- to you *and* to your seed, for ever). This personal promise has never been fulfilled (Acts 7:5; Heb. 11:8,13). The land which Abraham personally walked through was to be his for ever (Gen. 13:17). "To you *and* to your seed... for ever" occurs again in Gen. 17:8. It was promised to Abraham personally, as his personal eternal inheritance.

3. Joshua brought about an initial fulfillment of the promises but not a full one, "For if Jesus [Joshua] had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day. There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God" (Heb. 4:8,9).

If the promises to Abraham have already been fulfilled, then a few worrying and sad deductions present themselves:

- Seeing Abraham didn't receive the fulfillment of the promises in his lifetime, either God doesn't keep His promises and the whole basis of the Gospel isn't secure at all, or he received them somehow at his death. This latter view not only contradicts the New Testament statements that Abraham hadn't received what God promised him [at least by the time the New Testament was written], but also supposes conscious survival of death. This is contrary to Bible teaching as I've tried to outline in chapter 4 of "Bible Basics".

- If the promises have been fulfilled in the experience of believers today, then "If in this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men most pitiable" (1 Cor. 15:19). But Paul goes on in that context to reason that the Christian hope is of the resurrection of the body at Christ's return, and inheritance of the Kingdom then.

14-13 Predestination And Freewill: “Is life predestined?”

I’m sure we’ve all had moments where we look at ourselves, where we are, what we’re doing, where geographically we’re now situated, what we believe, how we’ve travelled in life’s journey... and had the very strong sense that there is some higher hand in our lives. So many meetings, situations, coincidences- couldn’t have been mere chance. God was there, far over and above our own efforts, working through even our failings, and those of others, to do us good in our latter end.
And yet if we take this too far, we end up passive, thinking that what shall happen shall happen. That whatever we do, all the same, our fate and destiny will happen to us anyway. “Islam”- meaning ‘submission’- has taken this to its ultimate term. Grace, forgiveness,

personal spirituality go out of the window, compared to the need to merely submit to the will of God. The Bible time and again teaches that personal behaviour is crucial; that we can alter our own destiny by faith and the works which are part of that faith- for faith without works is dead (James 2:17). There are conditions set for salvation- belief in the Gospel, response in baptism (Mk. 16:16). We must consciously decide for God and His grace as it is in Jesus; for there is no other Name apart from His in which we can be saved (Acts 4:12). We are His friends if we keep His commandments (Jn. 15:14).

And yet, again, if we go too far along this track of thinking, we end up with salvation being by works, by steel willed self control, rather than God's grace to us who are fallen sinners. And without doubt the Bible teaches that salvation is by grace through faith, "and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8). And not all men "have faith" (2 Thess. 3:2). Some just 'don't get it'. And the fact we do (after a fashion) isn't due to our intellectual prowess nor any inherent righteousness in us that isn't in the guy next to us.

To bring together these two strands- of salvation by pure grace, and yet the need for conscious human response to God's grace- is perhaps impossible. We can find no trite form of words nor smart 'quick explanation' in a Question Box which encases these two profound realities. But Paul does come to our help in Romans when he starts writing about predestination. But of course he doesn't just pull down a new leaf on his scroll and start writing about these things out of context with the rest of Romans. He has been arguing throughout that salvation is by grace and not of works; and he finds himself up against the Jewish mindset that 'We were chosen, others weren't'. And so he speaks of predestination in the context of demonstrating that salvation is indeed by grace and not works. If it were by works alone, then there would be no need for any concept of calling ["election"] nor predestination. But the fact that God does operate such concepts- Jacob was chosen rather than Esau before the twins were even born (Rom. 9:13,14)- is in fact a proof of His grace. Paul had begun Romans, as he did so many of his letters, by reminding his readers that both they and he had been "called" (Rom. 1:1,7). We cannot deny that we have been "called". For the call is in the Gospel. If you hear the Gospel, you are called. If I call out to a man across the street "Hey you, come over here and share my sandwiches!", he cannot walk on by thinking that I didn't call him to eat my sandwiches. He heard. He was called.

We have heard the Gospel of the Kingdom. We are called. Therefore we were predestinated to be in God's purpose (Rom. 8:30; 9:24). Now we have freewill, of course, and can fight against God's will to save us, or kid ourselves that we never heard. But His will is to save us. Exactly why He called you and not someone else is the mystery of grace. It wasn't because you were better. It was because this was the method God used to articulate His grace. And the end product of this is humility and zealous response on our part. There is a fatal fascination with the question of why some weren't called. But who are we as the clay to argue with the potter's grace? John's Gospel closes by addressing this question. Peter was following Jesus, walking behind Him, in response to Jesus' command to follow Him. But John was also following Jesus, and Peter turned around, turned back from following Jesus [just as he lost his focus on Jesus when he was walking on the water towards Jesus]... to notice John was also following. "Peter therefore seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me" (Jn. 21:19-23). The fate of others, the nature of their following or not of Jesus, is not [in this

sense] directly our concern; our focus must be upon single-mindedly following Jesus as we by grace have been called to do. For we can be assured from the whole Biblical record that "the judge of all the earth shall do right" (Gen. 18:25); we should be relieved that actually the ultimate judgment of earths' billions is actually not in our hands at all.

14-14 Universal Resurrection?

Will There be a Universal Resurrection?

The Resurrection of the Responsible

Whether or not someone will be raised depends on whether they are responsible to the judgment. The basis of our judgment will be how we have responded to our knowledge of God's word. Christ explained: "He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him - the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day" (Jn. 12:48). Those who have not known or understood the word of Christ, and therefore had no opportunity to accept or reject him, will not be accountable to the judgment. "As many as have sinned without (knowing God's) law, will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law (i.e. knowing it), will be judged by the law" (Rom. 2:12). Thus those who have not known God's requirements will perish like the animals; whilst those who knowingly break God's law need to be judged, and therefore raised to face that judgment.

In God's sight "sin is not imputed when there is no law"; "by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom. 5:13; Rom. 3:20). Without being aware of God's laws as revealed in His Word, "sin is not imputed" to a person, and therefore they will not be raised or judged. Those who do not know God's Word will therefore remain dead, as will animals and plants, seeing they are in the same position. "Man who...does not understand, is like the beasts that perish" (Ps. 49:20). "Like sheep they are laid in the grave" (Ps. 49:14).

It is the knowledge of God's ways that makes us responsible to Him for our actions and therefore necessitates our resurrection and appearance at the judgment seat. It should therefore be understood that it is not only the righteous or those baptised who will be raised, but also all who are responsible to God by reason of their knowledge of Him. This is an oft-repeated Scriptural theme.

- Jn. 15:22 shows that knowledge of the Word brings responsibility: "If I (Jesus) had not come and spoken to them, they have no sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin". Rom. 1:20,21 likewise says that knowing God leaves men "without excuse".
- "Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father...I (Christ) will raise him up at the last day" (Jn. 6:44,45).
- The Lord's attitude at the judgment seat to those who rejected Him in the first century will be: "Bring here those enemies of mine (out of the grave), and slay them before me" (Lk. 19:27).
- "Whoever will not hear (i.e. obey) my words…I will require it of him" (Dt. 18:19).
- God only "overlooked" the actions of those who are genuinely ignorant of His ways. Those who know His ways, He watches and expects a response (Acts 17:30).
- In the final judgment of the world, it will be "the nations that did not obey" who are condemned (Mic. 5:15 NRSV). Their hearing but not obeying God's word will be the basis of their punishment.

- Because Belshazzar *knew* he ought to submit to God's superiority, but refused, *therefore* he was punished (Dan. 5:22).
- "That servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he who did not know, yet committed things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few. (e.g. by remaining dead). For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more" (Lk. 12:47,48) - so how much more *God*?
- "Therefore, to him who *knows* to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin" (James 4:17).
- Israel's special responsibility to God was on account of His revelations to them concerning Himself (Am. 3:2). "Therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities ..." "and you shall all bow down to the slaughter; because, when I called, you did not answer; when I spoke, you did not hear, but did evil" (Is. 65:12).
- Because of this doctrine of responsibility, "it would have been better for them (who later turn back from God) not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them" (2 Pet. 2:21). Other relevant passages include: Jn. 9:41; 3:19; 1 Tim. 1:13; Hos. 4:14; Deut. 1:39.

Knowledge of God making us responsible to the judgment seat, it follows that those without this knowledge will not be raised, seeing that they do not need to be judged, and that their lack of knowledge makes them "like the beasts that perish" (Ps. 49:20). There are ample indications that not all who have ever lived will be raised.

- The people of the ancient nation of Babylon "will ... sleep a perpetual sleep and not awake" after their death because they were ignorant of the true God (Jer. 51:39; Is. 43:17).
- Isaiah encouraged himself: "O Lord our (Israel's) God, other masters besides You have had dominion over us (e.g. the Philistines and Babylonians)...They are dead, they will not live (again); they are deceased, they will not rise...all their memory to perish" (Is. 26:13,14). Note the triple emphasis here on their not being raised: "will not live (again)...will not rise...all their memory to perish". By contrast, Israel had the prospect of resurrection on account of their knowledge of the true God: "Your (Israel's) dead shall live; together with my dead body they shall arise" (Is. 26:19).
- Speaking about God's people Israel, we are told that at Christ's return, "many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt" (Dan. 12:2). Thus "many", but not all, of the Jews will be raised, due to their responsibility to God as His chosen people. Those of them who are totally ignorant of their true God "shall fall, and never rise again", seeing they are unable to find "the word of the Lord" (Am. 8:12,14).

'Rising again' in the Prophets

The argument has been made that 'not rising again' refers to not getting up, not arising from the ground in the sense of arising in power. But the passages quoted generally are in the context of death; and therefore the not rising again surely means that they will not recover from death, they will not arise from the dead, rather than from some political fall. Is. 26:14 is a clear example of how the Hebrew poetry rhymes in terms of the ideas:

Their dead	Shall not live
Their deceased	Shall not rise
You visited and destroyed them	Caused all memory of them to perish

Not rising is paralleled with not living; it is a rhyming idea with death and being deceased. It is another take on being destroyed and not remembered over future generations. Indeed, it would be fair to argue here that the Hebrew translated "shall not live", used as it is here in a causative sense, could be better rendered 'shall not be made alive'. Hence GNB: "Now they are dead and will not live again". The argument that 'not rising' means 'they shall not arise in power again' seems to me rather desperate; and my question would be, if that is indeed the intention of the Hebrew, then why did God not use a word which more unambiguously meant that? The Hebrew translated 'rise up' is rather like the Greek *egeiro*, it is used of resurrection from the dead, but it can also simply mean to stand up. But the argument about an ancient Hebrew word is rather sidelined by the parallel in Is. 26:14 between 'not rising' and not being made to live, and being utterly destroyed, deceased and quite simply "dead".

Other Points

- If the hope of universal resurrection is indeed part of the Gospel, then it's fair to ask why it's not specifically taught up front as being part of the Gospel of the Kingdom? A review of the Gospels and the preaching speeches of Acts fails to yield a single example of any such statement concerning the 'good news' of universal resurrection.
- The punishment for sin is death (Rom. 6:23), as was made clear in the Garden of Eden. This must be given its due weight. There is no need, therefore, for every single human being to be raised in order to be punished for their sins, or for justice to be done. Full weight likewise must be given to the Biblical statements about the nature of man. If we do not have the understanding which leads to responsibility to God, then we are as the animals which perish: "Man who...does not understand, is like the beasts that perish" (Ps. 49:20). "Like sheep they are laid in the grave" (Ps. 49:14). "As many as have sinned without (knowing God's) law, will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law (i.e. knowing it), will be judged by the law" (Rom. 2:12).
- If those who have not heard are to be raised, then there would be three groups at the resurrection: those who never heard; those who heard but disbelieved; and those who heard and believed. But the Bible is silent about these three groups; the resurrection is to judgment, not to a period of education or instruction. This first group, those who have never heard, are the majority of human population. If indeed the vast majority of human beings are to be raised and taught the Gospel, then the obvious question is why didn't God teach them in the first place? And how do we cope with the Biblical language of Divine calling, choosing and predestination of some? If in fact all are called, then what point is there in Paul's whole argument in Romans 9-11 that some

were called and others were not? God chooses some clay from the same lump to become something which lasts forever, and other clay He rejects. And Paul says we as the clay cannot adequately engage with Him over this. In fairness, the question is then thrown up as to why God brings humans into existence if He will not call them. We are the clay which cannot engage with the Divine potter over this. But I would say that the answer may be that they exist just as the multitude of plant and animals species, and the size of the cosmos, in order to provide dimension and scale; that out of all that, God loves particularly those whom He has chosen.

