

THE APOSTASY

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE: GOD MADE MAN UPRIGHT BUT HE HAS INVENTED MANY EVILS	4.
CHAPTER TWO: A WORLD-WIDE APOSTASY	17.
CHAPTER THREE: THE TRINITY - ONE OF THIRTY FIVE ERRORS	48.
CHAPTER FOUR: THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL	79.
CHAPTER FIVE: THE FALLEN ANGEL DEVIL	117.
CHAPTER SIX: DEMONS	167.
CHAPTER SEVEN: HELL - PURGATORY - LIMBO	192.
CHAPTER EIGHT: THE SECOND COMING - MILLENNIUM - INFANT SPRINKLING	211.
CHAPTER NINE: CLERGY - LAITY DISTINCTION - CONFESSION - LONG ROBES - THE MASS IN LATIN - THE EUCHARIST - TRANSUBSTANTIATION - CANONISATION - CELIBACY - RULES ABOUT FOODS AND HOLY DAYS - SHORT HAIR ON NUNS - PRIESTS ADDRESSED AS "FATHER"	214.
CHAPTER TEN: PREFERENCE FOR PETER - PAPAL INFALLIBILITY - MARIOLATRY - PERPETUAL VIRGINITY - MONASTICISM AND ASCETICISM - INDULGENCES - RELICS - IMAGES	224.
CHAPTER ELEVEN: PERSECUTOR - ANTI-SEMITIC - WAR - POLITICS	243.

INTRODUCTION

Basically, “apostasy” means “a falling away.” It comes from the Greek word “apostasia” which is translated “falling away” in 2 Thes. 2:3, and relates to defection from God’s truth.

The potential of man, due to the power of sin, to forsake and fall away from God’s truth and embrace lies and deception, is truly remarkable. Large sections of the Bible relate to this. Time and again the Old Testament testifies to the ancient nations being steeped in false doctrines and practises.

In spite of God personally manifesting Himself to the nation of Israel at Sinai and revealing Divine truths for them to believe and obey, they fell away from them and substituted them for pagan myths and superstitions. The Old Testament church, which Israel constituted, became apostate. It became a church which taught for doctrine vain traditions instead of the pure doctrine of God as revealed in the Scriptures. They ingeniously negated and neutralised the Word of God by their man-made philosophies.

And, according to warnings in the New Testament, the church of Jesus Christ was going to follow the same path, resulting in many becoming apostate. Certain statements reveal that an apostate Christianity would take shape in the form of a very powerful world-wide church which would oppose the Truth and persecute those who held to it.

All the signs given in the Word of God point to the Roman Catholic Church as being that church. The reasons for believing this are presented in this book.



CHAPTER ONE

GOD MADE MAN UPRIGHT BUT HE HAS INVENTED MANY EVILS

Ecc. 7:29 in the A.V. says: “God made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions.” It is simply stating that God originally made man good and upright but he ended up inventing many evils.

The statement no doubt refers back to the beginning, in the early part of Genesis when God first created man. Like everything else that God created, man was created “very good” Gen. 1:31. But as a result of sin, man became “no good.” The apostle Paul puts it like this in Rom. 7:18: “I know that in me, (i.e. in my flesh) dwells no good thing.” Verse 14 says: “I am carnal, sold under sin.”

Paul goes on to explain what he means. He says that lurking inside him are desires that have a bias towards evil rather than good. Like a gravitational pull, sinful negative propensities are constantly at work in his mind, seeking to pull him down to lower levels of attitude and conduct that are contrary to the Word and will of God. “When I want to do good, evil desire is present with me” he says, with the result that he ends up doing things he doesn’t want to do.

He doesn’t blame anyone else for this. He certainly doesn’t attribute it to a supernatural fallen angel devil. He lays the blame entirely on himself and accepts full responsibility for it. He says that it is sin (i.e. sinful urges, impulses), that dwell in him that are the cause of the problem. After saying: “I know that in me (in my flesh) dwells no good thing” he says: “O wretched man that I am.”

We all know what he is talking about. We can all identify with what he says. One would have to be dishonest or deceived to not acknowledge this. The whole human race is, and always has been, in the same boat, driven by sinful ungodly lusts and desires, which are the cause of all the problems in the world, particularly death. But as we have seen in Gen. 1:31 and Ecc. 7:29, man was not originally made like this. God originally created him “very good” “upright,” but he ended up inventing many evils.

How did this happen? Well, as a result of being created in the image of God, man was basically an inferior replica of God. As such, he had the potential to make great inventions - for good or evil - all depending on how he chose to exercise his creative potential. Prior to sin entering the world, there were of course no sinful desires in man’s nature. God did not create him with such desires. He was, as we have seen, “very good,” so he had no desire at that stage to invent evil of any kind. However, when he

was put to the test and given the opportunity to choose between doing good or evil, he succumbed to the temptation to do evil.

As a result, some profound changes took place. Because he chose to do evil, and bent his mind and will in that direction, a propensity towards evil became a fixation (addiction) in his nature, referred to as “the flesh.” In the same way that a person who decides and chooses to take up smoking or drugs becomes addicted and wants to keep on with the habit, so the choice to sin and do evil resulted in an addiction to sin and doing evil, and a desire to keep on with the habit. And, in the same way that a child, conceived by a woman who is a drug addict or alcoholic, can be born with a propensity towards drugs or alcohol, so all who have been born since the original sin was committed, come into the world with a propensity toward sin.

When Adam and Eve rebelled, the whole human race which was in them at the time, seminally speaking, was affected by that rebellion. That which is born of sinful flesh is sinful flesh. This is why man is inherently and intrinsically a rebel. He is born a rebel. His natural impulse is to rebel against authority. Rebellion is a strong inborn tendency due to the original sin of rebelling against the commandment of God.

PRIDE PRECEDES FALL INTO APOSTASY

Pride of course, lay at the heart of the original temptation which brought about the fall of man. We read in Gen. 2 that God had commanded man to not eat the fruit from a certain tree. This was a test of obedience and the opportunity to exercise free will.

The dissenting and distracting voice of the serpent which resulted in the temptation to disobey God and do evil, used pride as a motivation to induce sin. The voice virtually said: “If you eat that forbidden fruit, you will be like God.” This is the ultimate of pride: to be like God (Isa. 14:14. 2 Thes. 2:3-4) - to be a somebody - to not be second, subordinate or inferior to anyone.

And so, when man chose to make that decision, his mind became warped - permanently bent in the direction of pride. This is seen in the common characteristic of the flesh to want to be a somebody - to want to be the best and have the best. This has been a very strong propensity in man ever since the fall.

It is a true saying that pride is the mother of all sins. Pride is the catalyst or springboard of every other sin - and there are many of them. As a result of wanting to be the best and have the best, and have everyone

look up to you and treat you like a god; the result is that when someone comes along (which inevitably happens sooner or later), who happens to be better and who has better things, pride gets jealous and envious. Once this happens, things can get very nasty. Grudges, resentment and bitterness set in, and this leads to hatred and malice - false, hateful and malicious gossip and accusations, designed to bring that person down. Hate leads to anger and anger leads to murder. "Only by pride cometh contention" (Pr. 13:10). "Pride goes before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall" (Pr. 16:18). "A man's pride shall bring him low" (Pr. 29:23).

Pride is the beginning of a process of negative and destructive emotions and attitudes which are the cause of all the problems in the world. Jam. 4:1- relates to this: "What causes quarrels and fights among you? Isn't it because there is a whole army of evil desires within you? You want what you don't have, so you kill to get it. You long for what others have, and can't afford it, so you start a fight to take it away from them ..."

Obadiah v3 makes an interesting statement: "The pride of your heart has deceived you." It is a known fact that pride makes people vulnerable and amenable to deception. When ego is inflated it is common to be blinded to deception. Hence the saying: "Blind in their own conceit."

For example, people greedy for money in order to become rich and be a somebody, are often more easily deceived by a bad investment or business deal. Young men motivated by pride to get an attractive shapely woman, are easily deceived by outward beauty and charm, and easily blinded to inner character weaknesses and carnality. "Charm is deceitful and beauty is superficial and vain but a woman who truly loves and reverences the Lord is worth praising" (Pr. 31:30).

Due to pride, some people want to belong to a big respectable church which has a large congregation and a nice modern building and facilities. Such pride can deceive people into accepting and believing lies, because many, if not most of the big churches do not know or teach true sound doctrine. Practically all of them teach the serpent's lie in their doctrine of the immortality of the soul. This doctrine basically teaches what the serpent affirmed: "Thou shalt not surely die."

Pride is behind this. Man has got such a high opinion of himself, he thinks he is too important to die - he thinks he is immortal like God and cannot die. It is not surprising therefore that when the prospect of being like God, caused pride to arise in Eve's heart, she was deceived - deceived into believing a lie! She was deceived into believing she could sin yet not die, but live on forever. And so it is, that from that time forward, the flesh

of the human race, due to pride, has been vulnerable to lies and deception. It is all summed up in Jer. 17:9: “The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can fathom it?”

Once sin entered the world, the Bible gives example after example from that time forward, of men submitting and surrendering to the desires and deceitfulness of sin. Time and again reference is made to men gravitating towards lies, deception, false teaching and practices, contrary to the Word of God. For the most part, this represents the history of the Bible, because it is the history of man during which sin reigned unto death. It is made abundantly clear that, although God originally made man upright, he ended up inventing many evils. Among those many evils are many false religions and many false doctrines and practices that go with them.

THE INVENTION OF FALSE RELIGION

The history of human invention began almost immediately after sin entered the world. As a result of their sin, Adam and Eve felt a sense of guilt, shame and embarrassment, and the need to be covered. So they invented their own covering - fig leaves. This was the beginning of a long history of “coverings” invented by man designed to make him feel comfortable before God. All of these humanly devised coverings have been as flimsy and inadequate as the fig leaves used by Adam and Eve. Because sin offends God and alienates, only He has the prerogative to dictate the method or means by which it can be covered. In Adam and Eve’s case, “The Lord God made coats of skins, and clothed them” (Gen. 3:21). In order for coats to be made out of animal’s skins, animals would have to be killed and their blood shed. It was therefore taught from the very beginning that God required the shedding of blood for the covering of sin.

It is evident that from that time forward, animal sacrifice was instituted by God as a means of atoning for sin, because Gen. 4 informs us that Abel offered the firstlings of his flock and the fat, and the Lord respected his sacrifice. According to Heb. 11:4, Abel did this by faith: “By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness (approval) that he was righteous, for God acknowledged his gifts.” In view of the fact that faith comes by hearing the Word of God, God must have given a commandment to sacrifice animals. In order to do this, blood obviously had to be shed.

Cutting an animal’s throat is a messy gory business. To the natural

carnal mind, it seems an unnecessary and foolish sacrifice. It can be a stumbling-block to the sensitivities and pride of man. It was certainly a stumbling-block to Cain. He thought he knew and could invent a better way - a more respectable and sophisticated way, humanly speaking - a way that didn't involve the shedding of blood or death. So he offered fruit. He believed that an attractive assortment of fruit would be more pleasing to the Lord than a dead animal stained with blood. After all, by the toil of his hand and the sweat of his brow this fruit was produced. It represented hard work and effort. It sounds like a good philosophy, but it was contrary to the appointed way of God.

The New Testament therefore refers to it as “the way of Cain” (Jude v11). In its context it refers to those who, like animals, do whatever they feel like - whatever their lower natural impulses dictate. Cain's way is referred to in Pr. 14:12 as “a way which seems right to man, but it is a way that ends in death.” Jesus put it like this: “Wide is the gate and broad the way that leads to death and many walk that path.” The record concerning Cain is the beginning of a long history of religions invented by men - religions based not on the Word of God but the will of man. They represent the way of Cain.

Many are based on the works and effort of man trying to earn salvation instead of being based on the grace of God in Christ, by which salvation is a free gift. And many of them have put to death, as Cain did, those who believed and practised the truth of God.

There are also those who never go to church and who can't see the point in Christ's sacrifice or the shedding of his blood, but who do a lot of good work in the community. They are always willing to go and help their neighbours so long as they don't talk to them about the Bible or bring up the subject of God or Christ. Their philosophy is: “I don't go to church, read the Bible or pray to God, and neither have I been baptized into Christ, but I do a lot of good. If there is life after death I should qualify.” This philosophy is based on works - human effort. It is a deception and a lie. It is based on pride! It is the way of Cain. Only those who believe in Jesus and are baptized can be saved.

After the time of Cain and Abel, men started to multiply upon the earth. As the flesh multiplied, so did the sins that are produced by it. By the time of Noah, 1,656 years after the creation of man, the population of the earth would have been in the millions. At that time, according to Gen. 6:5: “The wickedness of man was great in the earth and every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” Verses 11-12 go on to say that “the earth was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with

violence. And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted His way upon the earth.” Conditions were so bad that God regretted He had made man.

Conditions in the earth today are following the same trends and heading in the same direction as in Noah’s day. It is only a question of time and they will be the same. Jesus clearly stated that as it was in the days of Noah so shall it also be when he returns (Matt. 24:37).

There was of course a mass destruction in Noah’s day. God’s judgement came in the form of a flood. Millions were buried in a watery grave. But the problem is that just as new weeds spring up where old ones have been rooted out, so the new generations that sprang up from the descendants of Noah’s sons ended up just as evil, necessitating further judgements of God.

In every generation the majority of people have been ruled by sin and only the minority have taken authority over sin’s propensities and pursued righteousness. Only Noah and his wife, their three sons and their wives qualified for salvation. Out of a population of millions, only eight souls were eligible! The warning of Jesus that “straight is the gate and narrow is the way that leads to life, and few find it” was literally true in Noah’s day.

A NEW START WITH ABRAHAM

As we move on in the book of Genesis about 350 years after the flood, we see that God was looking for a nation that could be a missionary nation - a nation that could witness and testify by word and deed to God and His truth. But there weren’t any. The Egyptians, Canaanites, Hittites, Mesopotamians etc, had all degenerated into the same condition as those in Noah’s day. They had corrupted God’s way. Idolatry and immorality were rife. The nations were steeped in pagan practices, totally ignorant of God and the way of God.

God therefore had to create a special nation for Himself, and to do this He had to start from scratch. He had to single out a man to be a progenitor and develop the nation from him. It was going to take time, but God, being eternal, had all the time in the world.

This is where Abraham comes in. He was the man and it seems that he was the only man living on earth at the time that God found acceptable for His purpose. The story of how God called him and promised him and his seed the land of Canaan is recorded in Gen. 12. Abraham’s descendants became the nation of Israel, the custodian of the Word of God and recipient of God’s promises (Ps. 147:19-20. Rom. 3:1-2). It is

recorded in Isa. 43:10 that God called the nation “My witnesses.” They were formed to be a light to the world. They were the church in Old Testament times.

With an outstretched arm and mighty signs and wonders, God delivered Israel from Egypt. He opened up the Red Sea and spoke in audible voice from Mt Sinai. Nothing like this had ever been experienced before by any other nation (Deu. 4:32-). One would have thought that the things Israel witnessed would have been life-changing experiences forever. You would have thought that every propensity of sin in their flesh would have taken a back seat and not assert itself against such a God and not manifest itself in any form of lies, deceit or corruption.

Well, you do not have to read very far to see how wrong such a thought would be. They no sooner crossed the Red Sea and they murmured and complained against God when they ran out of food and water. When they were told to keep the Sabbath by resting all day and doing no work, they disobeyed. When Moses stayed up Mt. Sinai longer than expected, they concluded that he was not coming back and made a calf idol out of gold, like those worshipped by the Egyptians, and said: “These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought you up out of the land of Egypt.” They rejected the true and living God of Abraham and embraced the false and dead idols of Egypt and looked to them to lead them back to Egypt, the land of slavery and oppression. The power of sin and its potential for deception is unbelievable.

And so we could go on. This was only the beginning of what became a boring and depressing repetition of history. Time and time again, in spite of the evidence they had that the God of Abraham was the only true God, they abandoned Him and turned to false gods - the idols of the heathen. They substituted the true religion for a false! They substituted the powerful living God in heaven for dead pieces of wood and stone on earth. This was an insult to God and highly offensive. It was like a wife rejecting her husband and setting up a wooden image of a man in the house in his place.

Much of the Old Testament is a record of God’s effort and His messages through the prophets warning Israel and appealing to them to turn away from idolatry, repent and be restored to God.

THE APPEALS OF APOSTASY

Why, it may be asked, did Israel turn to false gods and false religion which involved lies and not the truth? There are several reasons.

First reason: When they became rebellious and disobeyed God's laws, He punished them as He warned He would through the prophets. The punishment involved famine, pestilence, war, earthquake and flood. But instead of accepting these things as punishment for sin which they deserved, and repent and reform as a result, they noticed that other nations who worshipped idols were not having famines etc, so they concluded that their gods were better and turned to them. It would be like someone in the true church whom God is giving a hard time due to sin, deciding to leave and join a false church or cult, because their neighbours who belong to that church or cult are not having such a hard time.

Second reason: Due to the fact that God cannot be seen, and faith is required to believe in Him, and idols can be seen and touched, and faith is not required to believe in them; the flesh, which prefers to live by sight, easily gravitates to idolatry. A god in the hand is better than one in the bush!

Third reason: Immorality and sensuality were involved in idolatry. Pagan shrines had their idols displaying male and female genitals, as well as male and female prostitutes, with whom worshippers could freely copulate as part of the fertility cult. The flesh is always attracted to pornography and immorality so it is not surprising that so many were drawn away from the true worship into this false carnal religion.

Fourth reason: Those who worshipped idols were by far in the majority; powerful and prestigious nations. Those in Israel who worshipped the true God were few and weaker by comparison. Those who played the numbers game wanted to be on the side where the greater numbers were. Again, it would be like someone in the true church comparing the number of members with the far greater number in other churches and deciding to join them.

Due to her immorality and idolatry, God ultimately rooted Israel out of the promised land. The Assyrians, followed by the Babylonians, invaded, destroyed the cities, killed thousands of Israelites and took the survivors away captive into exile. Those from the southern kingdom of Judah remained captive in Babylon for 70 years, after which they were released and returned to their land to restore it.

EVILS EVENTUATED FROM EXILE

The exile, due to their idolatry, fixed them for good as far as idolatry was concerned. For example, when the Samaritans offered to help them restore the temple at Jerusalem, they declined the offer, no doubt due

to the hotch potch religion of the Samaritans, caused by idolatrous elements (Ez. 4:1-3). However, the Jews were not squeaky clean or pure in doctrine. We know this from the Jewish writings, especially the Apocrypha, which were written after their exile in Babylon during the inter-testament period, i.e. during the 400 year period between the Old Testament and New Testament.

It is evident from these and the writings of Josephus as well as certain statements in the New Testament, that as a result of spending 70 years in Babylon, the Jews embraced some pagan doctrines. For example, they embraced the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, which was contrary to what their Scriptures taught. As a result they ended up with a false concept of the death state and the destiny of those who die. Some of the Jews (the Saducees) even rejected the resurrection (Matt. 22:23).

Regarding demons: the pagans believed that they were the departed spirits of the dead i.e. immortal souls. This is well documented especially in ancient Greek literature. And it is evident from the apocryphal writings and Josephus' writings, that the Jews were influenced by this teaching and embraced it. Such is one of many false doctrines that stems from the doctrine of the immortality of the soul.

Regarding satan: Originally, both good and evil in the Old Testament Scriptures were ascribed to one and the same power alone, namely, God. The division into God and satan developed later, after Old Testament times, during the inter-Testament period.

Pears Encyclopaedia points out that: "The conception of a supreme source of evil took place among the Jews during their sojourn in Babylon under the influence of Zoroastrianism, a religion in which the struggle between the two spirits, good and evil, reached its height in the imagination of the ancient world ... When the Jews returned from their captivity in Babylon, Satan had become identified with Ahrim."

(Ahrim was the Persian's spirit or god of evil. According to Zoroastrianism, the religion of the ancient Persians, there were 2 major rival deities: Ahura Mazda, god of light and good, and Ahrim, god of darkness and evil. Between these 2 rival deities there was constant conflict.

But as far as the Old Testament Scriptures were concerned, particularly Isa. 45:7, it was taught that God creates both good and evil. Significantly enough, this statement forms part of a prophecy in which Cyrus, a Persian king is being addressed. Being a Persian, he believed that good and evil came from 2 separate and mutually antagonistic supernatural forces - 2 rival gods. But God refutes this concept saying: "I

am the Lord and there is none else; there is no god beside me ... I form the light and create darkness; I make peace and create evil; I the Lord do all these things” (Isa. 45:1-7).

In this statement God indignantly repudiates the idea of a supernatural rival. He alone is responsible for both good and evil.

Funk and Wagnall’s New Encyclopaedia also makes the point that the belief in a supreme spirit of evil in opposition to God “developed gradually in Hebrew theology and was affected by extranational influences” i.e. the influences of other pagan nations such as Babylon, Persia and Greece. This same encyclopaedia points out that in the Old Testament Scriptures “Moral evil was regarded as, properly, the act of man. Physical evil or misfortune, on the other hand, was interpreted as of Divine origin, a punishment for sin inflicted by a just and holy God, who, logically, was the source of all calamity. The angels of Scripture, who foretold and executed God’s will, were considered the instruments of physical, never moral evil. The concept of an angel capable of moral evil, first occurred after the Hebrew’s contact with the Babylonians.”

This encyclopaedia continues by pointing out that: “In the Apocrypha, which reveals both Babylonian, Persian and Egyptian influences, the older Hebrew doctrine that misfortune comes from the angel of Jehovah, disappears, and demons or evil spirits are for the first time mentioned as the authors of calamities.”

The Hastings Bible Dictionary and even the World Book Encyclopaedia agree. The general consensus of opinion of these and other encyclopaedias is that as a result of pagan influences during the exile, the Jews adopted the pagan concept of a supreme spirit or god of darkness and evil which became the Jewish satan, and ultimately Christendom’s satan.

Not only were the Jews influenced by the doctrine of the Persian god Ahrim, but also the Philistine god Beelzebub. This is evident in Matt. 12:22-37 where reference is made to the religious leaders who did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah, attributing his healings and miracles to Beelzebub, who they believed was “prince of the demons.”

Beelzebub is referred to 4 times in 2 Kng. 1 as “Baalzebub.” “Baal” means “lord” and was the name of the sun god, the chief god of the heathen. “Zebub” means “fly” or “flies” and is translated as such in Ecc. 10:1 and Isa. 7:18.

Because flies thrive in the heat of the sun and are carriers of disease, it may have been thought that Baalzebub, being lord of the flies, had power over sickness and disease, because 2 Kng. 1 informs us that

Ahaziah, the king of Israel, became sick, and sent messengers to the Philistine town of Ekron, to consult Baalzebub, to see if he would recover.

If anyone wonders how a pagan god of the flies could become prince of demons in Jewish theology, and ultimately a rebel fallen angel in Christendom's theology, just remember that the pagan god Pan, a mythical half man, half goat fertility deity in Greek mythology, became a fallen angel devil with horns, hooves, hairy legs and tail in the past in Roman Catholic theology!

In view of these pagan doctrines and other false doctrines that the Jews borrowed from Babylon and superimposed upon the Scriptures, we can appreciate why Jesus said to the religious leaders who believed and taught such things: "In vain do you worship me, teaching for doctrine the traditions of men." And if anyone thinks doctrine is not important, think again!

It is quite sad to consider how Israel ended up in this situation, embracing pagan myths, believing erroneous doctrine. It is especially sad when it is remembered that God called the nation out of Egypt and away from her contact with pagan doctrines and practises, and revealed to them divine truths which were expected to separate them and distinguish them from the surrounding pagan nations.

It is unbelievable that people to whom God manifested Himself in power and glory and to whom He spoke with audible voice, could turn away from Him and His Word of truth, and end up embracing the lies and superstitions of the heathen.

It only goes to illustrate what I said at the beginning about God making man upright but he ended up seeking and inventing evil. The way in which man so easily and naturally gravitates to error and has a preference for lies and deceit, is truly remarkable. The first original sin involved doing precisely that - believing the serpent's lie and rejecting God's truth, and the power of sin in the flesh, alias that old serpent called devil, ever since has repeated the same process many times. For this reason, it is emphasized in 1 Cor. 10 that Israel's failures and shortcomings in the past are recorded as a warning for all the generations that follow.

APOSTASY EXPECTED IN NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

In view of the fact that in spite of God manifesting Himself in fire at Sinai and speaking with audible voice, the Old Testament church turned away from divine truth and gave heed to fables and false doctrine,

it would not be surprising if the New Testament church, in spite of being launched by the manifestation of God in tongues of fire, also ended up turning away from the truth taught by Jesus and the apostles, resulting in giving heed to fables and false doctrines. The apostle Paul, in fact, predicted that this would happen: “The time will come when they will not tolerate sound doctrine, but to suit their own fancy, they will accumulate for themselves teachers who will tell them what their ears are itching to hear. And they shall turn away from the truth, and shall be turned to myths and fables” (2 Tim. 4:3-4).

The apostle Paul gave expression to this fear a number of times in his writings. Knowing the history of the Old Testament church and the potential of the flesh to invent false doctrines and pervert the truth, he issued warnings about it, and exhorted the faithful to be diligent to retain the truth and remain pure in doctrine. For example, when he spoke to the elders of the church at Ephesus for the last time he told them to take extreme care and be on guard in their guidance of the church, “For I know that after I have gone (when my back is turned) ferocious wolves will get in among you, not sparing the flock. Even from among your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse (distorted) things, endeavouring to draw away disciples after them (i.e. to be their own following or party). Therefore be always alert and on your guard” (Act. 20:28-31).

When writing to the Corinthians he said: “I am jealous over you with godly jealousy, for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a pure virgin to Christ.” Paul then expressed the fear that, in some way, “as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds might be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ” (2 Cor. 11:2-3).

Some in the Galatian church had actually been beguiled into turning away from the truth, causing Paul to write these words to them: “O foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you (thrown a spell over your mind), that you should not obey the truth ... are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now made perfect in the flesh?” Gal. 3:1-3.

In 1 Tim. 4:1-2 we read: “Now the Spirit says distinctly that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, subscribing to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods, which God has created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.”

2 Tim. 3:1-8 issues the warning that in the last days perilous times shall come. Many claiming to be Christians will “have a form of godliness, but deny the power of it ... ever learning and never able to

come to a knowledge of the truth ... men of corrupt minds who resist the truth, reprobate concerning the faith: from such turn away.”

The apostle Peter in his second epistle chapter 2:1-3 warns that as there were false prophets among the people in the past, “so shall there be false teachers among you, who will secretly and subtly bring in damnable (destructive) heresies ... and many shall follow their pernicious ways. Because of them, the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.”

The apostle John adds his voice to these warnings by saying: “Beloved, believe not every spirit (i.e. teaching which claims to be inspired), but test the spirits to see whether they are of God: because many false prophets have gone out into the world” 1 Jn. 4:1.

All of these statements indicate that Christ's church was going to have a battle holding on to the truth, and remain pure in doctrine. Forces were going to be marshalled against the church attacking and undermining the truth. Many false teachers were going to arise teaching false doctrine, drawing away many followers.

Jesus may have had this in mind when he gave the parable of a woman who hid leaven in 3 measures of meal until it was all leavened Lk. 13:21. As we shall see, a woman often represents ecclesiastical power in Scripture, and leaven can signify false doctrine (Matt. 16:6-12). The 3 measures could be related to all the nations which have descended from the 3 sons of Noah and which are divided up into 3 groups in Gen. 10. If so, the parable given by Jesus would be saying that false doctrine will be spread far and wide among the nations by a false ecclesiastical system, which claims to be the kingdom of God.



CHAPTER TWO A WORLD-WIDE APOSTASY

Whether or not the parable in Lk. 13:21 refers to a world-wide apostasy, we do know from other Scriptures that such an apostasy was expected and prophesied. As we shall see, the Bible prophesied that a pseudo church with tremendous power and influence over nations, would arise in the world, claiming to be Christ's church, but which is astray from, and opposed to the truth, and a persecutor of the true church.

In view of God's condemnation of this pseudo church and all who belong to it and identify with it, it is important for us to be able to identify it and keep our distance from its doctrines and practices.

So we need to look at the identification marks and signs given in Scripture in order to ascertain who we are dealing with.

In doing so, the first thing that we need to understand is that in Scripture, apostasy is likened to harlotry. The word "whore" or "harlot" is actually used metaphorically in the Old Testament to signify Israel's apostasy. Harlotry is the standing symbol for Israel's false worship and devotion, particularly idolatry. Many Scriptures could be quoted to demonstrate this (Ex. 34:12-17. Lev. 20:5. Deu. 31:16. Judg. 2:17. 2 Chr. 21:11. Isa. 1:21. 57:3-. Jer. 3:1-9. 9:1-2. 13:27. 23:10. Ezk. 16:15-16, 26 to 35. 20:27-32. Chapter 23. Hos. 1:2. 2:5. 4:10, 15. Mic. 1:7).

By definition, a harlot is a once-pure woman who has fallen from her purity and become a prostitute. In the case of a married woman, she is unfaithful and disloyal to her husband by embracing other men. Such a harlot of course would be offensive and repugnant to her husband. When Israel became a harlot, she was certainly repugnant to God.

The reason for Israel being called a harlot when she turned away from God's truth and became disloyal and apostate is because she was, spiritually speaking, God's woman or wife. There are a number of Scriptures which refer to Israel metaphorically as a woman or wife, to describe her close and intimate relationship with God, and God is referred to as her husband. For example: Isa. 26:17. 54:1-6. Jer. 3:1-2, 20. 4:31. 6:2. 31:32. Ezk. 16:28-32. ch. 23. Hos. 2:7. Mic. 4:8-10. Being God's woman or wife, God expected Israel to remain faithful and true to Him and His revealed truths. When she failed and strayed away, and ended up bowing before, and embracing the false gods of the heathen, and subscribing to their false doctrines, it was tantamount to committing spiritual fornication or adultery, so God called her a whore or harlot. Many Scriptures in the Old Testament use the words "fornication" and

“adultery” in this spiritual sense to signify departure and defection from God and His truth.

Not only did this departure involve spiritual fornication, but also literal physical fornication. As pointed out previously, literal fornication was associated with the pagan fertility cults. They all had male and female temple prostitutes with whom the priests and worshippers could freely copulate.

Israel’s spiritual fornication also involved entering into political alliances and unions with nations of the world who were carnal and not in covenant relationship with God. Such political alliances were, metaphorically speaking, “marriages,” and were a violation of Israel’s marriage to God, making her a “harlot” in this sense also.

To seek and embrace the support of other godless nations in time of need, instead of seeking God’s support, and putting trust in Him, was spiritual adultery. A truly spiritual church cannot enter into an alliance with a secular state or power. It would be like a believer marrying an unbeliever. To do this is to become “unequally yoked together” (2 Cor. 6:14). We therefore read this in Jam. 4:4: “You adulterers and adulteresses, do you not know that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.”

Now, having said all that, the point that I have been leading up to and want to make is this: According to Gal. 3:27-29, the New Testament church, i.e. those in all nations who have the same faith as Abraham and have been baptized into Christ, are “the seed of Abraham.” For this reason they are referred to in Gal. 6:16 as “the Israel of God.” In view of this it is not surprising that, in the same way that the Old Testament Israel of God was referred to as God’s bride or wife, and God was referred to as her husband, so also the New Testament Israel of God is referred to as the bride or wife of Christ, and he is referred to as the bridegroom. (Jn. 3:29. 9:15. 25:1-. 2 Cor. 11:2. Eph. 5:31-32. 2 Jn. v1. Rev. 19:7-9. 21:9. 22:17.

Now, the main point is this: If the Old Testament bride could be called a harlot as a result of being seduced away from the truth, and becoming corrupt and apostate, it should not surprise us if the New Testament church is also called a harlot as a result of apostatizing. It is to be expected, if the same spirit inspired both the Old and New Testaments, that the same metaphors would be used to describe apostasy. That such is the case we will now see by turning to Rev. 17.

THE GREAT HARLOT IN REVELATION 17

This chapter commences with these words: “And there came one of the 7 angels who had the 7 vials, and talked with me, saying to me, come here and I will show you the judgement of the great harlot ...”

Later on in Rev. 21:9 this same angel came again and showed John another woman, “the bride, the Lamb’s wife.” She is the woman referred to in 2 Cor. 12:2-3 as a “chaste virgin,” whose mind has not been corrupted by false doctrine from the simplicity that is in Christ.

A contrast is clearly made in Revelation between a pure woman and a corrupt woman. The corrupt woman - “the great harlot,” is the false apostate church, and the pure woman, “the bride, the Lamb’s wife,” is the true church.

The book of Revelation also contrasts the two different cities to which these two women belong, but that is another subject!

The woman in Rev. 17 is not merely referred to as a “harlot,” but a “great harlot,” which is a denigrating description signifying excessive depravity i.e. excessive corruption of the Word of God and the doctrine of Christ. The corruption is not mild or minimal.

The word “harlot” is used 4 times in the book of Revelation in relation to this particular ecclesiastical power or system: 17:1, 15, 16, 19:2.

Ten details delineate this woman:

1. “The great harlot.”
2. “That sits upon many waters.”
3. “With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication.”
4. “And the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.”
5. “A woman (in the wilderness) sitting upon a scarlet coloured beast.”
6. “Arrayed in purple and scarlet.”
7. “Bedecked with gold and precious stones.”
8. “Having a golden cup in her hand, full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication.”
9. “Upon her head was a name written, mystery, Babylon the great, mother of harlots and abominations of the earth.”
10. “Drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.”

Even before we come to the angel’s interpretation of this vision, it is clear that we are not dealing with a literal female, for no one woman could

commit fornication with the kings of the earth, nor could a single woman be “drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs.”

Seeing that this woman in Rev. 17 is “the great harlot” and “the mother of harlots and the abominations of the earth,” she must be involved in idolatry, immorality, politicking with the world, false doctrine and worship - a world-wide pseudo church that has corrupted and perverted the Word and ordinances of God. This helps us determine her character as the rival and antagonist of the true bride of Christ whom she persecutes.

IDENTIFYING THE HARLOT

Who then, is the harlot? Whoever she is, she obviously makes a great profession of Christianity, but in reality is a perverted form of it. Several clues are given concerning her identity. The first one is in Rev. 17:9 where the power-base where she “sits” is described as “7 mountains.” Secondly, John was told that the woman signifies “that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth” (v18). Thirdly, the city is called “Babylon” (v5. 14:8. 16:19. 18:10, 21).

The “great city” that reigned over the kings of the earth in John’s day was none other than Rome, and the link between the 7 mountains and Rome is obvious and universally accepted. That ancient Rome had the peculiarity of being built on 7 hills is known to most school children, and the hills are mentioned by name in most encyclopaedias: Capitoline, Palatine, Aventine, Quirinal, Viminal, Esquiline, Caelian. Modern Rome, being larger and more extensive, is on about 20 hills, but ancient Rome was on 7.

On page 2 of his introduction to “The Two Babylons,” Alexander Hislop writes: “No other city in the world has ever been celebrated as the city of Rome has, for its situation on 7 hills. Pagan poets and orators who had no thought of elucidating prophecy, have alike characterized it as “the seven hilled city.”

Virgil refers to it in these words: “Rome has both become the most beautiful (city) in the world, and alone has surrounded for herself 7 heights with a wall.”

Propertius, in the same strain speaks of it as “the lofty city on 7 hills, which governs the whole world.” This is almost identical to the statements in Rev. 17.

To call Rome “the city of the 7 hills” was by its citizens held to be as descriptive as to call it by its own proper name. Horace speaks of it by

reference to its 7 hills alone, when he refers to “the gods who have set their affections on the 7 hills.”

When Symmachus, the last acting pagan Pontifex Maximus, introduced by letter one friend of his to another, he called him “a man from the 7 mountains.” By this he meant “a Roman citizen”

Some have claimed that Jerusalem sits on 7 mountains and on that basis have concluded that she is the harlot in Rev. 17 not Rome. I have not been able to find any documentation to confirm this. Josephus, the Jewish historian, in describing Jerusalem in the first century A.D. says in book 5 chapter 4 that the city is built on 2 hills. The International Bible Encyclopaedia agrees with this. Zondervan’s Pictorial Bible Encyclopaedia on P.418 speaks of 3 hills in Jerusalem. There is however an abundance of documentation testifying that ancient Rome was built on 7 mountains.

Even if Jerusalem sat upon 7 mountains, the city certainly did not reign over the kings of the earth when Revelation was given to John. The city of Rome alone occupied this position, disqualifying Jerusalem and every other city. Also, the fate of the city to be “thrown down and never seen again” (Rev. 18:21) cannot apply to Jerusalem.

In the days of the apostle John it was customary to represent the Roman state by a woman sitting upon 7 projections. This can be seen upon a coin in the British Museum, struck in the reign of Vespasian. Sitting upon the 7 hills, (see picture below) the word “roma” under the base line, indicated that the great city, as it really was in those days, was the capital of the state.

Of the 7 hills, the highest is only 46 metres (150 feet). Some have argued that they are too small to be termed “mountains,” and cannot therefore refer to Rome. But the Greek word “oros” translated “mountains” in Rev. 17:9 signifies any protrusion whether small or large, low or high, which rises or rears itself above the plain. The same word is translated “hill” in Matt. 5:14. Lk. 4:29. 9:37. The Romans themselves nevertheless



call the land protrusions upon which the ancient city of Rome was built, “montes” i.e. “mountains.”

“MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT”

Regarding the city being called “Babylon”: the name Babylon was also used in New Testament times to symbolize Rome, due to the fact that the Jews were in bondage to her as they had been to Babylon. For example: reference in 1 Pet. 5:13 to “the church that is in Babylon” is generally regarded as referring to Rome.

Eusebius, who lived from 260 A.D. to 340 A.D. refers to this statement and says Peter refers to the city of Rome metaphorically as Babylon (Vol. 1 pages 143-145).

The fact that the beast in Revelation relates to the end time, and the harlot is depicted sitting on him in Rev. 17:3 and is ultimately destroyed by him (v16), reveals that she does not represent the pagan or imperial Rome of the first century, but the Rome of the last century. Pagan Rome is represented as a beast - the fourth beast in Dan. 7:7, and the sixth head of the beast in Revelation. If the harlot represented pagan Rome, she would be depicted as a beast, not as a woman sitting on a beast and being destroyed by it.

Wild beasts in the Word of prophecy generally represent secular powers, and a woman symbolizes ecclesiastical power.

The fact that the word “mystery” precedes the word “Babylon” in Rev. 17:5, indicates that the name Babylon has a secret symbolical significance, and is not meant to be taken literally. There is something deeper to it than the literal letter of the word. The caution given in Rev. 17:9 that “this requires wisdom” also indicates that “Babylon” is not to be taken at face value. (Cp. Rev. 11:8 where Sodom and Egypt are to be understood spiritually not literally).