- Those who believe in a universal resurrection and later opportunity for all need to bear in mind the huge scale of what they are proposing- that for some reason, God created people but didn't call them; and then when Christ returns, He will resurrect the majority of humanity who ever lived [i.e. all of humanity minus those who did hear the Gospel]. They will then have to be given the chance to believe. This would be a massive operation; and it would amount to the majority of God's work with humanity. This begs the question as to why this is not spoken about up front in the Bible. It appears to me to be the implication required by those who cannot cope with the Biblical statements about humanity being no better than animals by nature; and they have to force through this colossal, cosmic conclusion on very scanty implications from a few Bible verses. That is my honest conclusion on this matter; God can and shall do as He wishes. We cannot draw a circle around God and forbid Him to act outside it. He may do anything, including universal resurrection or universal salvation; my point is simply that the Biblical record doesn't support those positions.

"All men" being raised in John 5

Whatever these verses mean, they must be interpreted in the light of all the Bible teaching and reasoning presented above.

"For the hour comes, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation" (Jn. 5:28,29). The point has been well made that *mnemeion*, "graves", literally means the memorial tombs- those who are remembered, by God. Even if we insist on reading the "all" here as literally "all", believers in universal resurrection are stuck with their insistence that this mass resurrection of all humanity will be in order to give the majority the opportunity to hear the Gospel, and then come to some kind of [dimly specified] further judgment. But let's continue reading: they "shall come forth; they that have done good, to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation". The participants in this resurrection come forth to judgment, and to either eternal life or death. The preceding verses make it clear that judgment is in view: "The hour comes and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live. For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has given the Son life in himself. And He has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is a Son of Man" (Jn. 5:25-27).

There is no hint whatsoever that the majority of them will come forth to some in between state, in order to pass through some period of probation. These people come forth to judgment, and so the "all" must surely be read as referring to the "all" who are responsible to judgment, and who will receive eternal life or condemnation at the point of their resurrection and judgment. If we insist on reading "all" literally, then we would have to read *mnemeion* literally- all those in *graves* shall be resurrected; and many have died without graves. The context surely requires that the "all" who are in view here are those who will be liable to judgment, and their destiny will be decided by the nature of the resurrection they receive- hence the language of the resurrection of condemnation and the resurrection to [eternal] life. Anyone with any even outline familiarity with Semitic languages will know that "all" is not to be read literally. It is the "all" within a pool of persons or situation which the context defines. And the "all" here clearly refers to those who are responsible to judgment. Even reading the Bible in English translations makes it clear that "all" rarely means 'every single one'. Just a few examples of many:

"All Jerusalem" was troubled at the news of Christ's birth (Mt. 2:3); not every single man, woman and child, for they likely never heard the message of the wise men which troubled Herod and "all" those within the Jerusalem leadership.

"All" Judea and transJordan went out to John the Baptist and were baptized (Mt. 3:5); again, not literally every single man, woman and child. We can hardly imagine John baptizing newborn infants in Jordan.

"All" the sick people of Syria were healed of their diseases (Mt. 4:24)- surely all who came to Jesus were healed. Again, we have to define the scope of the "all" from the context, rather than simplistically insisting that "all" means literally all in a global sense.

"You shall be hated of all men" (Mt. 10:22)- not literally, but "all" of those within the category of the unbelieving.

The mustard seed is not the smallest of "all seeds" (Mt. 13:32) on a global level; at best, it might be the smallest of all seeds known within Israel.

"All things" [Gk. *pas*, not as in AV "any thing"] that believers ask will be done for them (Mt. 18:19; 21:22)- but that has to be qualified by other Scripture which teaches that this "all things" depends upon those all things being within the circle of God's will. Again, the "all" is not literally "all".

The "all men" who are gathered to the Kingdom are not literally all men, for not all hear the Gospel of the Kingdom; they are all whom the preachers "found" (Mt. 22:10).

Mt. 22:28 in Greek reads literally "all men had her [to wife]". The "all" clearly refers to the seven husbands spoken of in the context.

"All men seek for You" (Mk. 1:37) refers to the "all men" in the context, which is of a town in Israel; not the whole planet.

John the Baptist came so that "all men through him might believe" (Jn. 1:7). The reference is not to the entire planet, but to the "all men" who heard John's message in Israel.

The woman at the well marvelled that Jesus had told her "all things that I ever did" (Jn. 4:39). But she was referring not to literally all things in her life, but to all things of her marital life; and that is defined in the context.

The Old Testament prophecy that "They shall all be taught of God" is defined as "Every man who has heard and learned of the Father" (Jn. 6:45). Note that the Greek *pas* occurs twice here- "all" [taught of God] and "every" man. The same double usage of *pas* is to be found in Jn. 17:2: "You gave him authority over all flesh, so that he should give eternal life to all whom You have given him". The "all men" is defined as those who shall be ultimately saved, not literally everyone.

The cross drew "all men" unto Christ (Jn. 12:32)- the "all" of the group within God's purpose for salvation, but not literally all men as in every single man, woman and child.

And so we could continue. "All" simply does not mean "all" in a literal, global sense. This is particularly the case in John's Gospel, where "all men" appears to refer to a specific group, the believers, the saved. The reference in John 5 to "all men" being raised simply has to be read in this context.

"The grace of God has appeared… to all men"

Titus 2:11-14 further defines this "all men": "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men. It trains us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and Godly lives in this present age, as we look for the blessed hope : The manifesting of the glory of the great God, and of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us…". The "all men" is those to whom God's grace has appeared; the "we" and "us" in view are clearly believers, and they are described as "all things" in Paul's writings (Eph. 1:10; 3:9; 4:10; Col. 1:16-18,20). Tit. 2:11 says that God's grace "appeared" to all men; the word means literally to appear as a light, and the same word is to be found soon afterwards, in Tit. 3:4, where we learn that God's grace "appeared" towards *us* ; and it is the same word as in Lk. 1:79, where we read that the work of the Lord Jesus was to "give light" (s.w. 'appear') to those that sit in darkness, "to guide *our feet* into the way of peace". The 'appearance' was therefore not to every person, but to those who see the light. These are the "all men" who are in view in Titus 2. Even in the first century, the Gospel had been made known to "all nations for the obedience of faith" (Rom. 16:26). But we have to read in an ellipsis here- the Gospel went to *people from* all nations, not to literally every person in every nation; and the "all nations" would appear to refer to the nations around Israel, for surely the apostles didn't take the Gospel to every nation of South America or Australia in the first century. Likewise in Col. 1:6: "That Gospel is come to you, even as it has also come to all the world, bearing fruit and increasing, as it does in you also". The "all the world" who heard was not literally every person.

FOOTNOTE: Children Who Die

God can and shall do as He wishes. We cannot draw a circle around God and forbid Him to act outside it. He may do anything, including universal resurrection or universal salvation; my point is simply that the Biblical record doesn't support those positions. It could be argued from 1 Cor. 7 that the children of believers are somehow 'covered' in some way by their parents. But that is a different proposition to universal resurrection. The faith of the friends led to the paralyzed man being 'raised up' and forgiven (Mk. 2:5). But this again does not give any hint towards universal resurrection.

Duncan Heaster

Commentary on other passages:

"For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:3, 4 NKJB)

Again, "all men" doesn't mean every human being who has ever lived; I have demonstrated that above. If God desires all to know His Truth then why have the majority of humanity never heard it… And the text says He desires all to be *saved*. But only very few will be saved… so the Bible states many times. So God's desire didn't come to fulfilment. If God wants all to know the Truth, we either have to invent the idea of all being raised and given a chance, or, have another look at whether "all men" means every single human being. And I have explained above why I go for that option, because "all men" is clearly not used elsewhere with reference to all human beings of all times. The passage continues: "who gave himself as a ransom for all". The "all" are those who benefit from the Lord's death, the ransom payment. For even if there were universal resurrection, there is not going to be universal salvation. So the "all" who are ransomed is not literally everyone, for not all will be ransomed- some will not be saved / ransomed. They prefer to stay in bondage to sin.

"…John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). I suggest "the world" in John's writings refers often to the Jewish world (note Jn. 8:26; 9:5; 12:19,31; 14:19; 16:20; 18:20); looking through how that phrase is used in John , it simply cannot mean every human being on the whole planet, nor does it refer to 'planet earth'. John 1:9 begins by saying that "the world" is comprised of those who are enlightened… Logic is rather lacking in using these verses in John to prove universal *resurrection*; what they speak of is universal *salvation* of "the world". But seeing not literally all men will be saved, we must therefore redefine the scope of "the world", just as we have to when considering the phrase "all men", as demonstrated above.

"Clearly God no longer overlooks ignorance of the Gospel because of one's never hearing it - all will be judged, including those who were earlier ignorant of the Gospel". This makes no sense to me, if knowledge is the basis for judgment [see above], then how can people be judged for what they didn't know about. Why raise ignorant people to judgment? There is a time of judgment coming on the world, yes, and those who hear of it need to repent.

Acts 24:15: "…there is going to be a resurrection both of [1] the righteous and [2] the unrighteous." (HCSB). If this means universal resurrection, then surely a 3rd group is required- the ignorant who will

then be taught the Gospel. But such a group doesn't feature here. Those resurrected are righteous or unrighteous and will be judged accordingly.

"The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works" (Rev. 20:13). If this refers to the end of the 1000 years, then it could equally refer to those who die during the 1000 years. However, I am not very persuaded of the idea of a 1000 year reign; it is based on one figurative passage at the end of Revelation. If the Gospel of the kingdom involves belief that the everyone will be raised, I'd expect it to be taught far earlier than the end of Revelation, and to feature in the apostolic preaching. But it doesn't.

"But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope" (1Thess. 4:13). This seems to me to mean what it says- they have no hope. The obvious meaning of the words and context of the reasoning seems to be being overlooked by those who insist on universal resurrection.

"Many (Heb. rabbim) of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, [1] these to everlasting life, but [2] the others to disgrace and everlasting (Heb. olam) contempt" (Dan. 12:2 NASB). Again, the resurrection is the time of judgment. One would expect a 3rd group, numerically by far the largest, to be mentioned- those who need to be raised and taught the Gospel. But we don't encounter that at all. Whether "many" means 'multitudes' or 'just some' becomes irrelevant- because the required 'third group' aren't mentioned anyway.

14-15 Is Abortion Murder? What does the Bible say about terminating pregnancy?

Transcript of https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6-0ORilh7Jg

Abortion for Christians-

Bible guidance, Christian perspective, Christadelphian Biblical Discussion

We're going to be talking about the vexed question of abortion; whether abortion is appropriate or possible for a Christian, and whether someone who believes in the Bible and in God and in the Lord Jesus should be feeling guilty about having had an abortion.

Now I realise this is a very, very difficult thing to discuss in any rational sort of way. It's too easy to come to a black and white solution whereby we say abortion = murder and that's a sin- and that's it. And I don't want to just say that and finish the discussion; because I realise the issue is wider than that. Believeme, I don't want to be in this discussion really. It's just that people keep asking for some kind of guidance about what the Bible says. And so I feel I have to share that with you because I can't flunk the question by saying, "Search for that on the internet. Do a Google on that one. Don't come to me."

But I feel a great weight, believe me, as I come and discuss this question. Because maybe I might be leading you in the wrong way; even though I don't want to lead anyone anywhere. I simply want to discuss what the Bible says.

So, I wonder if you could join with me in praying before we start on this study:

“Lord God our Heavenly Father, we come to you the source of all life, the God of Israel, to try to understand your word and to understand your will and how we should be feeling about this whole issue of abortion and ending pregnancies. And, we ask that you will open our eyes to your word, and give us strength to follow where you are leading us. We ask that you will reveal your will to us. In Jesus' name and for his sake, Amen”

So, I'm here in Riga, Latvia. I'm at the Riga Bible Centre, which is in the former Soviet Union. I've just completed a discussion about this very subject [in Russian] with a hall full of baptised believers and some who are not yet baptised. I'd just like to quote you some statistics. In the 1990s in the Soviet Union, there were about 1,300 abortions for every 1000 live births. That's right. Thirteen abortions for every live birth. And my wife, as you might know, is a medical doctor, here in Riga, in Latvia. She was telling me that for a gynaecologist to get registered and complete their full training, they will have had to, in this country at least, and this is today [October 2014], they will have had to participate in around 100 abortion procedures.

So, this is not something that is just an item for somebody who gets raped or is in a very unusual medical situation. Quite clearly, this issue affects a large number of women and therefore families, in this part of the world and not just in this part of the world. It is all over the world. And so, people are carrying a lot of guilt when they hear things like, 'Abortion is murder'.

Let me start off thinking a little bit about guilt. I'm going to suggest to you that there is false guilt and true guilt. The true guilt is when we realise that we have not done right before God, then we read his word and we realise that my life and my thinking and my being is not matched with that which God would have liked me to have done or to have been. And quite rightly we should feel guilt, and the joy therefore of that guilt being taken away; because the Lord Jesus was amongst other things the guilt offering, the fulfilment of the guilt offering which there was in Old Testament times. So all that guilt has been taken away. The guilt of all our sin, sins that we don't realise we've done, sins that at the moment maybe we've not fessed up to or don't perceive as sins. The whole issue of guilt, both guilt that other people have put on us that maybe we shouldn't have to carry, and also true guilt, *all* guilt has been taken from us if we are baptised believers in Christ.

But, as I said, there is false guilt and true guilt. False guilt, I would suggest, is the guilt that we take that we needn't take. Guilt that is transferred onto us, that is put onto us by people saying. “You shouldn't have done that. You terrible person. You did this that and the other. You are a murderer.” For example, if you're a gynaecologist, “You're a serial murderer”. And I've heard that said. If you were a gynaecologist, in the USSR and probably in a lot of Europe, you're a serial murderer. And then when a gynaecologist becomes a baptised believer what do you do with your guilt. Are you right to feel guilt over this, etc.? I'm just simply flagging at the start that there is false guilt and there is true guilt.

You can also look at this the other way round. Perhaps you live in a society, as many people did in this country where I'm standing here, in Latvia, where there was no great guilt attached to abortion. It was effectively used as a form of contraception. And, unfortunately then, people can end up thinking, “Well, yeah, it was okay because nobody else feels guilty about it. So, why should I?” And this then raises the question of conscience. Is it simply enough to say, when we look at this vexed issue, ‘Well it's just a matter of conscience?’.

In 1 Corinthians 4: 4 Paul says, “I know nothing against myself”. In other words, I have a good conscience. “But I'm not thereby justified because there is one who is my judge and that is the Lord”. So, then whether or not we feel okay in our conscience is not insignificant because the Bible does talk about the importance of conscience. But it is also not the final issue, because the Lord Jesus teaches in the gospel of John that, “there is one that shall judge you on the last day and that is the word that I have spoken”. Now it's not as if we're going to stand before the Lord and our conscience is going to jump out of us and we're going to stand there and we get judged according to how far we followed our own conscience. No. Whether you feel it's right or not is not the final deciding issue.

Many people who have abortions are not rape victims. Many have abortions because they fear the responsibility, feeling: “I'm not ready for this”. Particularly younger women. I don't think it's good enough to simply say, “Ah, yeah. I'm simply not ready for this responsibility, so let's abort”. I would also like to say that I'm the father of two children and at this moment my wife and I are four months pregnant expecting our third child. So, if I were to say to my wife, “Ah Honey, times are hard, some issue with money or no place for the new child in our apartment. Let's just abort this, let's just terminate this pregnancy”. Look it's obvious that the child is alive. There's a little person inside that womb and for me that would be murder. And whatever I may say in this Biblical discussion just remember that, that for me *personally* that would be, effectively, murder.

Now, having said that, I stand here in front of you and you are where you are and in one sense we are just a bunch of cells. I'm just a bunch of cells. And that's what you are. And if you were to analyse sperm, male sperm, what is that? It's a bunch of cells. What is the egg inside a woman? It's a bunch of cells. So, there's got to be some difference, starting on one side where sperm and eggs are a bunch of cells, moving right across the spectrum to a grown human being, an adult, who is also a bunch of cells. Somewhere on that scale that one bunch of cells turns into something else that is considered to be a person. But I would emphasise that the Bible does not, from what I can see, attempt to define where that point is.

Let's think back to the creation of mankind in the first place. God created Adam, and there was Adam lying there, a body if you like, a person, but a body. I'll read to you from Genesis 2:7: “And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.” A living creature. You could argue that God breathing into Adam's nostrils made him a living creature. And without that breath in the nostrils he was not a living creature. You could argue that that was a special case, that was Adam's creation and that was a special case. But going forward it does seem to me that that is actually how God tends to define living persons- as persons who have the breath of life in their nose. If you go to Genesis 7, you have the record of the flood. Genesis 7:22: “All in whose nostrils *was* the breath of life... died.” So, living creatures appear to be defined there in terms of having the breath of life in their nostrils. Now, babies don't breathe. Babies don't breathe. They fixate oxygen from the mother. That's why when a woman comes to full term at eight months, nine months pregnant, she's breathless. Very often pregnant women complain of breathlessness. Why? Because they're fixing oxygen for the child. That's why you can have a waterbirth. A woman can give birth to a child under water because the child at that point is not breathing, still connected to the mother for oxygen. So, you could argue that actually the breath of life in the nostrils is significant. And that phrase occurs many times in the scriptures. You can check that out in a concordance at your leisure.

I'll just give you one and believe me there are many. Job 27:3, “All the while my breath is in me, and the spirit of God is in my nostrils”, Job says. And what he is saying in the context is, 'whilst I am alive, my lips shall not speak wickedness' and so forth. So his description of being alive and being a live person, who is not dead, is 'having breath in me and the spirit of God in my nostrils'. When you come to the book of Numbers you have God numbering his people; let's take a couple of examples in Numbers 3. This phrase I am going to read to you occurs a number of times in Numbers chapter 3. Let's take Numbers 3:22, “Those that were numbered of them, according to the number of all the males, from a month old and upward, even those that were numbered of them were seven thousand and five hundred.” And so the phrase that continues throughout Numbers 3. “Those that were numbered, according to the number, from a month old and upward”. Why from a month old? Why not from two months old? Why not from one week old? I don't know why. I'm simply saying that it's clear here that God numbered persons in this particular context from a month old and upwards.

I'd like to take you back to Exodus 21, because here we have a passage that is quoted by people who say that anyone who's had an abortion is a murderer and so forth. So let's just read the text and see what it says. It's Exodus 21:22: “If men strive, and hurt a woman with child, so that her fruit departs

from her he shall be surely punished, according as the woman's husband will lay upon him; and he shall pay as the judges determine."

If a man beats up a pregnant woman and she loses the child was he treated as a murderer? It proves that the child inside that womb is a person in one sense. I don't think anyone seriously doubts that. We are formed inside the womb by God and Psalm 139 says that God knows the child inside the womb. But, if this guy comes up and beats this heavily pregnant woman and she loses the child that wasn't counted as murder. He had to pay a fine. Now the Law of Moses is not slow and is not shy to stipulate death penalties. And it's not shy to say if you do this or that, then you must die. And it's not slow to condemn murder. But, for me, all I notice in this passage in this case is it's not treated as a murder. It's treated as something wrong but not as a murder. I think you need to bear that in mind.

If you want, if you are hoping at the end of this I am going to give you a yes or no, Is abortion murder?, then you can stop watching now because I don't have that. I don't have that answer. Because it's not in the Bible. All I can do is discuss with you all the texts that I could see as being possibly relevant to the discussion.

There is also an idea that all life is somehow sacrosanct. And that any life is life. And you've got to be extremely respectful of that, and so forth. I would say this that there's a huge teaching in the Bible about the value and the meaning of *the human person,* but by the human person I mean the person, the personality, as they are as a living being who has a character etc. Is all human life so terribly sacrosanct? When I read the Old Testament, I just don't get that impression. Because according to Genesis God wipes out the whole "world" in the flood. Men, women and children etc. Israel then come to enter Canaan and God basically says, "Yep, nuke the lot of them. Men, women and children". And that would have included pregnant women. And then you come to Ecclesiastes and the Psalms reflecting upon the meaning of death, and we're told there that *in the way that we die* we are no better than the animals. In the way that we die.What does that mean, that you can go out and kill people nilly willy, get mad with some bloke and just go and kill him? No. I'm just saying, I'm just raising with you the issue as to whether from God's perspective, every single human life is so incredibly sacrosanct to him. If it is, why does he only work with a minority of humanity? As you see, I'm raising questions. I'm trying to help you, I'm trying to help myself really, to come to a wider balanced perspective on this issue. Rather than a simplistic one cent answer to a million dollar question. Which is not want you want and is not what I want.

Now, it is true of course that God does work with his chosen people. And he talks about those who he foreknew from the womb. Some years ago I was having this discussion and I dogmatically quoted Jeremiah chapter one. I said, in my more redneck days, "But God knew Jeremiah in the womb". But it doesn't say*that*. God actually says to Jeremiah, "Before, [*before*!] you were in the womb, I knew you and I ordained you to be a prophet to the nations". So, yes, there is a foreknowledge of God, there is even a predestination of God, however you want to understand that, of those who are, as Paul says in Romans, the called according to his purpose. But to quote those references to God's foreknowledge of Jeremiah from the womb doesn't mean that therefore a certain set of cells must therefore become a great wonderful believer; nor does it mean that you are stopping that happening by having an abortion. I just don't think that those verses about God's foreknowledge of his *chosen ones* in the womb is a proof that every human life is sacrosanct to Him.

Now I am of course fully aware of the argument that if you have an abortion you are stopping potential life. That is true. And here in this hall, just an hour or so ago, when we were having this discussion in Russian, somebody got up and said, "I don't know who my parents were. I grew up in an orphanage but I have now been baptised. And I have the hope of God's kingdom in front of me". And so, thank God, that his mother did not have an abortion.

But, in all discussion of ethics, which is what we are discussing, it seems to me that very easily, one can end up setting up a position which if taken logically further- goes wrong. You end up in sort of case law. So, in law the argument is sometimes made to the effect: "You let that guy off because he

did so-and-so but he was under the influence. Then why don't you let the other guy off because he was also under the influence and he did something worse". This is the whole problem in any ethical discussion; before you know where you are, you are taking decisions or adopting positions which if taken to their conclusion will lead you into some very, very difficult situations.

Now, I think this is a classic example before us in this abortion issue; if we argue that abortion is limiting potential life and is thereby wrong. If you're saying abortion is wrong because you're limiting potential life, well I would assume that therefore you should not use contraception. And that is why in the Catholicchurch they have strong views against both abortion and also against contraception- because the two things logically fit together, do they not. If you're saying you can't limit potential life or destroy potential life, well, in that case you shouldn't use contraception. And it goes a stage beyond contraception. The 'Don't limit potential life' argument finally ends up by creating a dogma that every human being should procreate as much as possible. Because if you don't, if you choose to have two kids rather than ten kids, think about all those eight little kiddies who could have had life. But you didn't because you wanted to keep a better standard of living , you know the argument, 'We didn't have enough money to have more than two kids, so well therefore we only had two'. So, what are we going to say? You potentially destroyed the life of eight kids? You're a murderer? No. Well, *I* don't think so.

What I'm saying is, that in whatever position you ultimately want to come to on this issue, you've got to test it really by asking where does it lead logically. I mentioned earlier that I do not get the impression that for God human life is *so* sacrosanct. When you think a little bit about conception, as a process, you also would get that impression; because one in three (that's a lot), one in three pregnancies aborts naturally. There are a lot of women who get pregnant and they don't actually realise they have been pregnant. That is a fact. A lot of conception occurs but does not come to term naturally. Now, why, if God is so, so against this, why is that built by him into the structure of the whole nature of reproduction? We could say that it's part of living in a fallen world. Well, yes it is part of living in a fallen world I suppose. I don't suppose Eve would have miscarried and so forth. But all the same, that for me only throws the question one stage back: So then why then if for God every tiny foetus is so absolutely sacrosanct and important why then does he, has he built natural abortion into the human reproductive process?

The issue of unwanted pregnancies, of "Oh hang. I'm pregnant", this is not something just for us here in Europe in the 21st century. This has been always there. When I lived for a couple of years in Africa, I came across there all kinds of strange beliefs and practices related to unwanted pregnancies. And all sorts of ideas of what should be done in order to end a pregnancy. It could be drinking something. It could be touching a certain tree. It could be some strange rituals, some of them harmful, some of them not, in order to make a pregnancy go away. Now those kinds of rituals and those kinds of ideas are there in all primitive societies, and for sure they were there at the time that God was giving the Law of Moses. For sure they were there all the way through the Old Testament. But there is never a word from God that engages with those traditions and with those practices. There's plenty of words from God about not getting involved in pagan rituals etc. Don't take your children, that is children who have been born and are growing up, and sacrifice them to the Baals and all this kind of thing. Yes. But there is not a word about abortion or abortion procedures as primitive societies would have understood them. And my question is, why not? God is unafraid to tackle and engage with the ideas of the surrounding nations. But on that one he doesn't say anything. For sure it was there because it is there in primitive societies today, all over the world in every single society. But God doesn't directly engage with it or outlaw those abortion rituals.

So, coming to a conclusion here, the real moral issue is, I think, that God's intention is that the family unit is the basis for having children. Sex outside marriage, having kids outside marriage, this is taught against very clearly in the Bible. They, for me, are the key moral issues, and it's because of a lack of attention to those moral issues that the whole issue of abortions and unwanted pregnancies arise. I have put before you what I see as the possible Biblical case. And I can only say as you discuss around the relatively few verses that appear to be relevant to the issue, that I do not see a clear picture. In all

intellectual honesty, expositional honesty, I don't see a clear, if you like, doctrine / teaching. I don't see a clear picture emerging, whereby you can condemn every single woman who's had an abortion as a murderer. And remember that in the area in which I live, that is well over 50% of women. No, they're not all murderers.