It should be evident from this that the Babylon here in Rev. 17 is not the Babylon in Iraq which is on the banks of the river Euphrates, but Rome on the banks of the Tiber. The Babylon in Rev. 17 according to 18:17, is near the sea, but Iraq’s Babylon is not near the sea. Neither is it situated on 7 mountains and it certainly was not reigning over the kings of the earth in the first century when John received the Revelation.

When all the facts and details in Rev. 17 are taken into account, the identification of the harlot with Rome seems as complete as a mathematical demonstration. Rev. 17 is simply telling us that an apostate form of Christianity with its power-base in Rome, would rise to power,

and it does not require a rocket scientist to work out the identity of this church. It is clearly the Roman Catholic church, but not this church alone in the end time; for we are told in Rev. 17:5 that she is “the mother of harlots.”

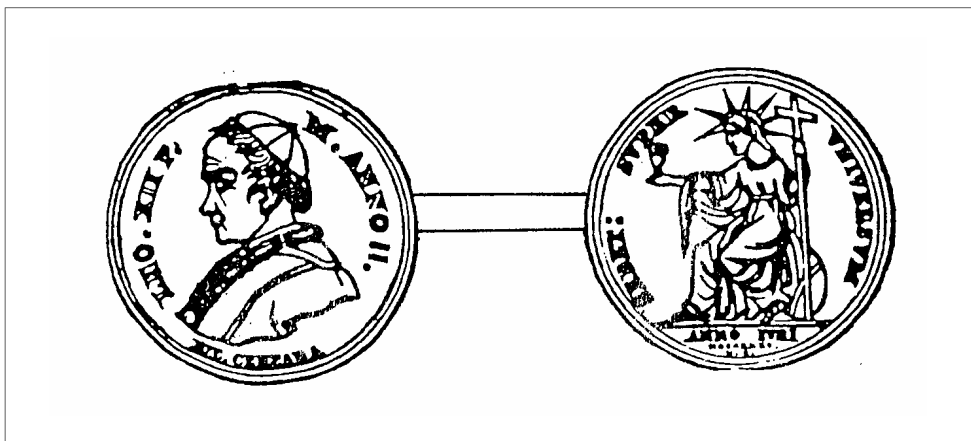
THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS

We are taught here that this church is a “mother” and has daughters who, like their mother, are also harlots i.e. unfaithful and disloyal to God’s truth. This refers to other church organisations in Christendom who, in spite of claiming to be “protestants,” have nevertheless inherited many of the false doctrines and practises of the Roman Catholic church. It is believed that they will become united with her in the end time, forming a world-wide super church that will be intolerant of, and will end up persecuting the true church which opposes it and refuses to join it.

The picture presented to us in Rev. 17 of an ecclesiastical power claiming to be the ambassador of Christ, reigning from Rome, would have been a remarkable prophecy when John received it in the first century A.D. when pagan Rome ruled and persecuted Christ’s true church!

Regarding the title “mother of harlots”: the council at Trent proclaimed that “the Roman church ... is the mother and mistress of all churches.” In 1825, a medal was struck commemorating her claimed status. On one side of the medal is the image of Pope Leo XII, and on the other side a woman, symbolizing the Roman Catholic church.

The woman is seated on a globe, with rays of glory on her head, a cross in her left hand, and a cup marked with a cross. This is held in her



extended right hand, as if presenting it to be drunk. Beneath her is the date, and around her face the legend: “She sits upon the world of jubilee, 1825.” The 3 aspects of a woman, sitting down, holding a cup in her hand, naturally invite comparison with the harlot woman in Rev. 17 who is also depicted sitting down with a cup in her hand.

One of Pope John Paul 11’s closest aides wrote to Bishops world wide declaring that the Roman Catholic church is “the mother” of other Christian churches, and that it was incorrect to refer to other Christian churches as “sister” churches to the Roman Catholic church. Prior to becoming the next Pope, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger was quoted as saying: “It must be always clear that the one, holy, Catholic and universal church is not the sister, but the mother of all the churches.”

The term “sister churches” is often used in dialogue aimed at fostering closer ties among Christians. John Paul made steps toward unity with other Christians a key goal of his Papacy. But Ratzinger, the Vatican official at the time, in charge of ensuring doctrinal correctness, appeared to be putting the brakes on such expansive terminology. He was quoted as saying: “It is evident that it would go against the faith to consider the church (Catholic) as “one” way of salvation alongside those represented by other religions.”

This claim caused concern among the protestant communities, but it gave a clear indication of the political direction of the Roman Catholic church. Such statements confirm the identification of the Roman Catholic church with “the mother” - “the mother of harlots” in Rev. 17.

In Rev 17:1-3 the harlot woman is depicted sitting upon “a beast” and also sitting upon “many waters.” In relation to this, is it significant that a stamp issued in Britain in 1984, produced a picture depicting the E.U. system as a woman sitting on a beast striding on the waters of the sea?



According to Rev. 17:15 the waters represent nations, and the E.U. certainly involves many nations, over which the Roman Catholic church has considerable influence. As time goes by, this influence will increase as the power of the Papacy increases.

SITTING AS A QUEEN

In Rev. 17:9 the harlot is referred to as sitting on the 7 mountains, which signifies being enthroned at Rome. The word “sit” signifies a posture or position of authority. Cp. Matt. 23:2. The word is used in relation to sitting on a throne in Matt. 22:44. In Rev. 18:7 the harlot is referred to as saying to herself: “I sit a queen,” indicating that she occupies a position of power and authority over nations. Regarding herself as she does, as the bride of Christ who is the king of kings, she sees herself as the queen, and imagines that her power and influence over the nations proves it.

Is it not significant that the Pope, the spiritual head of the Roman Catholic church, has a throne-like seat upon which he is often seen sitting, and people from all nations give him reverence, shout his praise, and even kneel before him and kiss his ring or feet? What a contrast to the apostle Peter who rebuked Cornelius for falling down at his feet, saying to him: “Stand up, I myself also am a man” (Act. 10:25-26). Peter was no celibate either! He was married: (Matt. 8:14. 1 Cor. 9:5).

The title “queen,” like “king,” also describes a person who reigns over a kingdom. Significantly enough, the tenure of office of the Pope is called “his reign.” The term of office of the Archbishop of Canterbury or the president of the United States is not referred to in this way!

The Roman Catholic church of course regards itself as the kingdom of God on earth, and the Pope is regarded as God’s representative or viceroy reigning over it. Traditionally, the Pope is crowned with a triple crown. Normally, crowns belong to royalty! In addition, the ceremony investing the Pope with the triple crown is called a coronation. After the coronation is over, the Pope takes his seat and “sits” upon his royal throne in the “palace” at the Vatican. Normally, only kings and queens have a palace! The elaborate monarchical system does not stop there. The cardinals of the church are styled “princes” - a title normally given to a member of a royal family and possible successor to the throne.

Concerning the harlot: Rev. 17:2 says: “with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication.” Countless kings, princes, presidents and prime ministers have embraced the Pope and his cardinals and fraternized with them for political as well as religious purposes, and still do. Many kings, especially in Europe and Russia, have embraced the Roman Catholic faith with all of its false doctrines, sharing with the harlot in her apostasy. Such politicking with the world and departure from the truth taught by the bridegroom is, as we have seen, spiritual fornication.

THE ANTICHRIST

Another pointer to Roman Catholicism as the apostate church is the reference to “forbidding to marry and commanding to abstain from meats,” which are given as signs in 1 Tim. 4:1-3 of departure from the true Christian faith. “Forbidding to marry” is seen in the celibacy of priests and nuns which is commanded by the Roman Catholic system. “Commanding to abstain from meats” is seen in various abstinences imposed by the church upon the people, such as not eating meat on Friday’s, which used to be practised.

“Doctrines of devils” (demons) is also mentioned in 1 Tim. 4:1 as another sign of departure from the faith. This can be related to Roman Catholic doctrines of the devil and demons which they borrowed from the superstitious pagans and superimposed upon the Scriptures, involving grotesque and bizarre concepts that are totally foreign to the Word of God. They fit into the category of the “fables” referred to in 2 Tim. 4:3-4 that Paul said would be adopted by those who turn away from the truth.

Another pointer to Roman Catholicism as the apostate church are the references to the “antichrist” in Scripture. The title occurs 5 times and refers to those who once belonged to the New Testament church but left due to adopting false doctrines concerning Christ. We are told in 1 Jn. 4:2-3 and 2 Jn. verse 7 that the false doctrine involved denying that Jesus came in the flesh. This does not mean they denied that Christ had skin. The word “flesh” in the New Testament has a significance that goes deeper than the skin. A careful examination of all the places in the New Testament where the word “flesh” is used, reveals that it relates to the sin stricken nature of man which contains propensities towards sin which tempt into sin all who surrender and succumb to them instead of crucifying them.

Because the propensity to sin is in the flesh nature of man, Paul refers to it in Rom. 8:3 as “sin in the flesh” and “sinful flesh.” And in the same verse he says that Christ also came in sinful flesh in order to condemn sin in the flesh. Heb. 2:14 also makes the point that Jesus partook of the same flesh as other men. For this reason Jesus had to be conceived by a woman, so that he would be impregnated with human genes, and as a result experience human desires. Heb. 4:15 clearly states that Jesus was in every way tempted like all other humans, but never succumbed and therefore never sinned. To deny therefore, that Christ came in the flesh, would make a mockery of his mission, which was to conquer the power of sin in the flesh and crucify every temptation, and once and for all nail it all up in his

own body of flesh upon the cross.

But some so-called Christians started to find such a view of Christ partaking of the same flesh nature as man, dishonouring and degrading. They wanted to put him on a higher plane and exalt him above the human level. Ultimately, this led to the doctrine of the Trinity which makes Jesus “very God of very God,” co-equal and co-eternal with his Father. And once Jesus was regarded as being equal with Father God, it had to be denied that he came in the same flesh as all other humans. This in turn meant denying that he was tempted in the same way as all other men by thoughts arising from his own flesh, because it is stated in Jam. 1:13 that God cannot be tempted. It also had to be denied that he really did die on the cross, because God is immortal and cannot die!

But denying that Jesus came in sinful flesh created a problem. It could not be denied that Jesus was conceived by Mary, and that in conception a woman with a flesh nature that has the potential to sin, will impregnate her child with the same nature. So, to overcome this, because they did not want to believe that Jesus came in the flesh in this sense, the Roman Catholics invented a new and unbiblical doctrine - the doctrine of the immaculate conception, which is a gross misconception! This doctrine affirms (without any Scriptural support whatever) that Mary was miraculously born immaculate and her flesh therefore did not contain sinful propensities. This enabled her to conceive and give birth to a son who did not inherit the same flesh and propensities as the human race.

This put the capping stone on the antichrist movement and clearly identifies as antichrist the Roman Catholic church and all her “daughters” throughout Christendom who have adopted from her the same doctrine.

It is “antichrist” because it creates a Christ who is different from the true Christ portrayed in the Scriptures. It results in preaching “another Jesus” as the apostle Paul would put it (2 Cor. 11:1-4). This doctrine is antichrist because it makes a mockery of the Messiahship of Jesus. If Jesus did not partake of “sinful flesh,” he could not have personally overcome and defeated sin and nailed it upon the cross in his own body of flesh. This would make a farce of his righteous sinless life, because anyone could live a sinless life if they were given a sinless nature like God’s which cannot be tempted, sin or die. Such a view undermines the virtue and merit of his obedient sinless life, and robs him of his moral glory as an overcomer. It turns the cross into an empty and hollow victory, making it a very artificial affair. It would be like a fully able-bodied man entering the Olympic games for the physically handicapped and winning all the events. Such victories would indeed be empty and hollow. There

could be no honour or glory for a man who is not physically handicapped who does better than those who are physically handicapped.

Basically then, “antichrist” represents a pseudo and corrupt form of Christianity that has gone astray on some very basic and fundamental doctrines of the Bible, and it is not difficult to link it with the harlot institution in Rev. 17. As we shall see, Rev. 17 depicts the harlot causing people all over the earth to become drunk with her wine, which signifies befuddling people’s minds with her false teaching.

Verse 5 says that upon her forehead is written the name, “mystery, Babylon ...” The forehead represents the mind, and how true it is that there is a lot of “mystery” that cannot be explained or made sense of, in the teaching of that system. For example, the doctrine of the Trinity which they openly confess to be a “blessed mystery,” and the doctrine of transubstantiation which claims the bread and wine literally and physically becomes the body and blood of Christ.

“Babylon” means confusion, and was the name of the place that captivated the Jews and indoctrinated them with some pagan doctrines and superstitions. “Babylon” is therefore an apt description of the pseudo church which has captivated the minds of so many people and indoctrinated them with false doctrines, some of which are basically pagan in origin. “Confusion” certainly describes such doctrines as the immaculate conception, infallibility of the Pope, the worship of Mary as “mother of God,” along with worship of saints and angels, not to mention the doctrine of the Trinity. It is completely confusing trying to make sense of a Father who is supposed to be His own son, and a son who is supposed to be his own Father, who are supposed to be one and the same person. How the son could sit on the right hand of his Father, or pray to his Father when they are supposed to be one and the same person, is a “mystery” and “confusion” indeed!

DRUNK WITH THE BLOOD OF THE SAINTS

John continues in Rev. 17:6 by saying: “And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her I was greatly astonished.”

History testifies to the fact that no other power has persecuted and martyred the Christians more than the Roman Catholic church. To read accounts of the horrors committed by the Inquisition, the massacre of St. Bartholomew’s day, the massacre of the Huguenots, and all the other horrors committed in attempting to stop the Reformation, is enough to

convince anyone of this.

Rome has never been noted for her toleration of those who oppose her. To my knowledge she has never publicly acknowledged her sin of putting protestants to death. Calling them “separated brethren” is just an accommodation used to gain acceptance by protestants. When she is established in power again, as Rev. 17 predicts, history will repeat itself: she will persecute and put to death those who oppose her.

However, it has to be recognized that the persecuting in the past was not one-sided. Protestants could be as harsh to Catholics as Catholics were to protestants. Many so-called protestants have taken up the sword and killed Catholics, and in so doing have acted contrary to the spirit and commandments of Christ, disqualifying themselves as the friends of God and heirs of His kingdom. Basically, they are of the same spirit as the harlot, and they are therefore called “harlots” and the Roman church is referred to as their “mother.” They are just as intolerant of all who oppose the doctrine of the Trinity and other false doctrines they inherited from their mother, and will support the persecution of all who oppose them when they link up with the Roman Catholic church in the end time. It is fitting therefore that they shall all ultimately come under the same judgement of God.

In certain respects it is a “mystery” as to how a church system which is acquainted with the teaching of Jesus and claims to be his follower and representative, could ever be able to commit the atrocities that have been and will be committed. When John saw it he said: “I was greatly astonished.” He stared in horror.

John was probably amazed that an institution professing to be Christ’s “woman,” could be such a harlot and persecute and put to death true Christians. He may also have been amazed at how politically powerful a pseudo Christian movement could become in the world. In his own time in the first century A.D. even the thought of the church which was “the sect everywhere spoken against” (Act. 28:22), sitting on the beast of the day (the pagan Roman empire which persecuted the Christians), would have been inconceivable.

PAPAL ROME NOT PAGAN ROME

Roman Catholic theologians have been forced by the evidence concerning the harlot in Rev. 17 to admit that it is Rome that is pictured here; but they say - and some protestant interpreters have joined them in it - that the reference is to pagan Rome, not Papal Rome. But why

should John be amazed to see pagan Rome persecuting Christians? Had he not seen and experienced persecution from this power, being himself in banishment under its cruel power at the time he wrote? Why then, should he be astonished, as he looked forward in time, to see Rome still persecuting the saints? It is hardly something astonishing that the ignorant heathen should persecute God's people!

This is almost proof positive that the harlot is not the secular power of pagan Rome or any other secular power, but an ecclesiastical power - Papal Rome. Seeing a church, professedly Christian, persecuting the saints and drunk with their blood, is what astonished John.

In response to John's amazement at what he saw, the angel said to him: "Why did you marvel," i.e. "Why are you so surprised and amazed that the church could become so apostate and such a persecutor of the saints?" The innuendo of this statement is: "You shouldn't be surprised." In view of the way the Old Testament church went badly apostate and killed the prophets of God, and in view of the warnings of apostasy in the New Testament, especially the warnings given by John himself in his epistles concerning the antichrist, it is not surprising; it was predictable and to be expected.

MORE POINTS OF IDENTIFICATION

There are other points in Rev. 17 which identify the harlot with the Roman Catholic church. For example, v2 refers to the inhabitants of the earth being made drunk with "the wine of her fornication." As pointed out previously, wine can signify doctrine or teaching. See Pr. 9:1-6. Isa. 55:1-. Matt. 9:17. Lk. 5:39. Jn. 2:1-10 (parable in action). Because fornication can relate to apostasy, the phrase "wine of her fornication" would mean teaching or doctrine that causes apostasy. As wine in the natural can cause moral standards to be lowered and compromised, resulting in a woman being unfaithful to her husband by embracing another man; so the wine or teaching of the harlot can befuddle people's minds, causing them to turn from the doctrine of Christ and embrace false doctrine Cp. Isa. 29:9-10.

Lenin was not speaking an original thought when he said that religion was the opiate of the people. The thought we have before us now is exactly that thought. An opiate puts people to sleep; wine puts them into a stupor, befuddling and confusing the mind, blurring the boundaries between true and false teaching. Such is the effect of the Roman Catholic religion.

We read in Rev. 18:23 that all nations are deceived by the harlot's "sorceries." The Greek word for sorceries is pharmakia from which the English word pharmacy is derived, and relates to both medication and magic, and can be related to drugs and druggists. Drugs of course, like wine, can befuddle, confuse and deceive the mind; putting it into an unreal and imaginary world of fantasy and fiction. Like magic, it creates illusion and delusion. Drugs can create a world in which things that are seen and believed are not in reality what they seem to be. This sums up in a nutshell the deceiving effect of the false teaching represented by the harlot's wine. Millions have been intoxicated by it.

In Rev. 14:10 the wine is referred to as "the wine of the wrath of her fornication." This is simply saying that her teaching which leads to fornication, incurs God's wrath. To drink her wine is tantamount to drinking God's wrath, because that will be the result.

We read in Rev. 17:6 that the harlot is drunk with the blood of the saints and martyrs of Jesus. She attacks and kills the true church of Christ. This is where her wine (teaching) leads, revealing how false and corrupt it is. Being astray from the truth, she cannot recognize the true church. The kings and inhabitants of the earth who become drunk with her wine, will obviously support her persecution of the true Christian community.

No wonder the nations will ultimately stand before the Lord and confess: "Surely our fathers have inherited lies and worthless things in which there is no profit" (Jer. 16:19).

IN THE WILDERNESS

It is interesting to note that John saw the harlot woman in "the wilderness." One of the first thoughts that springs to mind in relation to the word wilderness, is "testing." For example, Israel's 40 years out in the wilderness after the exodus from Egypt was a testing time, and the same applied to the 40 days spent in the wilderness by Jesus.

As we will see: reference to the harlot in the wilderness can be applied to a testing and trying time for the Papacy prior to attaining great power in the end time.

Strong's Concordance says the Greek word "eremos" which is translated "wilderness," can signify "lonesome," "a solitary place," "desert," "desolate."

The Concise Oxford Dictionary points out that the word in modern usage can be used of a political party out of office. "Political wilderness" is a term used to describe a political party that has lost its way and gone

off track i.e. lost direction, support and power.