And also in our discussion, in this hall, today, an hour and hour and a half ago, the point was raised that it is very easy to demonise women. "You had an abortion. You're a murderer." Why do most women have abortions? It's because of a whole nexus of pressures upon them, a lot of which pressure comes from men.Boyfriend. Father. "I'm not having you in my house if you're pregnant, girl". Society, boss at work etc.. You're not going to get promotion if you're a single mother… So, the whole issue is more than the whole guilt being put on a single woman. The issue in that sense affects all of us.

Now, in saying that the issue is not so black and white, the problem is that all of us have a tendency to try and reduce every inconvenient moral issue to so many shades of grey that we just say, "Ah yeah, well who knows? You just have to do what you feel's right, where your heart leads you". I don't think that that's sensible. And God has given us his word. Now, as we've seen, he doesn't seem to make a big issue of it. But he does give us enough to go on to realize that there is a point when a bunch of cells which doesn't class as a person, does become a bunch of cells which is a person in His eyes. I have suggested that this is when a born person is existing and independently breathing outside of the womb. But you must draw that point for yourselves.

So, I'm appealing for tolerance and understanding and not putting guilt upon people. To simply say that everyone who's had an abortion is a murderer is very radical and leaves huge numbers of sincere Christians condemned. You need to think it through.

I'd like to conclude with a prayer because as you can see, I hope, I have been somewhat nervous in presenting these thoughts. People ask me and they want answers, so I maybe haven't given answers in black and white; but I've discussed the issue. Let's just pray:

"Lord God our Heavenly Father, we ask for your guidance again for each of us in understanding and in coming to our own understanding of these difficult issues. And we do pray Father for all those of your children who are pregnant, in difficult situations, we pray for those who have had children who they now have to raise on their own in difficult situations. We pray for those who feel under so much pressure, for those who right at this moment are going through agonies over these issues. We pray, Heavenly Father, for them; and we pray for ourselves to be as supportive as we can to them and as non-condemnatory as we can, whilst at the same time upholding our understanding of your word. Heavenly Father, we pray for the day when your son will be here and at last this fallen situation will be no more, and at last we shall be neither male nor female but we shall rejoice forever in your son, and the things of your eternal family. Father,may that day soon come. And strengthen us, Father, as we try to find our way through the minefield of this world and of this life, towards that wonderful day. For Jesus' sake. Amen"

APPENDIX 1

Do Christians Need Prophets Today?

Many sects, Christian and otherwise, place crucial importance on the words of their 'prophets'; men or women whom they feel speak God's word to them, and whose teaching must therefore form the basis of their belief and practice. This attitude is held by many religious sects, Christian and otherwise. I believe that since the time the New Testament was completed, there have been no inspired prophets. The gift of prophecy was possessed in the first century church, but it was withdrawn once the New Testament was completed (1 Corinthians 13:8), and will be given again when Christ returns (Joel 2:28). We are living in the last days, just before the Lord's return, and therefore if He is going to give us the gift of prophecy, it follows that we do not *now* possess it.

The TrueChurch- ?

The true Church (and there is only one true body of Christ) was built upon the foundation of the brothers in the first century who had the gifts of apostleship and prophecy (Ephesians 2:20; 3:5 cp. 1 Corinthians 12:28). The true Church has been in existence since the first century; it does not therefore rely upon prophets who recently arose for its foundation. Many of the 'new' sects were only relatively recently established, on the basis of the words of their 'prophets'. But this was centuries after the one and only church, the body of Christ, was built up upon the foundation of the apostles' teachings in the first century. There have been true Christian believers from the time of the first century. Their salvation depended upon understanding and believing the teaching of the early Christian prophets and apostles, faith in the true Gospel, baptism into Christ and living in Him afterwards. Their salvation and relationship with God didn't depend upon any of the newly arisen 'prophets'- for they simply didn't exist. It follows from this that the 'prophets' of the last two centuries, even if they are genuine, are not so eternally important.

Likewise, Christian sect members would surely accept that a man reading his Bible in, say, China, or on a small island somewhere, would be able to be saved without knowing about their prophets. If he understood the true Gospel from his private Bible reading, and was baptized into Christ- the only Name given under Heaven in which we can find salvation (Acts 4:12)- then surely he would be saved? Again, it is evident that knowing and listening to the new prophets isn't essential for salvation. Those who disagree with this are effectively saying that we can only be saved through contact with their prophets; and therefore only some people living in the 20th Century will be saved. This is evidently not right. The true church, the one body of Christ, is comprised of believers from all nations over all time. It's head is the Lord Jesus Christ (Ephesians 4:15; 5:23)- not any human founder.

Prophecy And Scripture

But there is a more essential reason for our concern with the claim to have prophets, who prophesy God's word with the gift of prophecy as in the first century. 2 Timothy 3:16 teaches that the man of God can be perfected by his response to "all scripture". All that is necessary for the spiritual life is contained in "all scripture"- doctrine, correction, instruction in righteousness, it's all there. The Scriptures- the Bible writings- were written by God's spirit inspiring men (2 Peter 1:18-21). Those Bible writers prophesied, 'forth-told', they told out, the word which God's Spirit had inspired them with. These words were written down and form the "all scripture" which we have in the Old and New Testaments of the Bible. Once this "all scripture" was available when the New Testament was completed, then there was no need for men to be inspired with the gift of speaking and writing down God's word. Thus the Comforter, "which is the Holy Spirit", enabled the disciples to remember the things the Lord

Jesus said and did during His ministry- so that they could compile their records of the Gospel (John 14:26). Such a Spirit gift had no relevance for anyone else apart from the first century disciples. If the new prophets really have God's Spirit and speak in His behalf, then their words are as authoritative as the Bible itself. If we were to write them down, as some of the 'prophecies' of, e.g. Ellen White or Mary Baker Eddy have been, then those words would have to be treated as the Bible. Yet "all scripture" was completed in the first century. If it wasn't, then no Christian from then until the time of the new prophets had the completed word of God concerning doctrine, instruction in righteousness etc. which 2 Timothy 3:16 speaks of. And if God's word is progressively revealed whenever a new prophet speaks, this means that we don't now have "all scripture" and therefore we don't have the complete instruction which is necessary for the man of God to be completely equipped.

However, it is significant that many new 'prophets' seem to have a policy of not writing down their prophecies. Yet if they really have God's Spirit, why not? This makes us suspicious for two reasons:

1. One of the reasons for possessing the gift of speaking God's word was in order to write the Scriptures.

2. If prophecies are not written down at the time they are given, then the only record we have of them is the words and recollections of others. Men will tend to only remember some things; for example, they may forget all the things 'prophesied' which never came to pass, and they may in their minds distort the words that the 'prophet' said, perhaps many years ago, in order to make it appear that a current event was prophesied. Thus when some sects split as a result of human feuding, it is claimed that the sect's prophets had prophesied this. But there was no talk of this prophecy before the event happened.

The New Sects And The Early Church Contrasted

When we Biblically consider how the Holy Spirit gifts operated in the early Christian church, it becomes apparent that there are large areas of difference between this and what the new sects claim.

u For example, some groups generally don't claim to speak in tongues. Many congregations have 'prophets' who prophesy but nobody who speaks in tongues. This is because they correctly realise that Biblically, "speaking in tongues" means speaking in foreign languages which can be understood by the hearers (as on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2)- not the 'mumbo-jumbo' gabbled by many Pentecostals today. But 1 Corinthians 12:7-21 teaches that in the early church, there were a variety of different gifts of the Spirit. One had the gift of healing, another prophecy, another of tongues. Paul taught that each of these gifts was necessary, just as surely as in the body, the hand cannot operate independently of the foot. It is a nonsense to say that a church has the Spirit gifts as they were possessed in the first century, but have congregations which have only one of those gifts (i.e. prophecy).

u Some groups have women using the gift of prophecy in the church. The prophetesses of the Old and New Testaments used their gifts of prophesy to either teach other women (e.g. in the case of Miriam) or to teach unbelievers the Gospel. 1 Corinthians 14:34 teaches that a woman must not use the gift of prophecy in church meetings; they are to be silent (1 Timothy 2:11,12). And 1 Corinthians 14:37 goes further, and says that anyone who truly has the gifts of the Spirit will acknowledge that this is in fact true.

uThe Spirit Gifts would lead believers into “all truth” (John 16:13). Yet the different groups all have different doctrines, yet they all claim to have the gift of prophecy. Whichever group you belong to, just accept that there are some people who really think that their prophets are from God, who are in fact mislead. Presumably, this is what you think of the other groups to which you don’t belong. But just consider: all such groups might be just as wrong. If other people in other groups can be sincerely in the wrong and mislead by their prophets- there’s a possibility that you might be, too.

“Try the spirits”

We mustn’t just accept anyone who claims to be a prophet, and obey him as if he is speaking God’s very own words to us. We must test those who claim to have the Spirit (1 John 4:1). John goes on to say that the mark of a false prophet is the doctrine which they teach- he doesn’t say that we are to test for the genuine prophet by checking whether he can make predictions about the future, or whether he can tell us about our past lives. Deuteronomy 8:13-15 says the same: even if a man can predict the future, don’t accept him as a prophet. Check whether he really teaches according to God’s commandments. In Isaiah’s day, there was a group of true prophets, lead by Isaiah as their spiritual father. But there were other false prophets, also claiming to foretell the future. *All the people of Israel* were invited to test what these people said according to the already existing word of God, and then reject the false prophets, even if they seemed credible in other ways (Isaiah 8:14-20). The whole group of believers at Thessalonica were told to prove (the same Greek word translated ‘try / test’ in 1 John 4:1) *all* prophesies, and not to despise true prophecy (1 Thessalonians 5:20,21). We must *all* obey God’s word, and therefore we *each* have a responsibility to test the claims of those who ask us to obey *their* word because they think it is *God’s* word. In the Old Testament, there were many false prophets who claimed to speak God’s word, when in fact they only spoke their *own* word. And Israel were condemned for just believing these men without testing them (Isaiah 9:15,16). So you must examine the teaching of the prophets against the Bible- yes, *you personally* must do this. You can’t leave it to anybody else; for you personally must find and obey God’s true word. Here are some things to compare:

- We are free from keeping any of the Jewish food laws (Romans 14:1-4; Colossians. 2:14-17). Yet Adventist and other prophets insist that some foods are unclean still.

- We are free from the duty of keeping any festival or special day (Colossians 2:14-17). Yet some prophets encourage the keeping of some festivals.

- Jesus Christ is the chief apostle and founder of the Church (Hebrews 3:1); but some sects teach that their prophets are. We should call no man on earth our spiritual father or master (Matthew 23:9). Most seriously, the one Church was founded by the Lord Jesus Christ through His death and resurrection- not by any prophet of the 20th or 21st century (Matthew 16:18; 26:61; Hebrews 3:3). No other foundation can be laid apart from that which was laid in the ressurection of the Lord Jesus (1 Corinthians 3:11).

Many prophets don’t like being tested by their congregations. This is probably one reason why they have a policy of not writing down their prophecies- because they cannot withstand the careful scrutiny which God’s true word can. But to safeguard them from serious analysis, they have developed several theories- each of them quite contrary to Bible teaching.

1. Only a true prophet has the right to question or denounce a false prophet. The congregation must not think of doing this.

Comment: We have shown in the above paragraphs that every member of the congregation was under a duty to test each prophets' words

2. A prophet who has made true prophecies or told a man about his past life must therefore be true in all he says.

Comment: Being able to tell people events in their past lives isn't something only done by Christians. Many non-Christians claim to do the same. This is no proof in itself that a man is a true prophet.

There are many examples of where prophets gave a true prophecy but then said or did something which was not true:

- Abraham and Sarah were both prophets but at that time they both lied in various ways (Genesis 20:7; Psalm 105:15).

- You can have the gift of prophecy but still fail to be in God's Kingdom (Matthew 7:22; 1 Corinthians 13:2).

- 1 Kings 13:11-29 contains the story of one of God's true prophets who also lied.

- Saul prophesied with the gift of the Spirit, but also lied and hated, and was not accepted by God (1 Samuel 10:10-12; 19:24).

- Nathan was a prophet but he wrongly assumed God wanted David to build a temple. But then God's word came to him and corrected what Nathan had said; thus he was a true prophet, but not everything he personally said, as a man, was therefore from God (2 Samuel 7:3-11 cp. 1 Chronicles 22:8).

- Jonah was a prophet, but rebelled against the word he prophesied (Matthew 12:39).

- Balaam spoke true words of prophecy when he himself was a wicked man and a soothsayer, or fortune teller (i.e. a false prophet as well; 2 Peter 2:16).

These passages all show even if the new prophets do really have the gift of prophecy, this doesn't necessarily mean that they all they say is to be accepted without question as being correct. Nor does it mean that they will be saved or are pleasing to God.

3. A prophet who prefaces his words with the statement that 'this is the word of the Lord and not of man' must surely be telling the truth.

Comment: Not necessarily. There are many examples of where men spoke in the name of Yahweh, and yet spoke the very opposite of God's word. Have a read through the following passages: 1 Kings 13:18; 22:5,6; Jeremiah 28:2. God foretold that there would arise men who would claim to speak in His Name but would speak falsely (Deuteronomy 18:20). Members of 'prophetic' churches are perhaps making the same mistake as the people of Israel in Jeremiah's time; just because a man stood up and said 'This is what the Lord says', they

believed him and followed him, even though the man was teaching only what they subconsciously wanted to hear anyway. And for doing this, and thereby rejecting God's true word as it was revealed in the Scriptures which they did have available to them, Israel were rejected by God (Jeremiah 14:14; 23:31-38; 27:15; 29:9). Likewise there was once a man who knew God's true word, but believed another man who said 'This is what Yahweh says...', when he was telling him lies. Because he just blindly believed that man- he was eaten by a lion (1 Kings 13:18).

We don't really need prophets today: because we have "all scripture" in the Bible, and this is all we need to be fully equipped in the Christian life and to attain salvation by grace (2 Timothy 3:16). The whole Christian community is a kingdom of priests (1 Peter 2:5,9); we all must speak forth God's word as we understand it from the Bible. The Lord Jesus warned that in the last days, there would be many false prophets (Matthew 24:24). We must each be on the watch for them, and therefore we each individually have a responsibility to analyse the words of those who tell us they are God's true prophets. And be aware that people prefer to have a prophet, rather than truly study and preach God's word for themselves (Micah 2:11). But there's no short cut. We simply *must* study the Bible for ourselves (study, not just *read* it or carry the Bible to church every Sunday...). Many prophets demand we accept them as prophets because they can tell some people about events in their past, and can apparently predict some events. But we have seen that these aren't necessarily signs that a man is from God. The fact many non-Christians can do just the same, just as convincingly as the new 'prophets', is proof enough that these 'abilities' aren't any strong reason for accepting them as from God. And you must be aware that many primitive religions are in principle the very same as the new sects, in that they also feature people who can predict some future events, and somehow know the thoughts of people. These people, who have these strange and inexplicable powers, then seek to gain power over the people. They form a congregation, and bring their followers into a position where they have power over them, demand great loyalty from them, and put themselves into a position where they cannot be questioned by the congregation, but must simply be obeyed. Many an African village is controlled in this way by a witch doctor or magician. The new prophets seem to be following the same principle. And in essence, so do Adventists- for they claim Ellen White to be their prophetess who can't be questioned. And so do Jehovah's Witnesses, with their claim that the publications of the 144,000 in Brooklyn, New York must be unquestionably accepted- even if, over the years, they contradict themselves. And so does the Catholic church, with it's claim that when the Pope speaks *ex Cathedra*, he is speaking the words of God- even though his words may contradict those of earlier Popes, who also made the same blasphemous claims. And so with the hosts of Protestant churches whose pastors claim to have the Holy Spirit, and therefore imply that their congregations must accept their teachings and follow them...

Where Do We Go From Here?

We really must break out of this attitude. We mustn't have this primitive attitude to our God and His Son and His word, the Bible. We must study it for ourselves, and be unafraid to question those who claim to speak or to have spoken God's word in recent times. Many of the new Christian sects members have come to *some* true conclusions regarding doctrine (e.g. that the trinity is not a Bible teaching). Maybe this is a stepping stone to a true relationship with God. Because we put it to you: now you need to analyse the words of your prophets, compare them with the Bible, study the Bible teaching about prophets and the Holy Spirit gift of prophecy; and then go forward to greater truths and eventually come into a true relationship with God and a certain Hope of being in His Kingdom.

Appendix 2: Should Christians Tithe? Introduction

I'm not on one hand against tithing; if that's what a believer wants to do, sure, let them do it. But I was amazed by some conversations I had with some friends in Texas recently. They were telling me of churches with thousands of members, who all tithe. The pastors are fantastically wealthy; I heard of one who has a helicopter with which he flies between his two congregations, each with about 4,000 members. And he quotes himself to his congregations as an example to them- of a man who got so rich because earlier he used to tithe. I just can't believe that intelligent, high income earning people could fall for this kind of thing. And yet many of those thousands of members are not wealthy people. They put themselves into poverty, leaving their kids without food at times, just so they can pay their tithe- into the pockets of fabulously wealthy pastors. So I figured it was time to Biblically investigate all this, as it sounds to me like abusive Christianity at its worst.

Thousands of people are being taken on a guilt trip which they need never embark upon if they search the Scriptures for themselves. If we do this, we will never be made to feel that we are stealing from God if we do not tithe. True Christianity is a call to shoulder the cross of Jesus. The " law of reciprocity" [that if you give tithes, you'll get rich] is taught by many TV Evangelists including Jerry Falwell of the Old Time Gospel Hour and Pat Robertson of the 700 Club. But in Christ there is a law of temporary *loss*, so that when He returns we may receive the spiritual blessings of life. We die, that we might live. We sow, that we might in the future reap eternal life (Gal. 6:7-9). We don't give now that we might get rich now. That would be selfish and not spiritual. And such motivation would surely not be pleasing to the Lord Jesus, who became poor that we through His poverty on the cross might be made rich- spiritually rich.

In fairness to the pastors, they're trapped. They've gone so far that it's hard to find the humility to admit they made a big big mistake. And their whole church structures are built around the requirement to have huge inputs of cash every Sunday. The Lord's work doesn't require this; but their structures do. One minister admitted to a friend of mine that if I she were to teach *against* the payment of the tithe, the church would collapse. ' But that's not what the Bible says', she answered. He replied: " But that's not the point...how are we going to run the church and get an income?" .

God's way of financing His Work today is for the believers to give freely in any way they can, motivated by their Lord's death. There is nothing abusive in this. But there is a lot of abuse in statements like:

- failing to tithe nets death.

- failing to tithe is stealing directly from the LORD.

- failing to tithe means being sentenced into the Lake of fire.

There was one well known television evangelist who recently stated publicly: " [You ministers need to] preach those Scriptures [tithing texts] fearlessly and remind people that [paying the tithe] is an absolute obligation that can keep them out of the kingdom more quickly than practically anything else if they neglect it - that you can lose salvation through neglect [of the tithe] just about more quickly than any other way."

Salvation by grace has gone out of the window in this theology. And the salvation there is in the sacrifice of Jesus has become replaced by salvation for money. It's just Catholicism dressed up in a Protestant guise. Give the church your money, and we'll see you right with God.

The Law Of Moses Is Finished

The only commands to tithe which we find in the Bible are in the context of the Law which God gave to Israel through Moses. Yet that Law has been finished. We are now under the New Covenant and not the Old. Once this point has been established, then it becomes apparent that we are not required to keep any one part of the Mosaic Law [such as tithing] for our salvation. Paul points out that if we keep part of the Law then we must keep it all, as disobedience to just one part of it brings condemnation. Thus it is fatal to keep the Mosaic Law partially, because this will result in our condemnation (Gal. 3:10; James 2:10). That's how important this topic is. Again, I'm not saying 'don't tithe at all'; but rather, 'don't tithe because you think it's a command which you have to keep because it's in the Bible'.

The Change In The Law

Jesus was the perfect sacrifice for sin and the ideal High Priest who could truly gain forgiveness for us. Therefore the old system of animal sacrifices and high priests [including the tithing system that supported them] was done away with after his death (Heb. 10:5-14). "The priesthood being changed (from the Levites to Christ), there is made of necessity a change also of the law" (Heb. 7:12). Therefore, "there is verily a disannulling of the former regulation (i.e. the law of Moses) because it was weak and useless. For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope (through Christ) did" (Heb. 7:18,19 A.V. with N.I.V.). This means that it is irrelevant to argue that any command system of God cannot be changed and is eternal- for clearly there *was* a change made.

The Problem Of Trying To Keep The Law

To trust in tithing for justification means that we do not accept the fullness of Christ's victory. Such beliefs mean that we do not accept Christ's sacrifice as completely successful, and that we feel that works are necessary to bring about our justification, rather than faith in Christ alone. "No man is justified by the law in the sight of God...for, The just(ified) shall live by *faith*" (Gal. 3:11 cf. Hab. 2:4). Our own effort to be obedient to the letter of God's laws, however determined, will fail and will not bring us justification; surely every reader of these words knows this already.

If we observe the Law of Moses, we must attempt to keep *all* of it. Disobedience to just one part of it means that those who are under it are condemned. "As many as are of (i.e. rely on) the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in *all* things which are written in the book of the law to do them" (Gal. 3:10).

The Victory Of Jesus

The weakness of our human condition means that we find it impossible fully to keep the Law of Moses, but due to Christ's complete obedience to it, we are freed from any obligation to keep it. Our salvation is due to God's gift through Christ, rather than our personal works of obedience. "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending

his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh" (Rom. 8:3). Thus "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us" (Gal. 3:13). Because of this, we are no longer required to keep any of the ordinances of the Law of Moses. The New Covenant in Christ replaced the Old Covenant of Moses' law (Heb. 8:13). By his death, Christ blotted out "the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us (by our inability to fully keep the law), and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross...Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink (offerings), or in respect of a religious festival, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days: which are a shadow of things to come; but the reality is Christ" (Col. 2:14-17 A.V. with N.I.V.). This is quite clear - because of Christ's death on the cross, the law was taken "out of the way" so that we should resist any pressure put on us to keep parts of it, e.g. the tithes and the Sabbath. Like the rest of the law, the purpose of these things was to point forward to Christ. After his death, their typical significance was fulfilled, and there was therefore no further need to observe them.

Warnings against keeping any part of the Law of Moses in order to gain salvation are dotted throughout the New Testament. Some taught that Christians should be circumcised according to the Mosaic Law, "and keep the law". James flatly condemned this idea on behalf of the true believers: "*we* gave no such commandment" (Acts 15:24). Peter described those who taught the need for obedience to the law as putting "a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear. But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ (as opposed to their works of obedience to the law) we shall be saved" (Acts 15:10,11). Paul is equally outspoken: "A man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ...that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified...no man is justified by the law...by (Christ) all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Gal. 2:16; 3:11; Acts 13:39).

What The Tithe Really Was

If we are supposed to tithe, and our salvation depends upon it, then we had better do it properly. I submit that those who tithe in churches today don't do it in a way that is obedient to the Old Testament, Biblical tithing commandments. Take two quite simple points:

1. Most Western citizens pay 30% or so of their wages in taxes etc, so on what is the 10% calculated? On the actual salary, or, on what you actually get to spend? The tithing churches are trying to force a precept aimed at the agricultural society of Israel onto other cultures and peoples; and it just doesn't fit.

2. Many churches ask members to sign an agreement to give 10% weekly- or else you can't belong to the church and get disfellowshipped. Yet the Bible commanded *annual* tithing. Not weekly. And there was no tithing every seventh year. But the tithing churches conveniently forget that.

Three Types Of Tithe

It must be understood that there were three separate tithes commanded under the Law of Moses. Yet the tithing churches have simply said: 'There's something about tithing in the Old Testament. So, hey, give us 10% of your money!'. The first was the Levitical tithe of 10% on 100% of the produce for the first six years and was destined for the Levites and priests (Dt.

14:27 , 12:19). The second tithe was the Festival tithe of 10% on 90% remaining produce after the Levitical tithe. This tithe had to be eaten in the presence of the Lord and was collected on the 1st, 2nd, 4th, and 5th years only. The third tithe was the tithe of the poor to be collected on the 3rd and 6th years only (Dt. 14:22-29, 26:12-15; Am. 4:4-5). No tithe was collected on the 7th year or Sabbatical year. The farmers were to let the land rest in that year.