“Wilderness” in modern usage can also signify a state of disorder. For example; when a garden is referred to as a “wilderness,” it means a tangle-up of weeds, thorns and thistles. And, in view of thorns and thistles in Jesus’ parable representing the deceitfulness of money and material wealth which can choke to death the Word of God; “wilderness” would be a very fitting description of the position of any religious institution in which God’s truth was choked by greed and ambition for riches (Matt. 13:22. Rev. 3:14-17).

All these thoughts concerning “wilderness” have an application to the Papacy and the Roman Catholic church, because:

1. This religious system went off track and lost its way spiritually, ending up in a tangle-up of thorns and thistles due to lust for power and wealth, resulting in choking to death the truth of the Word of God, and substituting it for vain human traditions.

2. After a long time in power, this religious system went into a political wilderness, losing power, ending up in a solitary place - lonesome.

3. The political wilderness into which she was forced was a testing and trying time.

When John saw the harlot in the wilderness, she was depicted sitting on a beast, which, suffice to say at this stage, represented other nations - secular power; political power. Sitting upon the beast in the wilderness could therefore simply signify power and influence being exercised by the Roman Catholic church over the nations, in spite of her spiritually barren condition.

However, there may be more to it than that. When John saw the harlot sitting upon the beast, was the beast stationary, or was he bringing the harlot out of the wilderness? If the harlot was on her way out of the wilderness, this would be significant in view of developments that have taken place in the more recent history of the church.

THE HISTORY OF THE HARLOT

For 1,000 years (a counterfeit millennium) from 800 A.D. to 1805 A.D. the Pope had spiritual and secular authority over all rulers and religious systems in Europe, reaching a high point in medieval times. Papal control imposed a relentless tyranny upon all European nations and was known as “The Holy Roman Empire.” It was a law to itself to which all bowed, and which none could resist or gainsay.

But from 1517 to 1572, dramatic changes started to occur which were the beginning of the loss of power. Due to the Reformation, Roman Catholicism started to lose its iron grip on much of Europe. People were set free from the shackles of the apostate system as a result of fearless and courageous men exposing the unbiblical nature of its teaching and practise. As the Reformation gathered momentum and grew, opposition to Rome became more and more vocal, and the spiritual and political power of the Pope gradually declined.

Later, as a result of the French revolution and the Napoleonic wars which devastated the Catholic countries of Europe, causing a spirit of revolution to sweep through them, to the detriment of Catholic interests and power, the so-called holy Roman empire was abolished in 1805. The Pope was left only reigning over “the Papal states” - a term that refers to several provinces and cities, including Rome, which covered the broadlands of central Italy.

However, these Papal states provided the Papacy with legitimate national representation and temporal (civil) power in the international counsels of the nations. They comprised a nation among nations and permitted the Papacy to militarily defend itself against any who challenged the political authority of the Pope.

But in 1860 the Papal states became subject to Victor Emmanuel 11, who became king of Italy. This further reduced the political power of the Pope because he lost control of the Papal states and only the land immediately around Rome remained under his control.

Then, in September 1870, two months after the Pope was declared to be infallible, Victor Emmanuel took Rome by force and asked its citizens to vote on whether or not the city should become the capital of a united Italy. The people voted to accept the Italian monarchy. And so not only were the Papal states annexed by the Italian government, so also was the city of Rome, resulting in the Pope (pious 1X) having no political power at all.

THE PRISONER POPE

Being stripped of all power and confined to the Vatican, the Pope shut himself up there and regarded himself as a prisoner and so styled himself. During the rest of the nineteenth century he was referred to as “the prisoner Pope.” He was a mere figure-head with no political power. Politically speaking, he was in a “wilderness.” He had no political or diplomatic representation outside the limits of the church buildings.

The Popes after him followed the same “prisoner” policy for nearly 60 years. Then an independent Papal state was created in February 1929 through an agreement between Pope Pious XI and the Italian government. The agreement or concordat was called The Treaty of Lateran, and was signed between Pope Pious XI and the Italian fascist leader Benito Mussolini. It recognized the full sovereignty of the Holy See and was later incorporated into the Italian constitution.

The treaty affirmed that the “Catholic Apostolic Roman religion” is the only state religion in Italy. It also recognized that the Holy See had exclusive dominion and sovereign jurisdiction over the full property of the Vatican, and that no interference by the Italian government would be possible. There would be no authority but the authority of the Holy See.

Mussolini's concordat gave great impetus to the Roman Catholic church. The Papal state was resuscitated and the Papacy was given diplomatic representation in many parts of the world, enabling the Pope to intrigue in international politics. In short, the harlot was well on her way in coming out of the wilderness!

When the Papacy lost power and went into the wilderness, the question became: “How do we regain power?” One thing is certain: Like the tricks of the trade of a harlot (Pr. 5:6), the church of Rome has never been slow to change her appearance, approach and strategy when necessary; to make herself more attractive and appealing to those she seeks to seduce into her bed of fornication. She has proved to be completely flexible within the rigid confines of a relentless pursuit of domination.

The Encyclopaedia Britannica says: “At the very moment when the disappearance of the Papal states removed it from the field of European diplomacy, the Papacy was about to emerge as a world power with which every politician would have to reckon. This was the result partly of the missionary activity which kept abreast of the colonial expansion of Europe overseas, and partly because of the large scale migration of Catholics to Canada, Australia and the United States. Expanding in numbers, the church was yet closing its ranks more firmly around the person of the holy father.

As a result of the loss of power, the Popes in the twentieth century were characterised by a new spirit. Firstly, they were anxious to put a stop to the belief that the church was necessarily opposed to modern aspirations, and secondly, they stimulated Catholic initiative with regard to social work.

In the past the church had sought to prevail by ruthless control of

strong, autocratic Catholic monarchs, and the church had no sympathy for the populations which groaned under the tyranny of their exploitive rulers. However, the French revolution changed all that by putting proud monarchs in the dust, with the foot of the peasants and down-trodden firmly planted on their necks.

A series of Popes in the twentieth century carefully fostered a new policy of social justice, declaring themselves to be the champion of the oppressed working class. The acceptance of the socialist outlook (socialism) became the key to the revival of the Roman Catholic church in the twentieth century. This new image that the church projected caused many people to forget her oppressive, exploitive and tyrannical past. However, the change didn't all happen at once, but in such a slow patient manner, that many were not aware of the fact that the winds of change were blowing.

So gradual has it been, that the casual observer could be excused for thinking that it has always been this way. But if the Catholic king Louis XVI of France could get his head back from the revolutionaries and catch up on modern news, he would truly be amazed at the transformed attitude of the modern Popes! They bear no resemblance to the Popes of his day!

A turning point in the rise of Papal power and influence took place as a result of the visit of the Polish Pope John Paul the second to Poland in 1979, where he met with the leader of the Polish solidarity, Lech Welesa. The solidarity movement opposed communism because it had moved far from the original ideals. The people were no longer able to determine what were their best interests as they were decided for them by their non-elected leaders who were political tyrants.

The Pope's visit to Poland in 1979 created a sensational impression on world opinion. The huge crowds, said at times to number over a million people, joining in singing Catholic hymns, but also Polish national songs; delivered a distinct slap in the face for the communist regime.

The government put on a bold face of welcome, even though the Pope did not hesitate to make outspoken comments critical of political tyranny, bolder than uttered before in a communist-dominated European country. The authorities dared not intervene or comment unfavourably, for fear of provoking a popular demonstration which they would not be able to control.

The significance of this episode was that the huge and enthusiastic crowds which gathered to welcome the Pope made headline news for days in the world's press and on their T.V. screens. To a world feeling the lack of "spiritual leadership," the Pope emerged as the undoubted head of the

“Christian church” in the world, eclipsing completely the heads of the other communities in Christendom such as the Anglican archbishop of Canterbury.

The Pope’s personal presence conveyed a sense of sympathy and power which impressed millions - to the benefit of the Roman Catholic church. There can be no doubt that the Pope emerged as a world leader in more than a purely religious sense. The world became accustomed to the door of the Alitalia jet opening, and the jet-setting Pope emerging to kiss the ground as he travelled to countries all around the world, moving among the masses and even addressing the United Nations.

Everywhere the Pope went he received a rapturous welcome and was treated like a Messiah. The foreign minister of the Soviet Union and president of U.S.A. had audience with him at the Vatican, and many other leaders and dignitaries from other nations were received by him as well.

In the Pope’s extensive travels, he brought the Papacy out of the seclusion of the Vatican into the modern world, and without a doubt it was his social gospel - the concern he expressed for humanity that attracted the interest of millions of people. One newspaper stated that he “raised the Papacy to a political and social influence it had not enjoyed since the middle ages.” More and more saw him as “high priest for the planet.” As a result of the Pope’s activities and increasing profile on the world scene, it seemed certain that the influence of the Roman Catholic church would grow, and that other religious communities would diminish.

The Pope is spiritual head of over one billion (one hundred million) people in all nations throughout the earth. The reference therefore in Rev. 17:1, 15 to the harlot sitting upon (i.e. ruling over) “peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues,” is no exaggeration. While the Anglicans and other churches are declining in numbers, the Roman Catholics are increasing. They numbered 757 million in 1978 and 1.1 billion in 2001. This was an overall increase of 40.2%.

The revival of Papal power calls to mind the prophecy in Rev. 18:7 which depicts the harlot saying in her heart “I sit a queen and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow.”

The Greek word “chera” translated “widow,” has a wider connotation involving not only bereavement, but also the concept of being bereft or destitute. Strong says it conveys the idea of deficiency. Protestants of course believe that the Roman Catholic system is bereft of Christ and therefore husband-less - a spiritual widow, deficient and destitute of the truth.

Some say that the words “am no widow” could be read: “am no

longer a widow,” implying that there was a period when it looked or felt like she was; i.e. a period when it appeared that Christ was not with her. As we have seen, there was a time when the Papacy went into a political wilderness, being bereft of political power and the support of the state. The Pope became a “prisoner” in the Vatican, lacking suitors and admirers, ambassadors and delegates coming from the nations to bow before him and seek his favours.

According to “The Tablet” a Romanist newspaper, about one month after Pope Pious IX (the “prisoner Pope”) ascended the Papal throne, the Abbess of Minsk spent the whole night in prayer for the Catholic church, and claimed to have heard a voice saying: “Fear not, my daughter, I have not left my church a widow. I have chosen for her a Pontiff after my own heart.” These words indicate that some felt that the church was a widow, bereft of Christ.

How times have changed! Kings and rulers of the earth now send ambassadors to Rome and receive Papal Nuncios into their embassies. There is even a Papal delegate at the United Nations. There is no Anglican, Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist or Mormon delegate, but there is a Papal delegate.

When a Pope is crowned or dies, “the kings of the earth” send their top dignitaries to attend the ceremony. (Seventy rulers of nations attended Pope John Paul’s funeral and Rome’s population of three million doubled for the occasion). This special attention given to the Roman Catholic Pontiff and church is unique in the protocol of the powers of the world. And why do presidents, princes, kings, queens and heads of state go to Papal functions and send representatives? Because of the power and influence it exercises over millions of people and international affairs! Even communist and Moslem countries make sure their representatives show up at important functions in the “eternal city” of Rome. Truly, as prophesied in Revelation, she sits as a queen.

CHURCH UNITY

Coming back to Pope John Paul: His message was not only “justice for the workers.” He also made calls for unity in Christendom. A charitable attitude toward other Christian denominations was adopted calling them “separated brethren” whom they longed to receive into fellowship. In January 2001, the Pope stated that the Roman Catholic church was irreversibly committed to the search for church unity.

Historic moves are in train which could ultimately lead to the healing

of rifts that have existed for centuries between Catholic and protestant churches.

In 1965 the Catholic church annulled an excommunication pronounced in 1054 A.D. against the Orthodox church.

In October 1989, Dr Robert Runcie, the Archbishop of Canterbury, visited Rome and signed a common declaration in the Vatican with the Pope, which committed both the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches to “visible unity.” The Archbishop was quoted by an Italian newspaper as saying: “Anglicans are beginning to recognize and welcome a petrine, universal, primacy in the Bishop of Rome.” In other words, the church of England could accept the possibility of reunion with Rome and also the central, supreme position of the Pope as head of a universal church. By implication, the Archbishop expressed a willingness to abdicate his position as spiritual head of the Anglican church in favour of the Pope.

While the discussions between Anglicans and Roman Catholics do not appear to have had any conclusive outcome as yet, negotiations between the Vatican and the Lutheran world federation did lead to agreement in 1999 on a “common statement” regarding the doctrine of justification - the principle issue at the heart of the Reformation. The signing of the statement on October 31 in Augsburg, Germany, was the first time the Vatican has signed any such agreement with a reformed church.

According to a report in the Daily Telegraph, “The statement will have repercussions across all protestant areas including the Anglican, Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian and United Reformed churches. The agreement was highly significant to inter-church relations.”

The combined forces of Catholicism and Protestantism would be likely to pose a real threat to smaller non-conformist groups who would come under pressure from a large and united Christendom. This ultimate unity could very well be implied in Rev. 17:5 where the Roman Catholic church is not only referred to as a “harlot,” but “the mother of harlots.”

If “harlot” refers to one particular church - the “mother” church, then “harlots” would surely refer to other churches whose doctrines come from the mother, and who unite with her.

Rev. 17:6 refers to this powerful ecclesiastical system being “drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.”

The fact that the beast upon which the harlot is seen sitting, relates to end time powers, along with the fact that “prophets” are mentioned among those slain by the harlot (Rev. 18:20, 24), indicates that the prophecy has an end time application. (Both Joel 2:28-32 and Rev. 11:3 teach that the

power of God will be bestowed in the end time, anointing men to be prophets). The prophets in New Testament times have long since passed away before the harlot comes to power, and cannot therefore be the ones slain by her.

REVERSAL OF REFORMATION

In order for protestant churches to unite with the Roman Catholic church, a reversal of the Reformation would have to take place. One of the reasons for the Reformation going into reverse gear is because it never went far enough in the removal of false Roman Catholic doctrine. Too many common denominators were left that could act as a basis for reconciliation and unity, such as the Trinity; pre-existence of Christ; immortality of the soul and its accompanying doctrines of the righteous departing to heaven immediately at death without resurrection being necessary, and the wicked to eternal torments before the judgement takes place. The doctrine of infant sprinkling (Christening), and the doctrine of a supernatural fallen-angel devil and demons. These are some of the false doctrines which originated in the Roman Catholic church, and more will be said about them in the following chapters.

Another reason why the process of unity is now able to take place is because of the weak compromising attitude of the ecumenical spirit - that hotch potch organization which seems to be based upon discovering the lowest possible common denominator of doctrine upon which all parties can be agreed. A common attitude is: "It doesn't really matter what you believe."

Truths which were once rigidly and tenaciously held and which people died for, are now being compromised for church union. But union that lacks unity of the One true faith is a sham, and the consolidation of all conflicting creeds under one organization will involve that.

The ecumenical movement along with the World Council of Churches, has been negotiating for reunification and amalgamation with increasing success. The playing down of many reformation concepts by the protestant churches, along with the apparently more conciliatory attitude of the Roman Catholic church, has the potential to create a "Christian" confederation which could formally acknowledge Papal primacy without necessarily agreeing with all points of Catholic theology.

It is not difficult to see in present trends a confederate church in Christendom - an immense ecclesiastical power with enormous political power, (signified by the harlot sitting on the beast) having its nerve centre

or power base at Rome. Such ecclesiastical power would be tantamount to the revival and restoration of the Holy Roman Empire. The future European and world developments, especially the E.U. and ecumenical movement will more than likely lead to this. Chapters could be written about the influence exercised by the Roman Catholic church over the E.U. movement. Because the harlot woman represents a religious system and the beast a secular, political system; the woman sitting on the beast and being “carried” by him, is generally accepted to signify that the religious system will exercise some sort of influence or control over the political, and the political will support the religious. Whether or not it is against his will, or merely for the sake of political expediency matters not; the beast carries her!

Normally, something is carried because it cannot get to its place or position by itself or in its own strength. This is certainly true of the Papacy. Without secular and political support, it would never have attained the power and influence that it has in the past and today. As we have seen: when the political support of secular power was withdrawn, the Pope was reduced to a prisoner in the Vatican. The processes in the past that led to the religious system of the harlot exercising influence and control of the political, were long and subtle, and similar processes are at work today.

If the federation of Europe triumphs, the E.U. will be a mighty empire. Initially it will lack an emperor, but it will, as some political correspondents suggest, have the Pope. When this comes to pass, the prophecy in Rev. 17 concerning the harlot presiding over peoples, multitudes, nations and tongues, will take on a new light.

However, as is testified elsewhere, the beast is basically atheistic (Dan. 11:36-37. 2 Thes. 2:3-4. Rev. 13). In his heart of hearts he actually hates the harlot and her religious institutions and intends to destroy her (Rev. 17:16). His willingness to carry her on his back will obviously be due to political expediency in order to fulfil his own political agenda, which is world domination - a world without God and religion. When he decides to not have the harlot on his back any longer, he will destroy Rome along with the Vatican, and the language used to describe this destruction is not difficult to relate to a fiery nuclear holocaust (Rev. 17:16 and Ch. 18).

According to Lev. 21:9, burning with fire was the penalty under God’s law for a priest’s daughter if she corrupted herself and became a harlot!

When this comes to pass, the nations will no longer have a Pope, but

they will have an “emperor” - the man of sin, who will rule for 3½ years, at the end of which Christ will return and destroy the beast at the battle of Armageddon.

LAVISHLY ATTIRED AND ADORNED

Rev. 17:4 says the harlot was “dressed in purple and in scarlet, and covered (gilded or bespangled) with gold, precious stones and pearls.” These same words are also applied to “that great city” (Rome) in Rev. 18:16. It is revealed in Rev. 18 that the riches come from trade and commerce with other nations, emphasizing a very materialistic and commercialistic obsession and focus.

The colour scheme of the harlot’s garments, involving purple and scarlet is significant. Purple and scarlet are the chief colours in the robes worn by the Pope, bishops and cardinals. In Biblical times, purple garments were costly and only worn by persons of wealth and high official position. Purple was especially worn by kings and was a sign of royalty. Depicting the harlot arrayed in such garments indicates a show of opulence and the age-long desire of the leaders of Rome to have imperial power and secular authority. As we shall see: one of the deadliest marks of ecclesiastical corruption and apostasy in the past has been the Vatican’s lust for worldly power and involvement in politics to gain it. Worse still, has been the willingness to take up carnal arms to fight carnal battles and kill to attain such power.

On the basis of the statement in Isa. 1:18 about sins being like scarlet, the reference to the harlot’s scarlet garments can be taken to signify the sinfulness of her system. Being the colour of blood, it may also be intended to signify that she is stained by the shedding of the blood of the saints.

Regarding the reference to the harlot being decked with gold, precious stones and pearls: The Pope’s triple crown (tiara) alone, which is worn during his enthronement, is decorated with 32 rubies, 19 emeralds, 11 sapphires, 529 diamonds and 152 pearls. This single item alone is enough to identify the Roman Catholic church with the harlot decked with precious stones and pearls. What a contrast to Christ’s crown of thorns!

No other organization claiming to be Christ’s church has ever indulged so openly, blatantly and flauntingly in such a show of opulence and wealth. It is such a contrast with, and contradiction of Christ’s teaching and example, that it is bizarre, to say the least. Contrast the following advice given by the apostle Peter to Christ’s church: “Your

adornment should not be that outward adornment that involves special hair arrangements, expensive clothes and the wearing of gold. Instead, be beautiful inside, in your hearts, with the imperishable and lasting jewel of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is more precious to God” (1 Pet. 3:3-4). Jesus said to beware of religious leaders who wear long robes!

The Vatican lost much of its wealth and lands in Europe when it went into the “wilderness,” but this has been more than recouped in the vast financial empire she has since built up. The Vatican is one of the largest financial and business conglomerates ever to exist upon the face of the earth, largely through exploitation of the masses, motivated by a materialistic spirit. Countless stories could be told of the way Roman Catholic priests have exploited the poor and wrestled the last mite out of those who were already in abject poverty, not to mention the huge turnover of money made out of penance's, indulgences and so-called relics. This has been well documented by A. Manhattan, in his book “Vatican Billions.”

The greed and corruption of the Roman Catholic church and its exploitation of the people was a large contributing factor to the rise of communism in Russia, and its atheistic policy which outlawed religion. It was also the main contributing factor to Martin Luther’s stand against the church which resulted in the Reformation. His main thrust was that salvation comes by faith, not by works involving monetary payments for penance's and relics which were netting the church a vast fortune.

The Roman Catholic church has long realized that wealth brings power: power to influence the affairs of nations and of individuals to suit its own ends. So, throughout history; by forgeries, fabrication, distortions, deceit, corruption, torture, murder and even the instigating of wars (all in the name of Christ!); the pursuit of wealth has characterized this church. And so it has accumulated land, buildings, rare statues, priceless paintings and icons, and other religious paraphernalia, amounting to fabulous wealth in the realm of billions of dollars. More costly surroundings can scarcely be found than in the Vatican city itself.

ABOMINATIONS AND FORNICATIONS

In Rev. 17:4 the harlot is depicted as “having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornications.”

This simply signifies that the wine in her cup i.e. her teaching, results in abomination and fornication. Who would dare, after reading the Lord’s assessment and verdict of Roman Catholic doctrine here, speak kind and

flattering words about the system?!

In Scripture, the word “abominations” is frequently used in relation to idols and images which God strictly forbids and which are loathsome and detestable to Him (2 Kng. 23:13. Isa. 44:19 etc.). It is offensive and insulting to Him for the heavenly, divine, immortal Godhead to be represented by something earthly, carnal and mortal, like images made of wood, metal, marble or stone. Scriptures abound in which making images and bowing to idols is referred to as prostitution or whoredom. For example, Jer. 1:20: “On every hill and under every green tree, you have prostituted yourselves by bowing down to idols.”

On this basis, the “abominations” in the harlot’s cup could relate to the idols and images which are very much part of the Roman Catholic system. In the Vatican at Rome there are all manner of images which Roman Catholics venerate; not to mention the statues of Jesus, Mary, the apostles and various “saints” in all their churches throughout the world. It is claimed from time to time, that some of these images show signs of life by shedding tears and blood! This shows how real they want these images to be regarded and how seriously they want to take them.

Roman Catholicism has adopted the heathen practise - the practise of ancient pagan Babylon, of using images; thinking it is justified in doing so by putting new and Christian names on them. Herein lies the deception for those who are ignorant of the Scriptures and who therefore lack knowledge and discernment in spiritual matters. In many respects, Roman Catholicism has superimposed paganism upon the Christian faith and a book illustrating this has been written by Alexander Hislop, entitled: “The Two Babylons.”

Regarding the “filthiness of her fornications” referred to in Rev. 17:4: This statement may encompass more than just idols, images and idolatry.

The fertility rites of the pagans practised at the idol shrines in ancient Babylon and other nations, involved temple prostitutes, and literal physical fornication took place between them and the idol worshippers as part of the fertility cult. According to Herodotus, each maiden in Babylon was required to prostitute her virginity in temple worship. Sexual corruption took place under the guise or umbrella of religion.

So much for pagan Babylon; what about Papal Babylon? It is no secret that accusations over a long period of time have been made that many Roman Catholic priests, due to the church’s doctrine (wine) of celibacy, have been involved in fornication with nuns and other women in the church. If these accusations are true, the words “filthiness of her fornications” would be very relevant. Being “priests” does not

automatically exempt men (or women) from such behaviour. For example, Eli's sons were priests, but they became apostate and committed fornication with the women who came to the tabernacle to serve and worship (1 Sam. 2:22). In Christ, all believers are priests, and being flesh and blood, all have the potential to be tempted into sin.

Celibacy of all priests is an unscriptural doctrine and is one of the many false doctrines of the Roman Catholic church. As has already been pointed out, "forbidding to marry" is mentioned by the apostle Paul in 1 Tim. 4:3 as one of the signs of deviating from the true Christian faith. It is unnatural and dangerous, because it results in stifling and suppressing God-given desires. The apostle says it is better to marry than burn with lust (1 Cor. 7:9), and it is certainly evident from the reference to Peter's "wife's mother" in Mk. 1:30 that he was married! And according to Roman Catholic teaching, he was the first Pope.

Refusal to allow marriage can result in lust breaking out and exploding in fornication and homosexuality. In the event of this happening due to the celibacy doctrine, it is fittingly referred to as coming out of the harlot's cup.

Years ago a book was written by an ex nun entitled: "The Nun's Story," in which she openly testified to the fornicating that takes place between priests and nuns. Other ex priests and nuns have confirmed this. Another book was written on the same subject in which it was stated that babies born to nuns through priests were killed at birth and disposed of.

In a book entitled "The Faith of Millions," written by O'Brien, the following statements are made:

"In 836 the council of Aix-la-chapelle complained that many nunneries were brothels rather than houses of God, and it decreed that fornication was so prevalent among nuns that all nunneries built should have 'no dark corners in which scandals may be perpetrated out of view.'"

"During the famous council of Trent, August Baumgartner told the assembled cardinals and bishops that 96% of all priests were either married or had concubines."

"Pope Gregory X, in dismissing the second council of Lyons, told the cardinals and bishops that because of their immorality, 'they were the ruin of the world.'"

Adam Clarke mentions in his commentary that former priest, bishop Bale, said priests abominably corrupted men's wives, daughters, maid servants and children.

A more recent report on research by the Roman Catholic church in the U.S.A. said that over 50,000 children have been abused by priests

since 1950 up to the year 2000 i.e. about 1,000 per year!

In April 2004, a T.V. documentary entitled: “The Flesh and the Devil,” interviewed a priest who said he knows priests who are committed to each other in homosexual relationships.

The fact that Rome’s destruction is described in terms like Sodom’s overthrow (Rev. 18:9. 19:2-3), indicates that gross immorality is involved. Sodom of course was renowned for gross homosexuality, and where this exists, all other sexual perversions also exist including child abuse. In relation to this, consider the following selection of articles taken from the Wanganui Chronicle in 2002:

April 5: Church in crisis, say U.S. Catholics. “A majority of U.S. Catholics believe the paedophilia scandal in the Roman Catholic church is a crisis and many are angry at the way the church has handled the issue A survey of more than 1,000 adults found that among all Americans, 74% said church officials have tried to cover up the problem of priests who sexually abuse children. Two thirds of Catholic respondents expressed the same view ...”

April 27: Abuse Hidden. “An auxiliary bishop for the Roman Catholic church in El Salvador said yesterday the church keeps and periodically burns a secret archive of complaints against priests, including child abuse charges. Auxiliary bishop Gregorio Rosa made the accusation in a television interview as the central American nation, like many other predominately Catholic countries, reacted in alarm to a crisis that has hit the U.S. church over the shielding by high-level clergy of priests accused of abusing children.”

May 4: Priest sex scandal spreads to Hong Kong. “Police in Hong Kong are investigating reports of child sexual abuse by 3 priests in the territory, the latest in a growing list of world-wide cases that have shaken the Catholic church ... Yesterday a priest ... Father Paul Shanley, was arrested in San Diego on suspicion of 3 counts of child rape in Boston.”

May 8: “Help me find the priest who fathered my child.” Los Angeles - “A woman claiming she had a baby after being seduced by 7 Catholic priests yesterday asked a U.S. cardinal to help find the father and explain why he helped him hide for 2 decades ... The latest salvo in a snowballing scandal over sexual abuse by U.S. Catholic priests came just a week after 4 men, who say they were molested by a priest in the 1960s, sued the head of the United States’ largest Catholic diocese, Los Angeles cardinal Roger Mahony, for allegedly covering up clerical sex abuse ... The U.S. branch of the Catholic Church has been besieged by an avalanche of allegations of predatory sexual behaviour by priests,

prompting Pope John Paul 2 to convene an emergency meeting of his U.S. cardinals last month.”

June 22: Priest indicted on rape charges. Cambridge, Massachusetts - “A Massachusetts grand jury yesterday indicted Father Paul Shanley, one of the priests at the centre of a sex abuse scandal rocking the Catholic church, on charges of raping and assaulting 4 young boys. Middlesex county district attorney Martha Coakley said Shanley, already facing some of the most shocking accusations in the scandal, had been indicted on multiple counts of rape and indecent assault and battery of 4 children under the age of 14. Coakley said all of the alleged incidents took place when Shanley, an advocate of sex between men and boys, worked from 1979 to 1989 at St John the Evangelist parish in the Boston suburb of Newton ...”

June 28: Retired priest to stand trial on 42 sex charges. Louisville, Kentucky. - “A retired Roman Catholic priest has been indicted on 42 counts of sexual misconduct after dozens of people came forward saying they were abused as children. The Rev. Lous Miller, 71, faces 6 counts of sexual abuse and 36 counts of indecent and immoral practices ...”

Even in the church of England, an off-shoot of the Roman Catholic church, in spite of the clergy being free to marry, sexual perversion has become a major problem. Large headlines in the London Daily Mail back in October 1987 declared: “One vicar in 3 gay ... campaign to drive out homosexuals would shut down the church of England.” The reports quoted the “Reverend” general secretary of the lesbian and gay Christian movement as saying: “If this motion were accepted it would wreck the church, and the archbishop of Canterbury knows it. As a general figure, we believe between 30 and 40% of church of England clergymen are gay. And they are the most active people contributing to the ministry of the church.”

An overwhelming majority of 388 members (95% of the clergy) voted in favour of a watered down version. Concerning this, the Economist reported: “The church of England is against homosexual practises, but not very much. The general synod, the church’s parliament, with homosexual clergy in mind, this week decided that homosexual acts, unlike fornication and adultery, are not a sin: they merely fall short of the ideal that sexual intercourse is an act of total commitment which belongs properly within a permanent married relationship.”

Such reasoning demonstrates how ignorant of the Word of God and how spiritually bankrupt this ecclesiastical system is. The Bible is

unambiguously anti-adultery, anti-fornication and anti-homosexuality. All 3 are equally abhorrent to God - so abhorrent that they bar entrance into His kingdom. "Be not deceived" says the apostle Paul, "neither fornicators ... nor adulterers ... nor homosexuals ... shall inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 6:9-10).

Homosexuality used to be seen as a deviancy, but now merely a difference. In August 2003 the U.S. Episcopal church voted to approve the election of its first openly gay bishop, risking a major split in the denomination.

ANOTHER APPLICATION

Some have also applied the "filthiness of fornications" to the trafficking in, and making merchandise out of the "relics," involving skulls and bones which the Roman Catholics have a history of collecting and selling; attributing to them spiritual powers and influences. This virtually puts them into the same category as idols and images.

Under God's law given to Israel, a dead body or any part of a dead body was unclean and anyone who came in contact with it was rendered unclean. In view of the fact that bones of the dead are "unclean," and that regarding them as a source of divine blessing amounts to idolatry, which is spiritual fornication, "filthiness of fornication" would be an appropriate designation for such a practise.

Some time ago the results of an investigation by an Italian newspaper into the "relics" held by the Roman Catholic church revealed that: "There are 10 skulls of St John the Baptist around the globe. And the apostle Jacob left 9 heads and 18 arms by far-strewn disciples. But the English patron saint, St George, easily tops the list with enough bones to make up 30 skeletons."

The selling of such relics for monetary gain has turned many a Catholic church into a trafficker of the dead, a house of merchandise and a den of thieves and deceit. Such relics and the various statues of Jesus that are supposed to have bled and the statues of Mary that are supposed to have shed tears etc, are all summed up in the word "sorceries" in Rev. 18:23.



CHAPTER THREE THE TRINITY - ONE OF 35 ERRORS

The extent to which the Roman Catholic church has become apostate is indicated by a list of 35 false doctrines and practices that can be drawn up. The list is as follows:

1. Negative attitude towards personal study of the Scriptures.
2. The trinity.
3. The pre-existence of Christ.
4. The immaculate conception.
5. The immortality of the soul.
6. The fallen angel devil and demons.
7. Hell.
8. Purgatory.
9. The second coming of Christ
10. The millennium.
11. Infant sprinkling (Christening).
12. Clergy-laity distinction (a distinction between priests and people)
13. Confessional box.
14. Long robes and distinctive attire.
15. The Mass in Latin in non-Latin speaking countries.
16. The Eucharist. (Only the priests have the wine).
17. Transubstantiation.
18. Canonisation. (Only those selected by the church can be “saints”)
19. Celibacy.
20. Abstention from foods.
21. Observance of “holy days.”
22. Short hair on nuns.
23. Pope and priests addressed as “Father.”
24. Preference for Peter.
25. Papal infallibility.
26. Mariolatry (worship of Mary).
27. Mary’s perpetual virginity.
28. Monasticism and asceticism.
29. Indulgences.
30. Relics.
31. Images.
32. History of persecution.
33. History of anti-Semitism.

34. Involvement in war.
35. Involvement in politics.

Brief reference has already been made to some of these, but in the following chapters more will be said about them as each of the 35 points are covered.

1. DISCOURAGING ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE BIBLE.

The Roman Catholic church believes and teaches that the Bible is the inspired and infallible Word of God, but for the most part of her history, very few of her lay people possessed a copy, or read and studied it themselves. The reason for this is because it has been the policy of the church to discourage them from reading it on the grounds that it is not for them to interpret and understand.

The Bible was at one time officially forbidden to the people by the church of Rome. It was placed on “the index of forbidden books” by the Council of Valencia in the year 1229 with the following decree:

“We prohibit also the permitting of the laity to have the books of the Old Testament unless anyone should wish, from a feeling of devotion, to have a Psalter or breviary for divine service, or “the hours of the blessed virgin.” But we strictly forbid them to have the above-mentioned books in the common tongue.”

By insisting that any copy must be in Latin, it effectively put even the Psalter beyond the understanding of ordinary people. The other books mentioned are not, of course, part of the Scriptures in any case. The Council of Trent, in 1545, re-affirmed this decree, adding:

“In as much as it is manifest, from experience, that if the Holy Bible, translated into the common tongue, be indiscriminately allowed to everyone, the temerity of men will cause more evil than good to arise from it.”

Restrictions amounting to prohibitions on the circulation of the Bible in the common tongue were affirmed by Pope Pius IV (1559-1566). In spite of this prohibition being revised by Pope Leo XIII in 1897, allowing the circulation of approved translations, and the use of other translations by scholars, the majority of the members of the Roman Catholic church continued to be ruled by the previous prohibition.

History records that many earnest and sincere men and women were persecuted, and many of them put to death in the cruellest ways, for no other reason than that they either possessed or sought to make the Word of God, the Holy Scriptures, available to their fellow men in the tongues that

they could read and understand.

The Papacy was opposed to the work of the great protestant Bible societies: the British and Foreign Bible Society; the American Bible Society; the Bible Society of Scotland and that of the Netherlands. In 1844, Pope Gregory XVI condemned all such societies, and Pope Pius IX, the author of the decree on Papal infallibility (who died in 1878), denounced “these cunning and infamous societies, which call themselves Bible societies, and give the Scriptures to inexperienced youth!”

These Popes obviously felt threatened at the prospect of people being able to read the Scriptures themselves. By restricting access to the Scriptures to their own priests and theologians, they could keep the people ignorant of the Word of God, and conceal the fact that Roman Catholic teaching was not based on the Word, but on human philosophy and tradition.

In view of the many unbiblical doctrines taught by the church, it is not surprising that she has never encouraged her people to read and study the Bible themselves. This is quite contrary to the teaching of the Bible itself. For example: Isa. 8:20 states that if people do not speak according to the testimony of God’s Word, they have no light in them. 1 Pet. 4:11 says: “If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God.”

How can anyone speak according to the Word of God unless he knows the Word? And how can he know it unless he reads and studies it? It is clearly implicit in these statements that God expects people to read His Word.

The apostle Paul declared that it is the Holy Scriptures which are able to make us wise unto salvation (2 Tim. 3:15), and the apostle Peter declared that we all do well to take heed to them as we would to a light shining in a dark place (2 Pet. 1:19-21).

During his ministry on earth, Jesus said: “Search the Scriptures ... for they testify of me” (Jn. 5:39). He specifically encouraged them to read and understand the book of Daniel (Matt. 24:15). He rebuked people for not knowing the Scriptures, saying: “Have you never read in the Scriptures ...” (Matt. 21:42); “You have gone astray not knowing the Scriptures” (Matt. 22:29).

Reference was made earlier to Pope Gregory XVI being opposed to making the Scriptures available to inexperienced youth. This attitude doesn’t line up with the apostle Paul’s statement in 2 Tim. 3:15 that Timothy knew the Holy Scriptures from a child, and he encouraged him to continue learning from them. The same encouragement is given to young men in Ps. 119:9: “How shall a young man cleanse his way? By paying

attention to God's Word." Why? Because God's Word "is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path" (Ps. 119:105).

The Bereans were commended as being "noble" because they were open minded. They did not take it for granted that Paul's teaching was Scriptural, so they "searched the Scriptures daily to see whether those things were so" (Act. 17:10-11).

It has only been as a result of men and women adopting the Berean attitude, searching the Scriptures to see if Roman Catholic teaching is Scriptural, that it has become evident that it is hopelessly astray from the truth. For the most part, as we shall see, it is based on the traditions of men, not the Word of God. Jesus expressed his attitude towards this kind of system in these words: "In vain do you worship me, teaching for doctrine the commandments of men" (Matt. 15:9). "How ingeniously you neutralize the Word of God by your tradition" (Mk. 7:9, 13).

2. THE TRINITY.

In both the Old and New Testament, God is revealed as one God: "Hear O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord" (Deu. 6:4. Mk. 12:29). The sense in which God is "one" is indicated when Jesus referred to Him in His prayer as the "only" true God. The Greek word for "only" is "monos" from which the English word "mono" is derived and means sole, single, only, alone. It means "one" in a mathematical sense. For example: a monorail is a single solitary track. Monogamy means being married to one person. A monocle is a single eye glass etc.

Monothesim therefore, by definition, is a single God; one person.

God Himself has indicated many times that He is a single individual, by using personal singular pronouns such as "I," "Me," "Myself." He also does this by making statements stressing that He "alone" or "only" is God, and "there is none else." "To whom will you liken Me, and make Me equal?" (Read Isaiah chapters 44 to 47).

It would be grammatically incorrect to use personal singular pronouns if more than one person was involved.

In passing, it is acknowledged that there are 4 Scriptures in the Old Testament where the plural "us" is used in relation to God, but this is due to conversation taking place between God and His angels, as can be seen for example, in Isa. 6:1-8.

It should also be pointed out that the Hebrew word "elohiym," translated "God" in the Old Testament, is frequently applied to angels themselves. The reason for this is because they represent God, speaking in

His name, acting on His behalf, being energised, empowered and inspired by His Spirit. In fact, the Hebrew word translated “angels” in Ps. 8:5 is *elohiym*, the same word elsewhere translated “God.” And the fact that Heb. 2:7 quotes Ps. 8:5 and also uses the word “angels,” shows that the New Testament acknowledges that *elohiym* can relate to angels. However, it is evident that applying the divine title “God” to angels does not make them equal with God or the same person as God! The following Scriptures are a sample of those in which angels are referred to as God: Gen. 16:10-13. 32:24-30 with Hos. 12:3-5. 48:15-16. Ex. 3:1-6. Judg. 13:20-22. Ps. 97:7 and Heb. 1:6.