This is confirmed even outside of the Biblical record. According to *New Unger's Bible Dictionary,* Josephus, the Jewish historian, states distinctly that there are three tithes. Hesays that *" one-tenth was to be given to the priests and Levites, one-tenth was to be applied to feasts in the metropolis, and that a tenth besides these was every third year to be given to the poor (cf. Tob. 1:7-8).*

Thus the true Biblical tithe commanded of Israel was performed on a Seven year cycle called the Shemittah Cycle. Three Ma'asers (Hebrew for tithe) were conducted and their timing is illustrated in the following table:

Shemittah Cycle							
Ma'aser (tithe)	**1st Year**	**2nd Year**	**3rd Year**	**4th Year**	**5th Year**	**6th Year**	**7th Year**
Levitical (Ma'aser rishon)	**10% of 100%**	**10% of 100%**	**10% of 100%**	**10% of 100%**	**10% of 100%**	**10% of 100%**	**None**
Festival (Ma'aser sheni)	**10% of 90%**	**10% of 90%**	**None**	**10% of 90%**	**10% of 90%**	**None**	**None**
Poor (Ma'aser ani)	**None**	**None**	**10% of 90%**	**None**	**None**	**10% of 90%**	**None**
Total Tithe %	**19%**	**19%**	**19%**	**19%**	**19%**	**19%**	**None**

The tithe consisted of fruit, grain, wine and later animals that are typically harvested as produce from the land. It never consisted of money. Further, it was recorded into the Law of Moses that a tithe of everything from the land belongs to the Lord (Lev. 27:30-33). During the Festival tithe, money or silver used as currency in ancient times was not an allowable substitution for the tithe. Tithes were conducted annually and were based upon one's produce increase for the year. This just isn't talking about putting paper money or checks on an offering plate each week as demanded by the tithing churches.

Various Points Of Difference Between Biblical Tithing And Modern Practice

Notice Lev. 27:32-33 "And concerning the tithe of the herd or the flock, of whatever passes under the rod, the tenth one shall be HOLY TO THE LORD. He shall not inquire whether it is GOOD OR BAD..." . The tithes are SELECTED AT RANDOM. They are not supposed to come from the "best portion" or the "fat portion" as you may have often heard, but it was a randomly selected portion "whether it is good or bad".

And consider the question: Did anyone else receive tithes besides the priest? Pastors today teach that they are the equivalent of the Levites under the Old Covenant and therefore should receive the tithes. But Biblically, people other than the priests received the tithe. These other people were the poor, the strangers, the orphans, and the widows who had access to the tithe every third year, which was called the " year of tithing."

The Bible describes tithing in an agricultural economy. It does not tell us whether or how potters, carpenters, merchants, etc. calculated tithes. The insistence that money be given to pastors as a tithe doesn't square with the Biblical account.

Think about Dt. 14:26 (NAS) " And you may spend the money for whatever your heart desires, for oxen, or sheep, or wine, or strong drink, or whatever your heart desires; and there you shall eat in the presence of the Lord your God and rejoice, you and your household." It has been argued that for the Jews *the tithe* was a " party" (or feast, if you like) and was to be " consumed in the sight of the Lord" . God's command to *tithe* includes consuming " whatever your heart desires" , including " strong drink" ! Imagine using up a tenth of your agricultural increase every year in a single party. One could read this passage as God commanding His people to enjoy themselves by bringing the bounty together so that " There may be food in my house" and then feasting and enjoying themselves in His sight. This is not the spirit of tithing found in modern churches- 10% of your money must go to the church, usually the pastors. And that's it.

Lack Of Evidence For Tithing In the Early Church

It is surely significant that there is no evidence that tithing is intended to be part of the New Covenant under which believers now are. If God had intended to carry *tithing* over into the New Covenant, then the chance was missed in Acts 15. You will note tithing is not mentioned in the Acts 15 Jerusalem Council rulings. Indeed, tithing is only mentioned as emerging in the Christian church some centuries after Jesus- along with many other false practices and doctrines:

" The early Church had no tithing system. The tithes of the Old Testament were regarded as abrogated by the law of Christ... But as the Church expanded and its material needs grew more numerous and complex, it became necessary to adopt a definite rule to which people could be held either by a sense of moral obligation or by a precept of positive law. The tithing of the Old Law [of Moses] provided an obvious model, and it began to be taught... The Council of Macon in 585 ordered payment of tithes and threatened excommunication to those who refused to comply" (*New Catholic Encyclope*dia, Vol. 14, pp.174,175). There is fairly strong evidence that the sort of seeking for personal wealth by pastors such as we see today was totally frowned upon in the early church. These quotes are from the Didache (Teaching of the Apostles), written not long after the departure of the last of the original apostles:

Didache 11:6 "And when he departeth let the apostle receive nothing save bread, until he findeth shelter; but if he ask money, he is a false prophet".

Didache 11:12 "And whosoever shall say in the Spirit, Give me silver or anything else, ye shall not listen to him; but if he tell you to give on behalf of others that are in want, let no man judge him".

In fact the New Testament ministry was supported solely by *freewill offerings* (Mt. 6:25-34; Lk 10:4-8; Acts 4:32-35, 20:33-35; 2 Cor. 8:2-15, 9:6-12, 11:8-9; 1 Jn. 3:17-18) and not by some tithing system. In the days of the early church, Christians pooled their goods and shared their possessions equally (Acts 4:32-37). The apostles were legally unable to receive tithes from the people to financially support the Work of the primitive Church because the Temple was still standing and none of the apostles were of the tribe of Levi serving in the Sanctuary. Jesus himself was from the tribe of Judah (Heb. 7:12-14) and could not therefore have accepted tithes. Only the Levites were authorized by God and the Mosaic legislation to take tithes from the people. Even Paul, who was certainly not a Levite, could not have demanded or received tithes from his churches. Yet he shows that a teacher or minister has a right to be provided for in return for the preaching and teaching of the Gospel (1 Cor. 9)- but not by tithes. In fact he even states that such a teacher ought to receive " double honor" or a " double gift" (1 Tim. 5:17).

Some Logical Debating Points

HOW is it possible to reintroduce, without a shred of NT proof, an Old Covenant financial system into the Church?

WHY is a monetary tithe apparent to ministers of various churches when it is not expressed in the Old Covenant?

WHY is tithing not in the context or even mentioned in the NT epistles? AREN'T all NT references to tithes and to tithing solely concerning Pharisees, scribes, the antiquated Levitical system? WEREN'T these references due solely to the Sanctuary, Temple, Altar, Sacrifices?

WHY do devout Jewish rabbis refuse to take, demand or accept tithes? WOULDN'T they, not being Levites, be breaking God's law to do so?

WHY don't Christian deacons gather together all the tithes of the people and then pay the ministry a separate tithe if the Levitical analogy is to be consistently followed?

WHY are Peter, James, Paul, John and Jude strangely silent about tithing? WHY don't they command, infer, mention, exhort or plead the tithe from Christians?

WHY didn't Jesus establish tithing for the Church he was beginning?

WHY does Paul speak exclusively of gifts, offerings, and contributions? WOULD not Paul have had to explain the tithing system to Biblically ignorant Gentiles?

CAN ministers prove a universal tithing law existing before Moses?

WAS there ever a universal monetary tithing law existing in ancient Israel?

WASN'T tithing purely on farm animals and agricultural products?

WHY didn't Jesus take tithes from the people? SHOULDN'T Jesus have led the way in example by accepting tithes, or in admonition or command? SHOULDN'T the ministry stop taking tithes to faithfully follow Our Lord's example?

ISN'T "giving" the principle within Christ's new Covenant? WHY have so many people been terrorized, intimidated, disfellowshipped or " marked" by the leadership of " Prosperity Gospel" churches for not conforming to tithing laws? SHOULDN'T " giving" be personal and voluntary, based upon conversion, and by how deeply moved by the sacrifice of Christ the person is when he or she gives?

HOW can Christians ever build proper character, judgment, compassion under a compliant regulatory system of tightly prescribed Mosaic rules and regulations?

IF we are the priesthood of all believers, shouldn't a monetary tithe be paid to ourselves?

Giving As God Intended

True giving is motivated by the Gospel, by the love of Christ, not law.

The verse that most sums up the New Testament teaching on *giving* is surely 2 Cor 9:7 (NAS): “Let each one do just as he has purposed in his heart; not grudgingly or under compulsion; for God loves a cheerful giver”. Let us admit that there is something in us that hankers to be " under the law," even if just a little bit. But dumb legalism will never enable us to be cheerful givers.

1 Cor. 16:1,2 encourages the believers to give weekly- not annually as under the tithing system- according as God had blessed each person. This doesn’t sound like a continuation of Mosaic tithing. Each gives “as he purposeth in his heart”- not as a tithing programme demands. God loves a cheerful giver; and it is freewill offerings which come from a basis of joy, rather than those automatically given because of a duty to tithe, which so touch His heart. 2 Cor. 9:6 speaks of reaping sparingly if we sow sparingly in our giving. This sounds as if the amount we chose to give is fixed by us. But the ‘reaping bountifully’ sure refers to our reaping of the ‘reward’ in God’s Kingdom, as; not present material blessings. It is at “the end of the world” that the Angels come forth and reap the harvest (Mt. 13:30,39; 25:26; Rev. 14:15). And then we will “reap life everlasting...if we faint not [in this life]”(Gal. 6:8,9).

Paul told the Corinthians that they had a duty to give something in response to what they had been given. He makes a great play in 2 Corinthians on the similarity between the Greek words for “grace” and “gift / giving”. Because of God’s grace, they were to give. This response comes in terms of morality (6:14-7:1), which the Corinthians had done (7:8-13), and in terms of affection, which the Corinthians had also done (7:2-7), and in financial generosity, which Paul addresses in chapter 8. But Paul did not make a command (8:8). Instead, he asked first for a turning of the heart. He wanted the Corinthians to give themselves to the Lord first, and then to support financially. He wanted their gift to be done in sincere love, not from compulsion (8:5, 8). Paul reminded them that Christ had become poor for their sakes on the cross; the implication is that the Corinthians should make financial sacrifices in return. But then Paul reduced the pressure, reminding the Corinthians that they could not give more than they had (8:12). Nor did they have to impoverish themselves to enrich others; Paul was only aiming for equity (8:13-14), in that he was appealing for donations for the poor brethren in Jerusalem. Yet the tithing churches seem to be taking money from the flock in order to pay huge salaries to their pastors... which is the very opposite of financial giving by the flock leading towards equality amongst the wider body of Christ. Paul repeatedly noted that the offering must be done willingly, not from compulsion or given grudgingly (9:5, 7).

The theme of equality also recurs in Acts 2:44-47 " Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people". The way of dealing with poverty was not by tithing, but by the rich sharing what they had with the poor.

And the repeated teaching of the New Testament is that our giving should be to the poor, just as the tithes were partly to enable the poor to be helped. Jesus repeats this: " If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give TO THE POOR, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me" (Mt. 19:21); "Sell what you have and GIVE ALMS [to the poor]; provide yourselves a treasure in heaven.. for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also (Lk. 12:33,34)" . What is Jesus saying here? Give to whom? Give TO THE POOR and you will have treasure in heaven! Not to wealthy pastors and churches. All this is a reflection of God's generosity; and He doesn't heap up wealth upon certain pastors. Rather: " As it is written: 'He has dispersed abroad, He has given TO THE POOR; His righteousness endures forever'" (2 Cor. 9:9).

Let 2 Cor.9:12 sum up: " For the administration of this service not only supplies the NEEDS OF THE SAINTS, but also is abounding through many thanksgivings to God" . Such praise and glory to the Father is through our freewill generosity; not through parting with 10% of our wages regularly because we think we are commanded to do so.

Passages Misinterpreted

Genesis 14:18" Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High, and he blessed Abram, saying, Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. And blessed be God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand. Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything."

Comment:

It is true that Abraham *gave* a tithe to this priest. But he in no way " paid" that tenth. Nowhere in the Biblical record is there any reference that Abraham was required by God nor by any law to tithe. This is a specific one-off account of how Abraham gave Melchizedek a tenth of the *spoils obtained from warfare*. It wasn't a regular gift of 10% / year. Nowhere else in the Bible do we read of Abraham paying tithes ever again. Abram gave voluntarily, whereas under the Mosaic Law, tithing was mandatory. Clearly, then, this passage is not related to tithing as practiced by the nation of Israel under the Mosaic covenant. The reference to the tithe occurs in a narrative. The important thing to ask is: what is the purpose of this particular narrative section (Gen. 14), especially in relation to chapters 12-13 and chapter 15? Note in particular how Abram drove the kings out of the land (14:15), which must be seen in the context of God's promise to Abram (12:1) concerning the land. Abram's act of giving a tenth was a very common practice in the ancient Near East as a token of respect and honor, or in response to a blessing. Archaeological discoveries (e.g. the Ugaritic texts) show that the practice of " tithing" was a widespread custom of the times; 10% of the produce of the land was given to the landowner. And Abraham recognized that the landowner was God. He didn't want it to seem that he had gotten the land for his own personal possession. He knew God had given it to him.

Genesis 28:20-22 " Then Jacob made a vow saying, If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear so that I return safely to my father's house, then the LORD will be my God and this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God's house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth."