The Hebrew word “*elohiym*” actually has a plural connotation because it is used in relation to the family relationship which exists in heaven between God and His angels who are sometimes referred to as “sons of God.” Being vehicles and manifestations of God’s Holy Spirit, each angel is a “spirit.” Each one, being holy, is a holy spirit. But it is important to realize that *elohiym* denotes plurality of persons without stating the number. The word does not mean 3 beings or personalities. There is no Scriptural basis or justification for limiting the word *elohim* to 3 persons. The plurality of *elohiym* is not confined to a duality or trinity of persons, but involves a multiplicity of persons! It signifies plurality in unity: One God manifested in many agents. (There are over 100 million angels! Rev. 5:11).

This principle is illustrated in the science of arithmetic which is the science of numbers. The basis of the science is the multitudinous expression of one. “One” is the great power of the arithmetical universe, and all other numbers resulting from the multiplication of one, cannot exclude or expunge the number one without destroying the system. And who would be so foolish to argue the one is three or three is one!

Father God, the creator of the universe is, as Einstein put it: “the number one power.” Being Father, He is the first and primary cause. Everything and everyone, including all the angels and His only begotten son, came from Him. All are a product of His power. By His power He “made” the angels and “begat” His son (Heb. 1:5-7).

Not only is the divine title *elohiym* applied to angels, but also men, illustrating once again that the title has both a primary and secondary application.

Because Jewish judges judged on behalf of God and dispensed divine decisions, they are called “*elohiym*.” Being God’s representatives and His name bearers on earth, ruling over His kingdom (the kingdom of Israel) on His behalf, they were invested with the divine title. For example, in Ex.

4:15-16 and 7:1 God told Moses that he would be “as God,” (in connection with this, it should be kept in mind that Moses was also told Messiah would be a prophet like himself (Deu. 18:18. Act. 3:19-26). This implied that Messiah, like Moses, would be “as God”; not equal with God, but representing God, speaking and acting on His behalf).

In the following verses, the Hebrew word *elohim*, normally translated “God,” is actually translated “judges” in relation to Jewish judges: (Ex. 21:6. 22:8. 1 Sam. 2:25). However, as in the case of angels who are also called *elohiym*, the bestowal of the divine title on the Jewish judges did not make them equal with God. They were “God” in a secondary sense not a primary sense.

The apostle Paul sums up the situation in 1 Cor. 8:5-6 by saying that although there are those who are called gods in heaven (angels) and in earth (judges, not to mention idols); to us there is but one God the Father.

Ps. 82 also refers to the Jewish judges as “gods” (*elohiym*) and is particularly interesting because Jesus quoted it during his ministry to defend himself against the charge that he claimed to be equal with God.

Because Jesus said “I and my Father are one,” the Jews as usual, misunderstood and misinterpreted his statement, and imagined that he was claiming to be God Himself and therefore equal with God. They failed to understand that when Jesus said he and his Father were “one,” he neither meant that they were one and the same person nor that they were equal. He simply meant they were united in purpose as in the case when he referred to himself and his church as being “one” (Jn. 17:20-23).

The Jews reacted to Jesus’ statement “I and my Father are one,” by accusing him of blasphemy. They said: “you, being a man, make yourself God.”

Now, if that was what Jesus was really claiming, this was surely the time to say so. But what did he say? His answer clearly shows that he denied equality with his Father and rejected all claim to being “God” in the sense they conveyed, i.e. the primary sense.

Jesus replied saying: “Is it not written in your law, ‘I said, you are gods?’ If those to whom the Word of God was committed are called ‘gods’ (and the Scripture cannot be altered); then why do you charge me, whom the Father has sanctified and sent into the world, by saying, ‘you blaspheme,’ because I said I am the son of God?”

The last statement in this defence is particularly significant: “Why do you charge me with blasphemy because I said I am the son of God.” Jesus explains in these words what he meant when he said “I and my Father are one.” He was not claiming to be God Himself or equal with God. He was

simply claiming to be the son of God. This should have been obvious enough to the Jews by the reference of Jesus to “my Father” in his statement: “I and my Father are one.” Being the son of God, Jesus was united (one) with his Father in Spirit, mind and purpose.

Significantly enough, the Jewish judges, referred to as “gods” in Ps. 82:1, 6, are also called “sons of the Most High” (God) in v6. Not that they were sons of God through divine begetting like Jesus, but they were called sons of God nevertheless. In view of their own judges being called sons of God, the Jews were without ground for accusing Jesus of blasphemy for referring to himself as son of God.

We now come to the main point. Why was it that when Jesus was accused of claiming to be God, that he quoted Ps. 82 in which Jewish judges are referred to as gods? The answer is self evident. Jesus’ reply could be paraphrased like this:

“You have accused me of blasphemy because you have interpreted my statement: “I and my Father are one” to mean I claim to be God. This is not what I claimed at all. I simply claim to be the son of God. However, even if I called myself God, you would still be in no position to charge me with blasphemy, because your own Scriptures (which cannot be altered) call the Jewish judges gods because the Word of God was committed to them. If they can be called elohim without you concluding they were equal with God, then so can I. After all, I am divinely appointed as judge; the Father has sanctified me and sent me to minister His Word, as is evident in the works and miracles I perform. However, I have not called myself “God,” but “the son of God.”

It is significant that although Jesus was fully entitled to the divine title elohim, being the greatest judge ever in Israel’s history, he never claimed it or referred to himself by it. He referred to himself as “son of God” and “son of man,” but never “God.” Why? Because he knew that the Jews had become ignorant of the fact that Scripture called God’s representatives God in the secondary sense, and that if he referred to himself by this title and said he was “God,” they would immediately conclude that he was claiming to be God in the primary sense. Jesus clearly did not want people to think that!

Had Jesus been “very God of very God” he would surely have said so. But he never made that claim. If he had, it would have been quickly thrown at him during the interrogation prior to his crucifixion when the Jewish authorities were seeking evidence to put him to death. By this time they seem to have been satisfied that he didn’t claim to be God. This seems to be evident from the fact that while Jesus was on the cross they

said: “he trusted in God; let Him deliver him now if He wants him; for he said: I am the son of God.”

The divine title “elohiym” as applied to Jewish judges is clearly used in a secondary sense in Ps. 82, and relates to those who have received authority from the One supreme God to speak and act on His behalf. In view of the fact that Jesus chose this Scripture in which elohiym is used in a secondary sense to defend himself against the charge that he claimed to be God in the first sense; proves that he did not want people to regard him as God in the first sense, but in the secondary sense!

BACK TO THE ROMAN CATHOLICS

Unfortunately, the Roman Catholics and other churches in Christendom who have inherited their teaching, have made the same mistake as the Jews. To this day they interpret Jesus’ statement “I and my Father are one” to mean he was claiming to be equal with God, and have concluded that other references in Scripture to Jesus being “God” must be understood in the primary sense. Ironically enough, their conclusion is based on the false interpretation of the ignorant and apostate Jews! The only difference is that the Jews denigrated Jesus for the statement and the Roman Catholics venerate him for it.

Failure to understand how Jesus can be referred to as God without being the same person as his Father or equal with him, led to the doctrine of the Trinity. In the third century A.D. after much debate and controversy over the subject, Athanasius, a Roman Catholic bishop and theologian, formulated the statement on the Trinity. It is known as the Athanasian creed and is regarded as authoritative not only by Roman Catholics, but also Lutherans, Anglicans, Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, Brethren etc. - most of the churches in Christendom.

The creed states: “We worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in unity; neither confounding: nor dividing the substance ... and in this Trinity none is afore, or after other: none is greater, or less than another: but the whole 3 persons are co-eternal together: and co-equal.”

Basically, this creed wants to have its cake and eat it too. Realizing that the Bible affirms there is only one God, the creed states “we worship one God,” but then it contradicts this by adding “in Trinity.”

The word “Trinity” ever since has been the popular designation for God throughout Christendom, but it is an unscriptural word. It did not appear in Christian literature until the third century after Christ. The word is never used in the Bible to define God. Time and time again the Word of

God says God is “one,” never three. The only reference to “three” in connection with God is in 1 Jn. 5:7 in the old King James Version. But significantly enough, the statement does not appear in the original Greek manuscript. It was added by a Trinitarian, Virgilius Tapsensis, a Latin writer of no credit, and has been omitted by all modern translations of the Bible.

The only group of 3 parties in heaven referred to in Scripture involves the Father, son and angels (1 Tim. 5:21. Rev. 1:4-5). Elsewhere these 3 are referred to as the Father, son and Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is the power of the Father - His divine energy by which He performs all His works. Angels are energized by this power and manifestations of it. Compare Gen. 1:2 with Jer. 32:17. Also see Mic. 3:8. Lk. 1:35. Act. 1:8. 8:18-19. In these verses God’s Spirit is described as His power. In other places it is referred to in terms of God’s breath and is likened to the wind. God and His Spirit or power can be compared with the sun and its radiation. The body of the sun remains in heaven but its power emanates and radiates well beyond, imparting light and life. For this reason Ps. 84:11 says: “For the Lord God is a sun.”

As mentioned earlier, the angels (spirits) are vehicles and manifestations of the Holy Spirit, and for this reason the Holy Spirit and angels are often synonymous in Scripture. Compare Act. 8:26 and v29. Act. 10:3, 7 and v19. Act. 11:12-13. The “comforter” in Jn. 16:13 who was going to “show things that are to come,” was an angel (Rev. 1:1).

The fact that the Holy Spirit is God’s power is indicated by references to it being “poured out,” “shed,” “breathed” etc, and of people being “clothed upon,” “anointed,” “baptized with,” “filled,” “possessed” by it. All these characteristics of the Spirit reveal it as the Father’s presence or power - an influence rather than an actual person or being.

A person cannot be “poured out” upon another person, and one person cannot drink another person. Neither can one person be anointed (sprinkled or smeared) with another person.

NO PERSONAL NAME

The Father is a person and His name is Yahweh. The son is a person and his name is Yahshuah (Jesus). If the Holy Spirit is a person co-equal and co-eternal with the Father, what is His name? No name is ever given in Scripture because there is no such person. Reference in Matt. 28:19 to baptizing in “the name” of the Father, son and Holy Spirit does not mean that the Holy Spirit is a name. It is a title, as is “Father” and

“son.”

It is evident from the book of Acts that people were baptized into the name of Jesus (Act. 2:38. 10:48. 19:5. Rom. 6:3). Baptism into the name of Jesus links the believer with the Father and son through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the unifying power or influence which makes all parties one. Hence, the “name” of the Father, son and Holy Spirit is the name of Jesus - the only name given under heaven by which men can be saved. For this reason the word “name” is only mentioned once in Matt. 28:19. It does not say: “In the name of the Father, in the name of the son, and in the name of the Holy Spirit.” Orthodox churches recite it like this, and in so doing commit the sin of adding words to Scripture.

NEVER ADDRESSED IN PRAYER OR PRAISE

There is not one prayer or song of praise addressed to the Holy Spirit in the Bible. Nowhere in Scripture are we told to love, honour or worship the Holy Spirit, or pray to it. Why not if it is the third person of a triune God?

Rev. 5:13 says: “Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him (the Father) who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb (Jesus) for ever and ever.” Also Rev. 7:10: “Salvation to our God who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb.”

Why is there no reference to the Holy Spirit in these hymns of adoration if it is a co-equal member of the God-head. Why is the Holy Spirit omitted?

The Bible frequently pictures the Father sitting upon His throne and Jesus sitting or standing at His right hand, but never refers to the Holy Spirit on the throne with them.

The Father and son are often associated together in judgement and redemption, and the coming kingdom is referred to as the kingdom of God and His Christ (Rev. 11:15), but the Holy Spirit is omitted. Why?

In 1 Cor. 11:3 we read: “The head of every man is Christ; the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.” We have here a specific order, involving woman, man, Christ and God, but there is no mention of the Holy Spirit. If the Holy Spirit is a person like the Father, son, man and woman, and belongs to this “family,” why is he left out?

In his greetings to the churches the apostle Paul never mentions the Holy Spirit. His standard greeting is: ‘Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.’ Salutations and greetings never come from the Holy Spirit, but they do come from angels!

(Rev. 1:4).

Because all believers in New Testament times possessed the Holy Spirit, which had a bonding and unifying effect, 2 Cor. 13:14 refers to “the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.”

The Father and His Spirit are inseparable. “God is Spirit” (Jn. 4:24). When the Bible refers to the Spirit speaking (Rev. 2:7), it therefore refers either to God Himself speaking or to someone being inspired to speak on His behalf by His Spirit. When the Spirit is described as making intercession (Rom. 8:26-27), it refers to words of intercession quickened or inspired by the Spirit of God. When Ananias lied to the apostles who were appointed and inspired by the Holy Spirit, he lied to God who was present and working by His Holy Spirit. When men grieve or blaspheme against the Holy Spirit, they grieve and blaspheme against God Himself.

If the son of God and Holy Spirit are one and the same person, equal in status, how are we to understand Matt. 12:31-32 which says words spoken against the son will be forgiven, but words spoken against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven?

INCOMPREHENSIBLE

As we have seen, the singular pronouns used by God in relation to Himself, and the word “mono” used in Scripture in connection with Him being the one and only God, teach that He is a single individual - “one” in a mathematical sense. To say that He is one person yet 3 persons is incomprehensible, and it is no wonder that this doctrine is called “a blessed mystery.”

How can a father and son be the same person? How can a father be his own son? How can a son be his own father? How can a son pray to his own father or sit next to him on his throne if he is one and the same person? Such a doctrine is nonsense, full of contradiction, complications and confusion and it is an insult on human intelligence to be expected to believe it. That Jesus and his Father are separate individuals is clearly taught in Jn. 8:17. Jesus said: “It is written in the law that the testimony of two men (or 3 men: Deu. 19:15) is true. I am one who testifies and my Father is the other.” Paul confirms this by saying: “There is one God and one mediator between God and man: the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5). One plus one = two!

The doctrine of the Trinity teaches another and different Jesus from the Jesus taught by the apostles, and this has resulted in millions of minds being corrupted from “the simplicity that is in Christ” (2 Cor. 11:3-4).

Corrupting the simplicity in Christ fulfils the prediction made by Paul that: “The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine ... and shall turn their ears away from the truth” (2 Tim. 4:3-4).

NEUTRALISES FUNDAMENTAL FACTS

The doctrine of the Trinity makes a mockery of the true doctrine of monotheism, and negates some fundamental facts concerning God. For example: Scripture teaches that God is immortal and cannot be tempted (1 Tim. 6:14-16. Jam. 1:13). Being immortal means He cannot die; and not being able to be tempted, according to Jam. 1:14 means He cannot be drawn away and enticed by the desires of the flesh.

So then, if Jesus was God in the primary sense, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father, “very God of very God,” he would not be able to be tempted and neither would he be able to die.

The doctrine of the Trinity has actually forced the Roman Catholics and others, to reach these conclusions and to formulate false doctrines to accommodate them.

For example, the doctrine of the immaculate conception (more will be said about this shortly) was formulated in order that it could be believed that Mary did not impregnate Jesus with any of the genes responsible for the sinful tendencies and desires of the flesh of the fallen human race. Their doctrine of Jesus being the supreme untemptable God, made them believe that in his “incarnation,” (as they define it) he would have to be unaffected by the stain of “original sin,” and therefore be devoid of the impulses and propensities which arise from within the flesh and cause temptation and sin.

It is an experience common to all humans for temptation to arise from their own flesh desires, as taught in Jam. 1:14. And according to Heb. 4:15, Jesus was tempted in the same way. He was “tempted in all points like us, but never sinned.” But the Roman Catholic doctrine of the Trinity cannot and does not accept this. They do not believe that Jesus could experience within his own flesh the inner lurings and propensities common to the sinful flesh of all other men. They do not believe therefore, that Jesus came in the same flesh. However, Heb. 2:14 says he did come in the same flesh.

Neither does Roman Catholic doctrine accept that Jesus really died. On the basis of 1 Pet. 3:19 and Lk. 23:43 it is claimed that it was only Christ’s body that died on the cross, but the real Christ - his “spirit,” lived on, and either went and preached to other “spirits” in hell or went to

paradise in heaven, or both! This doctrine involves confusion and contradiction.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

The doctrine of the Trinity not only nullifies Christ's temptations and death, but also has other serious implications. For example: it virtually makes Father God redundant. Let's face it: if the Holy Spirit is responsible for all creative power, signs, miracles and healings, and the son is Saviour and redeemer, what does the Father do? And if Mary conceived Jesus by the Holy Spirit, then God the Holy Spirit should be the Father of Jesus not God the Father!

The concept of the Trinity practically eliminates Father God, and fails to give Him the exclusive status given to Him in the Scriptures.

God the Father is the number One power. He is the supreme fountain and source of all power throughout the universe. He is "the One God and Father of all, who is above all" (Eph. 4:6). He therefore issues this challenge: "To whom then will you liken Me, or set up as My equal?!" (Isa. 40:25).

The doctrine of the Trinity is therefore guilty of presumption for elevating Jesus to equality with his Father, especially in view of the fact that Jesus went out of his way to categorically deny equality.

Jesus never was, still isn't and never will be equal with his Father. The statement in Plp. 2:6 in the Old King James version that Jesus "thought it not robbery to be equal with God" is a poor translation reflecting the bias of the Trinitarian translators. The Greek word translated "robbery" means to desire, grasp, seize. The R.S.V. gives a more accurate translation in these words: "He did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped." The New English Bible says: "He did not think to snatch at equality with God." Others say he did not count equality with God a thing to be seized.

Instead of allowing his high status to make him proud and reach out to grasp at equality with God, as Adam reached out to grasp the forbidden fruit to become equal with the gods (Gen. 3:5), Jesus humbled himself and was obedient. Instead of teaching he was equal with God, the passage in Plp. 2 teaches the opposite!

When the Jews accused Jesus of claiming to be equal with God (Jn. 5:18), what did he say? Did he agree with them? No, he did not! He said: "Verily, verily I say unto you, the son can do nothing of himself, but what he sees the Father do" (Jn. 5:19). This is certainly not the position of the

Father! (See Isa. 40:12-18).

During his ministry on earth, Jesus plainly declared “My Father is greater than I” (Jn. 14:28). Jesus did not know the date of his second coming but his Father did (Mk. 13:32). And according to the apostle Paul, the glorification of Christ and his ascension to heaven has not changed this status. He said: “The head of Christ is God” (1 Cor. 11:3). This is confirmed in Rev. 1:1 where we are told that Revelation was given to Christ by God. “Revelation” involves knowledge not previously known. For Jesus to receive such knowledge from his Father after he had been in heaven for around 60 years, reveals he was not omniscient and therefore not equal with his Father.

Even after his second coming, at the end of the millennium, Jesus will still be subordinate to his Father as we read in 1 Cor. 15:28: “Then shall the son be subject (subordinate) to him who put all things under him.”

3. PRE-EXISTENCE OF CHRIST.

If Jesus was co-eternal with God, he obviously would have pre-existed prior to his birth. The pre-existence of Christ therefore inevitably forms an integral part of the doctrine of the Trinity, and gave rise to the doctrine of the incarnation, which teaches the pre-existent Christ reduced himself to an embryo and was placed in Mary’s womb to be clothed with flesh.

As in the case of the word “Trinity,” the words “pre-existence” and “incarnation” do not occur in the Bible. They are unscriptural terms adopted by Roman Catholic theologians to support unscriptural doctrines.

Even though the Greeks believed that all men pre-existed and used the term to describe it, the New Testament Greek text studiously avoids the word and never uses it in relation to Jesus or anyone else.

Instead of the Bible using the word “pre-existence,” the terms “foreordained” and “predestined” are used instead, and most of the passages of Scripture which Trinitarians regard as teaching pre-existence, can be interpreted and understood in this light.

The doctrine of the pre-existence of Christ is a serious error because it negates a number of fundamental truths relating to Christ. It makes of none effect and virtually nullifies certain basic principles relating to Mary’s conception, and the birth, death, resurrection and glorification of Christ. They may be summarized as follows:

A. Nullifies Mary’s conception.

It is commonly believed that the pre-existent Christ was transformed

into an embryo and then placed into Mary's womb to grow into a baby clothed with flesh. This process is called "the incarnation" and it negates Mary's conception.

It is clearly stated in the Gospels that Mary "conceived" through the Holy Spirit (Matt. 1:20. Lk. 1:31, 35). Now, "conceive" is a specific biological term with a specific meaning. It involves the female ovum, or egg, being fertilized as it passes down the fallopian tube. After fertilization, the egg divides into 2 then 4 and so on, as the embryo begins to develop. Conception cannot occur without the female ovum being penetrated by a fertilizing seed.

But, if a pre-existent Christ was placed in Mary's womb as an embryo, Mary could not have conceived. An egg from her ovary would not have been used. She would not be the real biological mother. Mary would therefore be reduced to a mere "test tube" into which an already existing Christ in embryonic form was placed, as in the case of embryo transplants. In other words, Mary would have been simply "used" as an incubator. All references to her conceiving would therefore be artificial and false - a farce!

B. Nullifies sonship.

If Mary's conception took place through a pre-existent Christ entering her ovum or womb, why doesn't Scripture say that Mary conceived through the holy son overshadowing and coming upon her? Instead, it says she conceived through the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit: "The Holy Spirit shall come upon you" (Lk. 1:35). This is clear enough. It was the Holy Spirit, and not a pre-existent son, that came upon Mary causing her to conceive.

If Mary conceived by the Holy Spirit coming upon her, it is evident that the Holy Spirit must have penetrated and fertilized her ovum, and not a pre-existent son. And if the Holy Spirit is a different person from the Father and son as Trinitarians contend, then why wasn't Mary's child called the son of the Holy Spirit? Why was the child called the son of the Father when it was by the Holy Spirit that Mary conceived?

It should be evident from this that the Holy Spirit is what Scripture declares it to be: "The power of the highest" (Lk. 1:35); i.e. the Father's power. If Mary conceived through the Holy Spirit and the child produced is called the only begotten of the Father, it is evident that the Father and Holy Spirit are one and the same, and not two persons.

Here is another point: If Mary conceived through a pre-existent Christ entering her ovum or womb, how could this change him from being a co-equal co-eternal God with the Father, into a son of the Father? If an

eternal God transformed Himself into an embryo, he would surely still remain the eternal God in embryonic form, for it is inconceivable that an immortal God could die during the procedure or transaction.

This example may help: Let us liken the Trinity to 3 brothers who are triplets. If one of them was able to transform himself into an embryo and enter a woman's womb and develop into a baby, how could that make him the son of one of his brothers, even if one of the brothers placed the embryo in the womb?

The doctrine of the pre-existence of Christ also raises this question: If he is known as "God the son" due to being born of Mary, what was he known as during his pre-existent state prior to that birth? Hardly "God the son." What then? Who was he? What was he? The unknown God?!

There was only one way in which the Father could have a son through Mary in the full and proper sense of the word, and that was through His own generative or creative power penetrating and fertilizing Mary's ovum, causing her to conceive. This, precisely, is what the Word of God says took place. Until this took place, there was no son of God, or, to put it more precisely: there was no "only begotten of the Father."

Scripture emphatically declares that Jesus became God's son through begettal - divine begettal, i.e. through the Father's Power coming upon Mary, causing her to conceive. The words of the Father Himself are: "Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee." This statement stresses that it was through begettal that Jesus became God's son. Prior to being begotten, Jesus was neither the son of God nor God the son. And it is certainly evident from the statement in Heb. 1:5 that he wasn't an angel.

Never before or since in the history of man, has God released His Power to fertilize a female ovum. Except for Mary, no other woman has ever conceived through the Holy Spirit. Jesus is the only man in history to be born through divine conception, and is absolutely unique in this respect. He is distinctly and exclusively "the only begotten of the Father."

Because Jesus came as a result of God's Power being released from heaven to overshadow Mary, he is naturally referred to in Scripture as having come from or proceeded from God, or from heaven, or sent by God etc. These statements do not teach pre-existence but divine begettal. Jesus truly came from above or heaven in this sense.

C. Nullifies hereditary connections.

If a pre-existent Christ entered Mary's womb as an embryo, Jesus would have no hereditary connection with his mother or her ancestral line.

It is a known fact that genes are the minute carriers of our hereditary traits. They are arranged in lines along the chromosomes, the tiny strands

of genetic material found in the nuclei of all body cells. During fertilization, 23 single chromosomes are contributed by the father (in a sperm cell), and 23 by the mother (in the ovum). The new individual therefore has 23 pairs, with sets of genes from both parents. The child will therefore inherit characteristics from both parents, which have been passed down a long genealogical line.

So then, if Jesus pre-existed and entered Mary's womb as God in embryonic form, he would not be impregnated with her genes, and therefore would not have any biological connection with her or with her ancestral line. In reality, Mary would not be the mother of Jesus in the true biological sense.

Now, Scripture plainly declares that the Messiah would be the "seed" of Abraham and David, according to the flesh (Rom. 1:3. Gal. 3:16). The word "seed" comes from the Greek word "sperma" from which the English word "sperm" is derived. This does not mean of course that Abraham's or David's sperm was preserved and used to fertilize Mary's ovum. It simply means that the ancestral line which was impregnated with genes from Abraham and David, would be the same line out of which Christ would come. This is what is meant when God promised the Messiah to David in these words: "I will set up your seed after you, which shall proceed out of your bowels" (2 Sam. 7:12).

Due to Mary being a direct descendant of Abraham and David, her conception would result in the child being impregnated with their genes, making the child their "seed" in a real genetic sense. Through his mother's conception, Jesus would therefore have a personal, organic, family relationship with Abraham and David, qualifying him to sit upon David's throne and reign as king, as many prophecies declared concerning the Messiah.

But if Jesus pre-existed long before Abraham and David were even born, and later entered Mary's womb as God in embryonic form, he would have no hereditary connection with Abraham and David. He would therefore not be the true Messiah or the true heir promised to David. It is therefore no exaggeration to say that the doctrine of the pre-existence of Christ nullifies all hereditary connections. It makes him "another" and different Christ from the one promised.

Can anyone think of anything more bizarre than God telling David that one day He, the Eternal Creator God, will proceed out of his bowels, and be born of a woman and become an ignorant baby! This is the ridiculous state of affairs which the doctrine of the Trinity has forced people into!

D. Makes Christ's death artificial.

As pointed out earlier: If Jesus was the immortal God, it would be impossible for him to die. However, Jesus plainly said: "I am he who lives and was dead" (Rev. 1:18). In this statement Jesus makes no distinction between himself and his body. The Jesus who speaks these words is the Jesus who was dead.

As we shall see, according to Scripture, death is a sleep - a state of unconsciousness. This was certainly the case when Jesus was dead, for it is clearly stated in 1 Cor. 15:20 that he "slept." (Sleep is a common euphemism for death in Scripture). This is almost proof positive that Jesus was not the supreme immortal God, for He never slumbers or sleeps (Ps. 121:4). He certainly cannot die. It is therefore indeed "mystery all; the immortal died," as is stated in a Trinitarian hymn. It is a mystery because it is a contradiction.

If Jesus lost consciousness when his body was put to death, he could hardly have had conscious existence before he had a body, i.e. before he was born. This puts another nail in the coffin of the pre-existence theory.

E. Makes resurrection superfluous.

If Jesus was the immortal God who lived from eternity before he appeared in a human body, and, as Trinitarians claim: lived on after the death of his body on the cross; why was resurrection in his body so important? If men must believe that he pre-existed before he "put on" a body without having been able to see him, could not men equally believe that he continued to exist after the death of his body without resurrection in the body being necessary? If he really was the eternal God who cannot die, and people were expected to believe that, it would be a foregone conclusion that he survived the death of his body and lived on eternally as he was supposed to have done prior to being in it. Such is the conclusion to which the doctrine of Christ's pre-existence leads, and it renders the resurrection of Christ superfluous.

The fact of the matter is that Christ's conscious existence and continuance in life depended on resurrection. Like all other men, he would have seen corruption and perished had the Father not raised him from the dead. This is clearly taught in Act. 2:27-31, 13:33-37. The special significance of Christ's resurrection can only be appreciated when it is realized that he was the first man in history to be raised from the dead to life everlasting (Act. 26:23. 1 Cor. 15:20. Co. 1:18. Rev. 1:5).

Jesus is a representative man - a true representative of the human race. Being "the first fruits" of all who have "slept" in death (1 Cor. 15:20) makes Jesus a "specimen" of man in the totally redeemed state. He

is an example of the immortality promised to believers, which involves an immortal body, not a disembodied immortal.

With Jesus and his resurrection from the dead, there has already happened what is yet to occur for all other men who belong to his body the church. His resurrection is an anticipatory resurrection, by which God gives assurance to all His followers that they, like fruit on a tree that follows the first ripe fruit, will be like him.

But if it is believed that Jesus pre-existed as an immortal being, what is so special about him being raised from the dead to immortality? How could he attain to immortality through resurrection if he was already immortal anyway? Wherein lay the great victory and breakthrough from mortality to immortality? If Jesus was “Very God” he couldn’t miss or fail! The thought of an immortal, untemptable, sinless God losing His immortality is incongruous. It makes a mockery - a pantomime out of the whole ministry of Christ if he pre-existed as God Himself.

But once it is accepted that Jesus did not exist before he was born - that although born through divine conception, he nevertheless was a man, sharing the same propensities as other men, and like other men, was mortal and experienced the feelings and infirmities of the flesh, and had to exercise faith and trust in God, and grow in the knowledge and wisdom of God, and that like other men, slept in the death state and would have corrupted and perished had God not raised him from the dead - when this is accepted; then Christ’s resurrection and re-appearance from the grave to eternal life becomes deeply meaningful - an astonishing victory and breakthrough! Without it, the hope of the resurrection and eternal life remains theological speculation, with no firm foundation in human experience. History would have no meaning, no goal, no purpose. As a human race we would be going nowhere. We would be, in Paul’s words: “of all men, most miserable.”

F. Makes a farce of Christ’s exaltation.

If Jesus pre-existed as co-equal with Father God, sharing the glory of His highly exalted throne; a farce is made of the Scriptures which declare that the Father has exalted him by placing him at His own right hand on His throne. In terms of a pre-existent status, Jesus would be no higher after his resurrection than what he was before from all eternity.

There is no higher status than equality with God and sitting on His throne. If Jesus occupied that position from all eternity, his return to the same position could hardly be an “exaltation.” It would simply be a resumption or reinstatement of a former status. And if Jesus was “very God,” nothing in heaven or earth could have prevented him from being

restored to that position. It would be quite incongruous to imagine that the eternal God could lose His throne or be denied access to it. If Jesus was the supreme, holy and righteous God Himself; it would be a foregone conclusion that his throne and glory were well and truly secured. This being the case, all references to the “obedience” and “exaltation” of Christ become farcical.

If Jesus has been exalted to the Father’s right hand as a result of his obedience, on what basis did he occupy a position on the throne throughout his pre-existent eternity?

Mary was told that her son “shall be great” and that “the Lord God shall give to him the throne of his father David” (Lk. 1:32). But according to the pre-existent theory, Jesus always was great and sat on a throne throughout eternity. The promise given to Mary therefore promised no more than what Jesus had been and experienced throughout eternity. It offered less in fact because the throne in heaven is higher and greater than David’s throne.

It should be evident then, that the doctrine of the pre-existence of Christ nullifies, and makes a farce of many of the promises of God relating to His son.

The following is a list of the contrasts between Bible teaching and terminology on the subject, and the teaching and terminology of tradition:

Bible Teaching.

1. God is one.
2. Jesus was foreordained.
Jesus was predestined.
3. Jesus was conceived.
4. He shared the same flesh.
5. Jesus died and slept.
6. His resurrection was vital
Without it, he would have remained unconscious and would have corrupted away.
7. Jesus, since his resurrection has been exalted to a position never experienced before.

Tradition.

1. God is three.
2. Jesus was foreformed.
Jesus pre-existed.
3. Jesus was transformed;
incarnated.
4. He shared similar flesh.
5. Jesus didn’t really die.
6. His resurrection was not vital
He survived the death of his body and remained conscious. He would have lived on eternally whether resurrected or not.
7. In relation to his pre-existent state, Jesus has not really been exalted at all. He is no higher now than what he was as God’s equal throughout eternity.

FOREORDAINED

As I said earlier, Scripture never uses the word pre-exist, but it does use the words predestine and foreordain, and many of the passages in Scripture which Trinitarians regard as teaching pre-existence can be interpreted and understood in these terms. Pre-existence is a doctrine of platonic philosophy which believes all men pre-existed. Predestination is the doctrine of the Word of God.

A good example of being predestined or foreordained can be seen in Jer. 1:5. In this verse God says to Jeremiah: “Before I formed you in the belly, I knew you, and before you came out of the womb I sanctified you, and ordained you a prophet unto the nations.” We are told here that God knew Jeremiah before he was born and ordained him before he came out of the womb. Being “ordained before” means he was “foreordained.” How would this be interpreted if it was affirmed in relation to Jesus that God knew him before he was born? No doubt Trinitarians would quote it as a key verse to prove pre-existence. But no! It relates to being foreordained. Jeremiah did not pre-exist.

Being omniscient, God knows the end from the beginning. He sees and knows everyone long before they are born - they are with Him as clearly as if they already exist, and this applies particularly to His only begotten son, who, as we read in 1 Pet. 1:20: “was foreordained before the foundation of the world.

In God’s eternal purpose with mankind, Jesus was first and foremost - the focal centre. We see this in the reference to Jesus in the first prophecy 4,000 years before he was born, way back in the beginning in Gen. 3:15, long before Abraham came on the scene. In terms of God’s purpose, Jesus was “before” Abram and all others. We therefore read in the New Testament that he was before Abraham and before John the Baptist. But when Scripture says he “was” before it does not mean existed before i.e. pre-existed. No! That is not the language of Scripture. He was ordained before - destined before. This is also conveyed in the reference in Rev. 13:8 to him being “the lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” He did not have to pre-exist of course for this to be the case. No! His ultimate sacrifice to which all animal sacrifices pointed, was foreordained and in the Father’s thoughts from the beginning. Every time an animal sacrifice was offered, it was like him being slain.

Another good example of being foreordained can be seen in relation to Cyrus the king of Persia who God anointed to deliver Israel from captivity in Babylon. 300 years before he was even born God addressed

this message to him, recorded in Isa. 45:1: “Thus says the Lord to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have held... I have called you by name: I have surnamed you.”

Imagine if there was a statement in the Scriptures 300 years before Jesus was born, declaring that God had anointed him, held his hand and called him by name! Trinitarians would no doubt regard it as proof positive that Jesus pre-existed and was alive in heaven with God long before he was born.

But no one is prepared to interpret it like that in relation to Cyrus. And neither they should because the language is to be understood in the light of being foreordained - predestined, not pre-existence. Jeremiah and Cyrus were both with God before being born, but not in a pre-existent state, and the same applies to Jesus. If the future destiny of Cyrus in God’s purpose was so sure and clear to God, that He could speak of it in terms of actually being accomplished before Cyrus was even born, then it should not surprise us if God speaks in the same terms in relation to His son prior to his birth. Rom. 4:17 says God speaks of things that do not exist as if they already exist! NB: Lk. 20:38: “I am the God of Abram - all live to him.” To God, they are as good as alive.

Consider this: From the very beginning God’s plan was to give glory to His son and He declared this many times in His Word before Jesus was born, especially in Isaiah’s prophecies. For this reason we read in Jn. 12:41 that Isaiah saw Christ’s glory and spoke of him. This doesn’t mean that Jesus pre-existed and Isaiah saw him in a pre-existent form. No! God inspired Isaiah with visions of the coming glory of Christ, causing him to speak and write about it. Jesus himself read about his coming glory in the book of Isaiah and other prophecies, and therefore prayed to his Father saying: “Glorify me with the glory I had with you before the world began (Jn. 17:3). This glory “before the world began” refers to the foreordained glory planned by God before the foundation of the world, and which was prophesied from the beginning.

As Cyrus was, so to speak, with God anointed and holding His hand and Jeremiah was appointed prophet before being born, so Jesus was with God glorified with His glory. In his prayer, Jesus was simply requesting the glory that God had reserved for him, which He had promised from the beginning. This glory was the glory that resulted from his suffering and obedience to death on the cross. This is made clear in Isaiah’s prophecies. It was impossible therefore for Jesus to have this glory literally and physically before the suffering and the cross, let alone before he was born. It clearly had nothing to do with a pre-existent glory.

WHOSE GOINGS FORTH WERE FROM EVERLASTING

Sometimes Mic. 5 is quoted in support of Christ's pre-existence. It refers to the "goings forth" of Jesus being "from of old, from everlasting." Many have interpreted the words "goings forth" to mean Jesus was moving about on missions prior to his birth and therefore must have pre-existed. However, "goings forth" does not mean that. The Hebrew word "motsaoth" which is translated "goings forth" only occurs here and one other place in 2 Kng. 10:27 where it is translated "latrine." The reason for this is because the word means outgoings and a latrine is a place for human outgoings or emanations. In Mic. 5:2, the reference to "goings forth" relates to seminal outgoings, as is involved in a genealogical line. For this reason, among the meanings for the word given by Strong's concordance is "family descent." The Good News Bible therefore translates it like this: "The Lord says, Bethlehem Ephratah, you are one of the smallest towns in Judah, but out of you I will bring a ruler for Israel, whose family line goes back to ancient times."

Instead of giving "goings forth," some translations give "comings forth" which is a more accurate translation, because the prophecy relates to Jesus coming forth down the holy genealogical line which started way back in the days of old in the book of Genesis. Both Abraham and David were promised that the Messiah would come forth out of their bowels (2 Sam. 7:12. Gen. 15:4). This is the thought conveyed in Mic. 5:2. Jesus was clearly not a last minute thought. During a 4,000 year period prior to his birth, he was coming forth down a holy genealogical line specially planned by God. As this process was taking place, God was declaring in His Word in each generation, from the very beginning, His purpose in His son.

IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD

We therefore read in Jn. 1:1: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." The Greek word for "Word" is Logos and according to Strong means "something said (including the thought)..." Jn. 1:1 can therefore be taken to mean that in the beginning something was thought, purposed, spoken, promised by God. And Jn. 1:14 reveals what it was by saying: "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us... the only begotten of the Father." This reveals that the thought and promise of God in the beginning related to Jesus. It simply teaches that from the very beginning the Father had thought about

and talked about His son, who was clearly with Him in His mind and purpose.

Up until the time that Jesus was born, he was only a purpose in God's mind and a promise in the Word of God. But when he was born, the purpose and promise materialized. Or, as Jn. 1:14 puts it: "The Word became flesh." The promise became substance and physical reality. The birth of Jesus was the fulfilment of promises in the Word that went back thousands of years in time. As I said before: Jesus was not a last minute decision. He was "foreordained before the foundation of the world."