Comment:

Nowhere in the account was Jacob *required* to give or to pay that tenth. Claims that there was a tithing law in force before Moses is clearly a nonsense without substantiation. This vow made by Jacob was personal in nature and was uttered by him as some kind of rather unspiritual " bargain" or " deal" with God. However, notice that Jacob says that if Yahweh is his God, then he will give Him a tenth. This tradition of giving a ten percent amount had its roots in the ancient landlord/tenant/king relationship. Jacob was recognizing God as his king by doing it, and was treating Him how people at the time treated their king or landowner. But later on, when Jacob wrestles with Esau, and comes to realize how God is indeed his king, there is no reference to him actually giving a tithe to God. He surely came to grasp that God demands our all, and not just a mere fraction.

In light of understanding the cultural and social expectations in which Abraham and Jacob lived it must surely be accepted that the tenth given by Abram and Jacob was not equivalent to the tithe as set forth by the Law of Moses. The tenth of the spoils paid by Abram was for his victory and Jacob's tenth was for God to watch over him and for a safe journey. There is no evidence in the Bible to assume that Abram or Jacob intended to give an annual ongoing tenth of their future produce increases. These were surely one off payments of a tenth which are referred to. Note that nowhere do we read that Jacob was commanded to give a tithe (tenth). Jacob's promise to " tithe" was conditional - *" If God will be with me ..."* (vs. 20), but under the Mosaic covenant, tithing was compulsory.

Leviticus 27:30-33 " A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the LORD; it is holy to the LORD. If a man redeems any of his tithe, he must add a fifth of the value to it. The entire tithe of the herd and flock - every tenth animal that passes under the shepherds rod - will be holy to the LORD. He must not pick out the good from the bad or make any substitution. If he does make a substitution, both the animal and its substitute become holy and cannot be redeemed."

Comment:

Two things stand out in this section of legislation. (1) God commanded Israel to tithe on *agricultural or farming produce* and (2) every tenth *animal* of their flocks and herds. God never commanded them to tithe on fish they caught. He never commanded them to tithe on all the copper they mined. Nor on the milk they received from their sheep, goats and cows. Nor were they required to tithe on the sale of wool, or the money they made in their professions of selling pottery, designing and making furniture or clothing, creating carvings, writing literature, or on construction work. According to this section of God's law, if a shepherd had 18 sheep in his flock only the tenth animal would be considered holy to the LORD. The tithe in this case would be 1/18th or 5.6%, not 10%. And yet the tithing churches twist this to mean that 10% must be given to them- because the Old Testament says something about giving a tithe. But the tithe wasn't always 10%... So, a "tithe" doesn't mean '10% of your money'. It means 'the tenth'- and there is a difference.

Numbers 18:20, 21, 24 " The LORD said to Aaron, You will have no inheritance in their land, nor will you have any share among them. I am your share and your inheritance among the Israelites. I give to the Levites all the tithes in Israel as their inheritance in return for the work they do while serving at the Tent of Meeting... I give to the Levites as their inheritance the tithes that the Israelites present as an offering to the LORD."

Numbers 18:25-28 " The LORD said to Moses, Speak to the Levites and say to them: When you receive from the Israelites the tithe I give you as your inheritance, you must present a tenth of that tithe as the LORD's offering. Your offering will be reckoned to you as grain from the threshing floor or juice from the winepress. In this way you also will present an offering to the LORD from all the tithes you receive from the Israelites. From these tithes you must give the LORD's portion to Aaron the priest. You must present as the LORD's portion the best and holiest part of everything given to you."

Comment:

No other Israelite tribe apart from the Levites could accept Israelite tithes. This was a stipulation that was very plain indeed. The Levites in turn had to give a tenth of the tithes which they received from the people directly to the priests who attended the altar. Where is this by pastors etc today? There was to be no deviation from this command. Yet today we have Gentile ministers who have arrogated to themselves this right to receive tithes from the people.

The Lord further states that the Levites would have no inheritance of land but would be given the tithe instead (Num. 18:20-32) To summarize, the purpose of the biblical tithe was 1) to care for the Levites who were denied land , 2) to provide subsistence for the priesthood whose function was to preach the Torah and 3) to care for the poor in general. Not to pay big wages to pastors.

Deuteronomy 12:5-6,11 " You are to seek the place the LORD your God will choose from among all your tribes to put his Name there for his dwelling. To that place you must go; there bring your burnt offerings and sacrifices, your tithes and special gifts, what you have vowed to give and your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks... Then to the place the LORD your God will choose as a dwelling for his Name - there you are to bring everything I command you: your burnt offerings and sacrifices, your tithes and special gifts, and all the choice possessions you have vowed to the LORD."

Deuteronomy 14:22-29 " Be sure to set aside a tenth of all that your fields produce each year. Eat the tithe of your grain, new wine and oil, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks in the presence of the LORD your God at the place he will choose as a dwelling for his Name, so that you may learn to revere the LORD your God always. But if that place is too distant and you have been blessed by the LORD your God and cannot carry your tithe (because the place where the LORD will choose to put his Name is so far away) then exchange your tithe for silver, and take the silver with you and go to the place the LORD your God will choose. Use the silver to buy whatever you like: cattle, sheep, wine or other fermented drink, or anything you wish. Then you and your household shall eat there in the presence of the LORD your God and rejoice. And do not neglect the Levites living in your towns, for they have no allotment or inheritance of their own. At the end of every three years, bring all the tithes of that year's produce and store it in your towns so that the Levites (who have no allotment or inheritance of their own) and the aliens, and the fatherless and the widows who live in your

towns may come and eat and be satisfied, and so that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands."

Comment:

It was to the Temple or the Tent of Meeting (the Tabernacle) that Israelites forwarded their tithes. That is why Moses instructed that tithes must be sent to the place God had put his Name (Shiloh and later Jerusalem). Every third year in a cycle of seven they retained their tithes in their own cities for the use of the poor, strangers, widows, Levites etc. There is no doubt thatDeuteronomy 14 is referring to the Second Tithe as contrasted with the tithe of the produce that was to be given for the maintenance of the Levites (see Dr. J.H. Hertz, *The Pentateuch and Haftorahs*, 1961, p.810). This Second Tithe, or its monetary equivalent, had to be consumed in Jerusalem but in the third and sixth years of the seven year cycle what would have been the Second Tithe was to be retained at home for the poor and the destitute to consume. The third year is called " the year of tithing" (Dt. 26:12). Yet again, the tithing churches have just made a surface-level connection with the Old Testament passages. Part of the tithes was to be eaten before the Lord in His temple. Where and how is this done in the tithing churches? Aren't they rather arrogant if they presume their church to be the actual and only temple of God? For the tithes could only be consumed in one place on earth.

Malachi 3:6-12 " I the LORD do not change. So you, O descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed. Ever since the time of your forefathers you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you, says the LORD Almighty. But you ask, How are we to return? Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. But you ask, How do we rob you? In tithes and offerings. You are under a curse - the whole nation of you - because you are robbing me. Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse that there may be food in my house. Test me in this, says the LORD Almighty, and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it. I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not cast their fruit, says the LORD Almighty. Then all the nations will call you blessed. For yours will be a delightful land, says the LORD Almighty" .

Comment:

Firstly, Malachi is not writing to Christians today. He is writing to the Jewish nation which had returned from Babylonian captivity during the days of Ezra-Nehemiah. His commands were concerning native Israelites of his own day. Secondly, the tithe under discussion is agricultural in nature. This can be easily established by looking at verse 10: " Bring the whole tithe into the STOREHOUSE that there may be FOOD in my house" . This tithe of Malachi was stored in a temple storehouse (2 Chron 31:4-12; Neh 10:38). One cannot escape the conclusion that in Malachi's day the Israelites (not the Gentiles) were still commanded to bring their tithes to the Levites (as Moses had legislated) who then placed these tithes in the storehouse of the Temple. We cannot escape this conclusion because it is clearly written in this very section which modern ministers wish to ignore while emphasizing certain verses to their own financial advantage (Neh. 10:35,37,38).

The " tithes" are presented to be the tenth portion of your income which is given away and deposited into the " storehouse" . The " storehouse" is presented to be your church's account. But this just isn't what the passage is talking about. The key to understanding this is in the preceding verse: " Yet from the days of your fathers you have gone away from MY

ORDINANCES and have not kept them..." (Mal. 3:7). But now we are not under the Law of Moses; those “ordinances” have been taken away. Jesus “abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances...blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, nailing it to his cross...If ye died with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the [Jewish] world, do ye subject yourselves to [Mosaic] ordinances?”(Eph. 2:15; Col. 2:14,20 cp. Heb. 9:1,10).

In Malachi's day, tithing was required (Mal. 3:8-10), and physical blessings were promised for obedience, just as physical blessings were promised for obedience to the old covenant. But New Covenant blessings are not physical. No longer do we receive long life for obedience and many children and fruitful fields. Our blessings are in “heavenly places in Christ”, and relate ultimately to the “blessed hope” of eternal fellowship with the Father in His coming Kingdom.

Matthew 23:23 " Woe to you teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices - mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law - justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former."

Comment:

Certainly they were correct in their fulfilling of the legal requirements of the Mosaic law, for they were tithing on agricultural products, not items of monetary increase. And, of course, they were still under the Mosaic law for the Temple still stood, and all the rituals performed by the Levites and the priests were to continue until the Temple was destroyed. What verse 23 really tells us is that the scribes and the Pharisees had gardens of herbs on which they were required to tithe. Remember, only shepherds, cattlemen and farmers were to tithe according to the Law. Because they grew herbs they were considered " farmers" .

If Jesus taught that Gentiles should practice tithing, and that the Church ought to levy a tithing system onto its members, then it is surely strange as elsewhere pointed out, that there is no reference to tithing in the early history of the church.

Hebrews 7

Comment:

We now come to the teaching of Hebrews 7. It is suggested by some that Christians today are part and parcel of the " Melchizedek" Priesthood, not the " Levitical" of the Mosaic dispensation. And therefore, they reason, they have a right to collect the tithes of the people, even of Gentiles. If this is the case then why not reintroduce into the church the Jewish annual holy days, purification rites, vows, tokens of virginity, land Sabbaths, eye for eye compensation, landmark and restitution laws, first fruits, firstborn redemption, firstlings, worship customs, the year of Jubilee, phylacteries, fringes, mixed fabrics, washings, ablutions, circumcision, refuge cities, leprosy tests, Temple furniture, divorce laws, year of release, slavery laws, warfare rules, robe and ephod etc.? Why not revive all the other Mosaic laws, regulations, statutes and judgments especially those not specifically rescinded in the pages of the New Testament?

According to Heb. 7:24 Jesus is the only member of the Melchizedek priesthood. There was a change in the law (Heb. 7:12) but the is to the priesthood being changed, not tithing being transferred. The example of Abraham giving tithes to Melchizedek was cited to illustrate the awesome superiority of the Melchizedek priesthood over that of the Levitical priesthood. Indeed, the Letter to the Hebrews makes no suggestion that the New Testament ministry IS the Melchizedek priesthood. There is only ONE priest who occupies that position and that is Jesus Christ (Heb. 7:24).

Hebrews 7 is not instructing Christians to follow the example of Abraham in tithing, but rather, expounds the superiority and eternality of Christ's priesthood and the finality of his sacrifice. The Hebrews were reasoning that Jesus could not be a High Priest because He was of Judah and not a Levite. Hebrews 7 is replying that actually Melchizedek was of unproven genealogy, therefore he would not be a priest under the Mosaic system as he couldn't prove his genealogy. And yet even Abraham considered him his superior, by paying tithes to him. Christ alone is our Great High Priest forever *" who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and made us to be a kingdom and priests"* (Rev. 1:5,6; cp. 1 Peter 2:5,9). Melchizedek was a type of Christ- not of the pastors of the tithing churches.

Summing up, there was a change of the priesthood from the Levites to Jesus Christ, and this implies a change in the law that assigned the Levites to be priests. How much has been changed? Hebrews says that the old covenant is obsolete. The package of laws that commanded tithes to be given to the Levites is obsolete.

APPENDIX 3

What Is The Gospel?

It's good to see you have taken time to consider the Bible's message. Perhaps you are cautious of religion. Going to church, performing rituals, following traditions. And we would quite agree with you. The Bible teaches that God lives in the heart of men and women who listen to His words. The only ceremonies we should follow are those the Bible itself clearly explains – and there are very few of them in the Bible. Being baptized by dipping in water and breaking bread every week in memory of Jesus are the two main ones.

Or perhaps you're just an ordinary person who wants God in your life, but doesn't want to go any deeper. Now this is probably true of many of us who would read a religious leaflet, come to a lecture about the Bible, or have a discussion about it. It's wonderful that we believe that God is; for surely He does exist. But there is so much more waiting to be discovered – by studying His word, the Bible, we can come to know Him and have a part in His eternal plan. That book was written by His Spirit influencing the people who wrote it – it isn't just the words of men, like any other book. So this is why it's so worth studying.

Or maybe you think you know it all. You've looked at the Bible, you figured it out. But if you are very, very honest, something is missing. There's that hollow feeling still, that fear of the future, that lack of certainty about our final destiny... that doubt that's like the black dog that follows most men and women till their grave. And to you, we'd say: Give it one more try. Perhaps human interpretations have got muddled up with your consideration of the Bible. Get back to the Bible text itself.

Or maybe you see Christianity as “just another intellectual adventure”, another hobby to play with for a while, another fascination, another town along a road – that leads to the grave all the same. Life is too short to have this kind of cynical attitude. One day you will be laid down in your grave, one day the terrible finality of death will close in on you. Give the Bible text a fair hearing now. Please, purely for your own sake, spare a few minutes of your life to at least consider what it says.

So can I address the question, ***What Is The Gospel?***

Please open your New Testament to Matthew 1:1. This is the beginning of Matthew’s explanation of the Gospel. We read:

The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

It’s not quite what we’d expect. He says Jesus is the descendant of David and Abraham. And this, for Matthew, is the beginning of the Gospel. Paul saw it the same way. Have a look at Galatians 3:8:

And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.

So, the Gospel is what was promised to Abraham. That’s what Paul says. So, if we can understand what God promised to Abraham, we can understand what the Gospel is. So let’s go back to the Old Testament, and see what God told Abraham. We’ll go to Genesis, the first book of the Bible, Genesis 17:8:

And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.

So Abraham was told that he and his children would live for ever on this earth. So, eternal life is an idea that comes up in the Old Testament. Note that – because the essential message of the Bible is the same all the way through. How could this be? Turn on to Genesis 22:17,18:

"That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice".

Abraham was to have a son who would be the source of blessing for the whole world. Now the way to understand the Bible is to see how the Bible itself quotes itself and gives us the interpretation. Now these words we have just read are quoted in the New Testament – in Acts 3:25,26. Let’s go there and find the interpretation.

"Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities".

So, who is the seed of Abraham? Jesus. And what are the blessings he would enable for men and women of the whole world? The blessings of forgiveness of sins and salvation. Let's go further. To Galatians 3:16:

"Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ."

So, the seed of Abraham was one man, singular, Jesus. But how could that one man become so many, as many as the stars in the sky? Let's read Galatians 3:27-29.

"For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

So, only those who have been baptized into Christ have a part in these promises – the promises of eternal life here on earth. This is why we must be baptized if we are going to be saved! Paul said that his hope was *"the hope of Israel"* (Acts 28:20). As he faced death, this was his hope – the hope of Israel. What is baptism, then? It isn't sprinkling. The New Testament is written in Greek, and the word translated 'baptism' means really to dip. It was used about a ship sinking, being submerged, or a piece of cloth being dyed from one colour to another by immersing it. Have a look at Mathew 3:13-16:

"Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him."

Jesus went "down into" the water and came "up out of it". He was baptized as an adult, not as a baby; by dipping, not sprinkling. That's why it was done in a river. And if He was baptized, so should we be. This dipping and rising up signifies the death and resurrection of Jesus, and that we have decided to make His death and resurrection our own.
This is why it has to be by immersion, not by sprinkling. Have a look at Romans 6:3-5:

"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection"

This is why we appeal to you to be baptized – make it your aim in life, to accept Jesus Christ! By being baptized into Jesus, we become part of Him, and therefore the promises apply to us. Therefore when He returns, we will be resurrected, judged and then, if we have lived faithfully according to God's word, we will be given the eternal life which He now has. Then we will live for ever in God's Kingdom here on earth. If you believe this, then life has a new meaning. Whatever material problems we have, we will realize that they are only temporary, and when Christ returns He will give us a new and eternal life. This is why in the Bible and in

Christ there is real HOPE. The hope ahead is so great that our present problems do not seem so great.

But how can it be, that this man Jesus can save us? He was our representative, and this is why we must be baptized into His death and resurrection; because He was just like us. Have a look at Heb. 2:14-18:

"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted."

Notice in passing that the devil is not an animal or a dragon. It is used here as a personification for sin. *"The wages of sin is death"* (Romans 6:23), but here we read that 'the devil' "has the power of death". We need to struggle against our own natures, not against an invisible being outside of ourselves. Verse 14 says the same thing several times – He, Himself, likewise, partook, the same nature as us. Yet most 'Christian' groups teach that there are three Gods in a trinity, and one of them was Jesus. But this isn't what the Bible says. And according to Hebrews, it is very important we get our understanding of Jesus right. He was exactly of
our nature. The writer stresses it 4 times! He was tempted like us.
And how are we tempted? By our own human nature. Have a look at James 1:13-15:

"Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."

This means that Jesus had our human nature. God can't be tempted, it says, but Jesus was tempted, Hebrews says. So Jesus wasn't God Himself. He was a man, the Son of God by birth, the descendant of David and Abraham through Mary. Likewise, God can't be born; but Jesus was born. God can't die; but Jesus died. We cannot see God; but men saw and handled Jesus. Jesus didn't exist before His birth, either. He was the son of God through Mary. Have a look at Luke 1:31-35:

"And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."

Notice all those future tenses! He will be the Son of God, Mary will conceive in her womb – this is where Jesus began, although the idea, the logos of Jesus, had always been with God from the beginning. Notice that Mary was just an ordinary woman. Jesus was the descendant

of Abraham and David, and this could only have been because his mother was their descendant. If Jesus was God, then Mary is the mother of God, and she wasn't an ordinary woman. If as the Bible teaches Jesus was the Son of God and also "son of man", the descendant of Abraham and David through Mary, it is evident that Mary was an ordinary woman. So it's all or nothing – a system of true belief, or a system of wrong belief. It is important to believe the right thing, because doctrine affects how we live. Have a look at Hebrews 4:15,16:

For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

Because Jesus was of our nature, therefore we can pray with confidence through Him to God. We don't need a human priest, church building or pastor to make our prayers acceptable.

So can I just summarize the things we have spoke about:

1. There is only one God, not a 'trinity'

2. Jesus is the Son of God, not God Himself; He didn't exist before He was born. He had all our temptations and human experiences, but He never sinned. He gave His life for us in a painful death, but then, because He never sinned, God resurrected Him from the dead.

3. Through baptism into Christ by the dipping in water of an adult, we share His death and resurrection

4. So when Jesus Christ returns we will be resurrected, judged and given eternal life in His Kingdom – which will be based here on this earth. This Kingdom will be like the world was in the garden of Eden, when God first created man – and even better. All the problems which are now on earth – war, famine, sadness, even death itself, will be finally ended – for ever.

5. After death we are unconscious – 'hell' means just 'the grave'.

6. The soul is not immortal; we are made of dust and return to the dust. The spirit is the power of life within us, which God takes back when we die. We don't go on existing in any conscious form after death.

7. 'Satan' is a symbol for the evil human desires inside us, against which we must struggle; it is not the name of a dragon or monster that exists. God is 100% powerful; He doesn't share His power with 'satan'. All our problems come from God, not satan, and therefore there is a positive spiritual purpose to them.

8. By reading the Bible for ourselves we can find the true way to God.

I do appeal to you, to study these things, and give yourself no rest until you have come to surely know the true Gospel. I do so hope you will study our free Bible study course; and set yourself the aim, to be baptized one day, by dipping in water. Then you will surely have the hope of eternal life. OK we can't imagine eternal life. I can only suggest we imagine a long, long line, with no end, stretching on into the distance; and we in this life are just a few

millimetres at the start of it. This really is our hope, if we are baptized into Jesus and live in Him. I plead with you, to take all this seriously, and not treat it as mere religion, as just something ordinary.

Our modern civilization [so called] with its addiction to money and power has left so much unaddressed; our need for beauty, for poetry, mystery and dreams, to find love, the meaning of life, for personal contact with God. The rush of modern life has left each of us with the niggling conscience that this is the sort of life we want to have, indeed, that we ought to follow. But not only do we not follow our conscience; we don't know where to find something, some philosophy, some religion, which somehow synthesizes all these needs together. But I'm bold enough to suggest that in God and in His Son, as the Bible reveals them, stripped of all the theology of men, the accretions of nominal Christian culture… we find just what we need and were unconsciously looking for all our lives. I can only say 'taste and see…'. For all other commentary or persuasion would be bathos compared to the real Christ and the real God as they truly are.

Duncan Heaster

Appendix 4: Tips For Speaking Through An Interpreter

Ez. 3:4-7 contains God's comment on language barriers. In that passage, God comments that had Ezekiel been sent preaching in Hebrew to nations who didn't know Hebrew, somehow they would've understood and responded. In other words- in the preaching of the Gospel, the language barrier *can* easily be overcome, somehow, with God's help and the desire of an audience to understand God's truth. It's an encouragement to us in our efforts to 'get the message over' in languages other than our own.

After very many years of translating Christian speakers, and being myself translated, I thought the following little points might be of value to brethren speaking through translators whilst on mission work:

- Realize that translating is more stressful than speaking. Try to take attention off the translator by asking members of the audience to read out loud the Bible verses you quote.

- Make it clear if you do not want the translator to add their own comments to your material. However, sometimes this *is* necessary.

- Realize that a translator may have mistranslated one of your earlier sentences. In this case he or she may have to backtrack at some point. Be prepared for this and allow them to do it.

- When a translator is translating the response of someone else, ensure that they adhere strictly to their role as translator, and that they aren't adding their interpretation of what the person is saying. I well remember opening an interview in Asia with the question: "Why do you want to be baptized?". The candidate said about 5 words, but the translator went on for about 5 minutes!

- Avoid idioms and small talk. Keep language simple. Realize that it is not enough to merely repeat material you have previously given to a Western audience- it will need some

adaptation. If you are talking about David, call him David- and not “the sweet Psalmist of Israel” [that’s a real example from a few years ago!]. Avoid throw away comments.

- Leave out all references to Western Christian politics.

- Leave out references to the idea that Russia=Gog and will invade Israel. This subject inflames strong feelings and will not contribute to a happy time together.

- Be as visual as possible.

- Don’t use “thee” and “thou” and their associated old English endings. Almost no local translator will understand them. Appreciate that almost none of the translators are professionals. If they make a mistake or can’t understand you, they get phased and very stressed, and the quality of their translation declines. Appreciate that it’s far more stressful for them translating than it is for you speaking. Therefore thank them warmly at the end. Show your recognition of the fact that without their services, you’d be unable to serve the congregation.

- Keep sentences short. Be translated sentence by sentence. Complex sentences are either partially forgotten by the translator, or lead to confusion in the mind of the audience. Consider the sentence: “The difficulty with explaining the devil and satan, which subjects are so widely misunderstood [actually, my mother in law to this day won’t accept our explanations on this subject], is that people don’t realize that ‘satan’ is just a Hebrew word meaning ‘adversary’”. This needs cutting down to: “The devil and satan are widely misunderstood. People don’t realize that ‘satan’ is just a Hebrew word. It means ‘adversary’. That’s why some find it hard to understand this subject”. And omit all reference to your mother in law.

- Watch the translator while he / she is translating. A common problem is that the translator is in mid sentence, pausing for thought or breath, and then the speaker continues on with another sentence. Never interrupt the translator while they are speaking. Let them clearly finish their sentence before you start speaking again. This is perhaps the most frequent and most frustrating problem between speakers and translators. Some Western brother gets in full flow making his case and getting excited, talking quickly, sentence after sentence, and the translation just trails off… [and he wonders why there are all those blank looks in the audience in response to his wonderful exposition!].

- Realize that jokes often don’t come over through translation.

- Avoid double negatives, e.g. “It’s not clear that this is not the case”.

- Repeat the chapter and verse numbers several times. Translators are often so busy thinking about the words you are saying that they forget the numbers.

- Realize that non-English Bibles may vary from the English version which you are using. The numbering of some chapters and verses, especially in the Psalms and Daniel, is often different. The Russian Bible has a different numbering for the Psalms- after Ps. 7, the Psalms are one number behind the English, e.g. Ps. 23 English is Ps. 22 Russian. Also, where there is an opening editorial note to the Psalm, this counts as verse 1 of the Psalm. Therefore, the verse numbers in Russian in those Psalms are plus 1 from those in the English Bible. E.g.

Verse 23 English becomes verse 24 Russian. Also, the order of the NT books in the Russian Bible is different- the English Bibles arrange them in size order from what I can see.

- Try not to base arguments on individual words [even though Scripture itself does this], because the local language version may be different. For example, an argument based on the translation "Shall the Son of man find *the* faith on the earth" loses all power in a language [e.g. Russian] where there is no concept of a definite article ["the"].

- Never come over as condescending towards the translator. Warmly thank him or her afterwards and show appreciation of the fact that it's a difficult job. Apologize for the fact that you don't know the target language. And above all, pray that the message of the Gospel will get through.