As a result of God's promises, men were able to see by faith the day of Christ's coming long before he was born. On one occasion Jesus referred to this by saying: "Abraham rejoiced to see my day and he saw it and was glad." Some have read this to mean: "Abraham rejoiced to see me and saw me and was glad" and claim it teaches pre-existence.

However, it does not say that. It says Abraham rejoiced to see Christ's "day" and saw "it," not him. In 1 Cor. 1:7-8 the apostle Paul refers to the second coming of Christ as "the day of our Lord Jesus Christ" and there are many other examples of this. Abraham saw this day in the promises of God and rejoiced because when it comes, all the promises given to him will be fulfilled.

ALL THINGS WERE MADE THROUGH HIM

Before leaving Jn. 1, a few comments on v3 should be made. It says that "all things were made through him" i.e. it was through the one promised in the Word, that God made all things. This kind of statement is made in several other places in the New Testament and Trinitarians interpret it to mean that Jesus himself made all things and was therefore the Creator.

However, it is important to note that none of these verses actually say that Jesus himself made all things. No! They say the Father made all things through him. What does this mean? Well, the Greek preposition "dia" translated "through" has a variety of applications. For example, it has been translated "by reason of," "because of," "by occasion of," "for," "for sake of," "cause." If we applied any of these to Jn. 1:3 it would read to mean that God created all things by reason of - because of - for the sake of His son. In other words it would teach that the Father's thoughts and plans for His son at the beginning were the reason and motive for Him creating creation. Without the Father's purpose in His son, nothing would have been created. It is therefore through Jesus, because of Jesus, on

account of Jesus, for Jesus, in Jesus (i.e. as focal centre) that all things have been made by the Father.

We are forced to come to this conclusion because the Bible so categorically teaches that the Father was the Creator. Mal. 2:10 says: "Have we not one Father. Has not one God created us?" Jesus certainly never taught that he was the creator. He attributed creation to his Father. For example, he referred to "creation which God created" (Mk. 13:19). This is very different from saying "creation which I created." Again in Matt. 19:3-6 we read that Jesus said: "He (God) made them (Adam and Eve) at the beginning."

Of particular interest is the fact that there are a number of statements in Scripture which refer to the Father, son and creation in the same context, but creation is attributed to the Father not the son. The son is excluded from having any physical active part in it.

For example: in Rev. 4:8-11 creation is attributed to the One sitting on the throne, which is Father God. Then the Lamb (Jesus) is seen approaching the throne to take the scroll out of his Father's hand. In Act. 4:23-30 a prayer is addressed to God and creation is attributed to Him: "Lord, Thou art God, who has made heaven and earth, and the sea, and everything that is in them." The prayer goes on to say "against Your holy child Jesus who You anointed, both Herod, Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, gathered together..." It is clear from this that the Father created all things - not His son.

Act. 17:24-31 is similar. Paul attributes creation to God and then goes on to say that He has appointed a man (Jesus) to judge the world. It would have been an easy matter for Paul to say that God is going to use the same man to judge the world who He used to create the world if such were the case. But it wasn't so he didn't say that. Many more Scriptures could be quoted from both the Old and New Testament, which confirm the ones already quoted which teach that the Father, not the son, created all things.

IN THE FORM OF GOD

Moving on: Something should be said about Plp. 2:6-7 which refers to Jesus "who, being in the form of God, did not think to snatch at equality with God, but made himself of no reputation and took upon himself the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men."

"Being in the form of God" is usually interpreted by Trinitarians to mean Jesus pre-existed in the very nature of God, co-equal and co-eternal with Him. "Made himself of no reputation and took upon himself the form

of a servant” is interpreted to mean that Jesus divested himself of his pre-existent nature and glory and came down from heaven to be clothed with the body and nature of a man (servant).

Trinitarian theology lays stress on the word “being”: “who being in the form of God.” They maintain that it means Christ was originally in the form of God before he became a man. The phrase “being in the form of God” is taken to mean that Jesus was “very God” before becoming a man.

However, in the Greek, the word “huparchon” which is used here signifies continual, habitual, repeated action. It expresses action yet, or still in the course of performance. This means that “being in the form of God” means being, and continuing to be in the form of God. In other words, whatever “the form of God” means, Jesus never ceased to be in it. It involved a continuous state. He did not surrender or divest himself of it.

Other examples of how “huparchon” is used confirms this. For example, reference in Act. 2:30 to David “being a prophet” does not mean “being originally before birth,” but rather being a prophet and continuing to be.

The statement “If you being a Jew” in Gal. 2:14 does not mean “being originally before birth a Jew,” but rather always having been a Jew and continuing to be. Many other examples could be given.

It should be noted that Plp. 2:6 does not say that Jesus was God Himself, but in the form of God. In 2 Cor. 4:4 it is stated that he is “in the image of God.” He is clearly not the original self-existent God, but a replica or manifestation of God.

Basically, what Plp. 2:6-8 is saying is that although Jesus was the divinely begotten son of God, possessing the Spirit of God without measure, and manifesting the power of God in signs, wonders and miracles, and manifesting the name and character of God in holiness, righteousness and sinlessness, - although he was the heir of all things and destined to be king of kings and Lord of Lords over the whole earth, he did not become proud and swelled headed or pursue vain glory, or try and pretend to be God and grasp at equality with God. No! He emptied himself of such things and made himself of no reputation. He took it upon himself to be humble like a servant and manifest the characteristics of a servant, even to the point of getting on his knees and washing his friend’s feet!

That particular episode, recorded in Jn. 13 is particularly relevant to the passage in Plp. 2. When Jesus had finished washing their feet he said: “You call me master and Lord and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and master, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one

another's feet."

Christ's action of washing the disciple's feet (a duty more suitable for a servant) and his comment on his own example, throws a flood of light on the contrast in Plp. 2 between "the form of God" and "the form of a servant."

Being "master and Lord" explains how Jesus was "in the form of God," and the action of washing the disciples' feet is one of many examples of how he "took upon him the form of a servant."

And the expression "form of a servant" indicates that the word "form" does not relate to physical shape or outward appearance, because the physical bodily shape and form of a servant is no different from a master, and the physical bodily shape and form of Jesus was no different from any other man. All, from the highest to the lowest, are made in the image of God, including the angels.

It is important and significant to note the reason for the words being penned in Plp. 2:5-8 stating that Jesus, in spite of being in the form of God, made himself of no reputation and took upon him the form of a servant. The reason for this statement is given in v3: "Let nothing be done through strife and vainglory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves. Let each of you look not on his own things, but every man also on the things of God. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God..." This passage is basically saying that in the same way that Jesus, although son of God and heir of all things, adopted a humble attitude, so also we who are sons of God, should not be proud, but humble servants of God and willing to serve one another, following the example of Jesus.

4. IMMACULATE CONCEPTION.

Heb. 2:14 emphatically states that Jesus had "the same" flesh as fallen man, in order that through death he might destroy the power of death, i.e. the devil which is sin (1 Cor. 15:56).

Now, Scripture does not refer to Jesus coming in the flesh in order to assure us that he had skin. Of course he had skin and no one would be foolish enough to deny that. The word "flesh" has more than a skin-deep meaning! References to the flesh in relation to God's redemptive purpose in Christ, relates to the flesh nature or constitution of fallen man which contains sinful propensities. This is particularly apparent in Paul's epistle to the Romans.

Seeing that sinful acts spring from the impulses of the flesh, Jesus

had to partake of the same flesh in order to do battle with sin and strike it at its root. He therefore came “in the likeness of sinful flesh, and as a sacrifice for sin, condemned sin in the flesh” (Rom. 8:3).

By sharing the very nature over which sin had ruled and reigned since Adam, Jesus met sin on its own ground and was able to have a head-on encounter with it. He was able to deal with it at its root level and put it to death in his body of flesh. This involved never succumbing to the promptings of the flesh which cause temptation and sin, and living a one hundred percent righteous and obedient life - something that no other person in human history has been able to achieve.

It is absolutely fundamental to the original Christian faith to believe that Jesus had the same flesh nature of the fallen human race, and experienced the same impulses and temptations. This doctrine is so important that the New Testament says any teaching that denies that Christ came in the flesh is “not of God” and is the “spirit of antichrist” (1 Jn. 4:2-3. 2 Jn. v7-10).

Why is the apostle John so strict and severe about this issue? Because if Jesus didn't partake of sinful flesh, he could not have overcome and defeated the power of sin and have nailed it up upon the cross in his body of flesh. And this would make a complete farce of the cross, not to mention a mockery of his righteous sinless life, because it would make it a lot easier for all of us to live a sinless life if there were no impulses to sin in our flesh!

To believe that Jesus did not have the same sin-prone flesh as his fellow man, undermines the virtue and merit of his obedient sinless life. Such a view robs him of his moral glory as an overcomer and turns the cross into an empty and hollow victory - a very artificial affair.

Could there be glory or praise for a man who has a perfect physique and is physically sound and whole, who wins all the events in which physically handicapped and disabled people participate? Would people celebrate the ability of an astronaut who breaks all high jump records while on the moon where there is much less gravitational pull? Neither could there be glory for a man who never sins because he is not hampered by the handicap of sinful flesh, and who does not have the gravitational pull of sin's propensities in his flesh to contend with like all other men.

It is evident from the references in the apostle John's epistles to the spirit of antichrist, that at that time, towards the end of the first century, seeds of error were being sown in relation to the nature and status of Christ. Certain false teachers accepted that the Messiah had come and was Jesus, but they did not believe that he had the same flesh nature as fallen

man. They probably thought such a concept was dishonouring and degrading. So they went beyond the Biblical record which stated that Jesus was “made of the seed of David according to the flesh” (Rom. 1:1-3), and elevated his nature to a higher plane.

Significantly enough, the word “transgresseth” in 2 Jn. v9 which describes their action, literally means in the Greek “to go beyond” i.e. exceed the limits. They no doubt thought that their new doctrine was “advanced” teaching and progress. But any doctrine which goes beyond the sacred page can only be a retrograde step resulting in the retardation of spiritual knowledge, not advancement. Something as fundamental as Christ’s nature cannot be changed without changing other important doctrines as well. It is like the keystone to an arch: remove it and the arch comes crashing down.

Many students of the Bible and church history believe that the doctrine of the Trinity had its beginnings in, and developed as a result of denying Christ came in sinful flesh. Little by little, like water through a crack in a dam, false theories leaked out in relation to the nature and status of Christ. As the flow and pressure of false doctrine increased, the crack widened and eventually the dam burst, resulting in a flood of errors swamping the church. As predicted by Paul, the time came when sound teaching was not tolerated and ears turned away from the truth (2 Tim. 4:3. 1 Tim. 4:1-3).

Once it was believed that Jesus was “very God of very God,” equal with Father God who cannot be tempted or sin, it became impossible to believe that Jesus could have “sinful flesh” and be able to sin. Such a concept was regarded as dishonouring and degrading to Christ. But the problem was that it could not be denied that Jesus was conceived by Mary, and that all children conceived by sinful flesh are born with the same flesh propensities.

So, to get around this, the Roman Catholics went beyond the pages of Scripture and invented a new doctrine which became known as “the immaculate conception.” There is absolutely no ground for this doctrine in the Bible. It is one of the most blatant examples of man adding to the testimony of God’s Word. In 1854, Pope Pius IX declared: “From the first moment of her conception, the blessed virgin Mary was, by a unique grace and privilege of Almighty God, and in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, kept free from all stain of original sin.”

This doctrine declares that Mary was miraculously conceived immaculate in her mother’s womb so that she could not inherit the effects of original sin i.e. sinful flesh, from her parents, and therefore was

incapable of sinning. The reason for wanting to believe this of course, was because they did not want to believe that Christ inherited “the flesh” from her in the true Biblical sense of the term. This became known as “the clean flesh” heresy, and it clearly brands the Roman Catholic church as antichrist and anyone else who believes and teaches the same doctrine.

ANIMAL SACRIFICES INEFFECTIVE

As pointed out before: failure to accept that Jesus came in sinful flesh, and defeated the power of sin by conquering its propensities in his own flesh, results in a rather superficial and mystical concept of the cross.

A very common view is that, in some mystical way that cannot be explained; the sins of the world were transferred to Jesus as he died on the cross. But there are several problems with this, mainly that it would mean the principle involved in his sacrifice for sin was no different from the animal sacrifices under the law, which were unable to conquer and take away sin.

Under the law, when a man sinned, he artificially or symbolically transferred the sin to a beast by the laying on of hands, then it was killed. However, in reality, something abstract like an act of sin, cannot be transferred from one body to another, be it animal or man. Even if it could, of what value would it be, because sins continue to be committed afterwards, necessitating the same procedure.

For this reason, as is stated in the New Testament, “it was impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin.” Cutting an animal’s throat in order to eradicate sin, was as ineffective as cutting thistles at ground level. Because the roots are left in the ground, the thistles will sprout and grow again. Likewise, because the root of sin - the sinful propensities of the flesh, remained unconquered, sins continued to be committed.

If all that was required to put away sin was for sins to be symbolically transferred to a sacrifice, why weren’t animal sacrifices sufficient or effective? And if sins are laid on Christ according to the same principle, how is it that his sacrifice does put away sin but the others didn’t? Why did the artificial transfer system not work with animals but did work with Christ?

THE ANTITYPE TRANSCENDS THE TYPE

From Heb. 10 we learn that the animal sacrifices under the law were only a shadow of a better and more effective principle and operation to come in Christ's sacrifice. In verses 5-10 we are told that at the heart and root of this is Christ's success in doing the will of God. This of course involved renouncing and crucifying the selfish and sinful will and desires of the flesh, and fully obeying the will of God. This is expressed by Jesus in his prayer to his Father: "Not as I will, but as you will" (Matt. 26:39).

Herein lay the major difference between animal sacrifices and Christ's. Not being human or moral creatures, animals cannot know the will of God, let alone do it. Neither can they know what sin is, and not having sin in the flesh to contend with, they cannot consciously conquer its propensities and crucify them out of love and respect for God with a desire to please and glorify Him.

This means that during the centuries that animal sacrifices were offered, the power of sin was never actually conquered, in spite of the countless times sins were artificially transferred by the laying on of hands. And the same would apply to Christ's sacrificial death, if the propensity to sin was not in his body of flesh. Under such circumstances, the death of his body would not be the death of the power of sin in the flesh. And this would mean that in spite of the many hands that have reached out to identify with him and his sacrifice, the power of sin in the flesh in reality would not have been conquered, condemned, and destroyed by him.

As has been said: denial that Jesus came in sinful flesh, reduces his sacrifice to the same level as animal sacrifices, and for this reason is branded as "antichrist" because it robs Jesus of his moral glory and takes the chief virtue out of his example as an overcomer of sin.

So then, as all men are made (constituted) sinners by the disobedience of Adam, due to being "in him," all can be made righteous due to the obedience of Christ by being "in him." All were in Adam, seminally speaking, when he sinned, and were therefore affected by his sin, being born with a bias toward sin, and under the curse of death. However, we can be born again by being in Christ spiritually speaking, and share in his victory over sin and death. His righteousness is imputed to all true believers who repent and are baptized, and have a quest for righteousness, and they are accounted as righteous before God. (See Rom. 5 and 6).



CHAPTER FOUR

5. THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL

Central to the Roman Catholic faith is the belief that man possesses an immortal soul, which at death leaves the body and departs to heaven or hell. This belief is unscriptural and negates fundamental doctrines of the Bible concerning death and the death state, the second coming of Christ, resurrection, judgement and the kingdom of God on earth.

“Nephesh” is the Hebrew word translated soul in the Old Testament and it occurs about 750 times. “Psuche” is the Greek word translated soul in the New Testament and it occurs 105 times. However, nephesh and psuche are not only or always translated “soul.” They have in fact, been translated into over 40 different words, and careful study of these applications reveals that the primary meaning is “life” and “creature” i.e. living creature. Many Scriptures could be quoted where “soul” simply means this. This includes the various aspects in which a living creature may be contemplated, such as body, mind, heart, emotions, appetite etc. For this reason, nephesh and psuche are quite flexible in their meaning and a great variety of applications are given.

When God breathed the breath of life into Adam’s nostrils, he became a “living soul” (Gen. 2:7) i.e. a living breathing creature. Prior to this, he was a lifeless, breathless creature i.e. a dead soul. It is significant to note that Gen. 2:7 does not say that God breathed into Adam’s nostrils an immortal soul, but many read that into it.

The word “life” in the statement that God breathed the breath of life into Adam’s nostrils, and the word “living” in the phrase “living soul,” both come from the Hebrew word “chay.” “Living soul” in Hebrew is therefore chay nephesh, and, significantly enough, Scripture not only applies this description to man, but also to all species of living creatures in creation. This can be seen in Gen. 1:20, 21, 24. 2:19 etc.

So then, whatever the “life” was that was breathed into man, all other living creatures in creation have it as well. And, if “living soul” means possessing an immortal soul, then all beasts, birds and insects must possess an immortal soul as well!

SOULS ARE MORTAL

It is worthy of notice that on the hundreds of occasions where nephesh and psuche occur, not once is the word “immortal” or “deathless”

found in connection with them as qualifying terms. Quite the opposite is the case. In 326 of the places in the Old Testament where nephesh occurs, the soul is said to be subject to death. And in 45 of the 105 places where psuche occurs in the New Testament, the soul is said to be subject to death and destruction. Ezk. 18:4 for example, is quite explicit: “The soul that sins shall die.” Also Matt. 10:28: “Fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”

The doctrine of the immortality (deathlessness and indestructibility) of the soul contradicts Bible teaching.

The account of the creation of man in Gen. 2:7 says God formed man out of the dust of the ground and then breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, causing him to become a living soul. Prior to the dust being formed into man, and prior to the breath of life being breathed into his nostrils, he was not conscious; he did not pre-exist in some immaterial state. Man did not come from heaven but out of the earth.

At death, according to Gen. 3:19, man returns to the ground: “For out of it you were taken, for you are dust and you shall return to dust.” We are taught here that the death state is the same as the dust state from which man was originally made, i.e. a non-existent unconscious state. Man’s death is the reversal of his creation!

In order for man to live, the breath of life had to be breathed into his nostrils, and as long as he continued to breathe the breath of life, he remained a living soul. At death breathing ceases; the breath of life is withdrawn and returns to God who gave it. Ps. 146:4 puts it like this: “When his breath departs he returns to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.”

The same process of death experienced by man applies to all other breathing creatures in creation. Ps. 104:29 says God “takes away their breath; they die, and return to their dust.” In view of this it is not surprising to read in Ecc. 3:18-20 that men and animals all have the same breath and die in the same way. Also see Ps. 49. In this respect, man has no pre-eminence over animals (Ecc. 3:19).

In passing, it should be pointed out that in Ps. 146:4 and 104:29 where reference is made to man’s “breath” departing at death and of the “breath” of animals being taken away by God: the Hebrew word for breath on these occasions is “ruach.” It basically means breath, especially God’s life-imparting and miracle-working breath, and it is elsewhere translated “spirit.” For example: Ecc. 12:7: “Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return to God who gave it.” Also Ecc. 8:8: “No man has power over the spirit to retain the spirit, or

authority over the day of death ...”

In some places where Hebrew parallelisms occur, the words breath and spirit run parallel with each other. For example, Job says: “My breath is in me, and the Spirit of God is in my nostrils” (Job 27:3). And Job 34:14-15 says: if God “gather to Himself His Spirit and His breath, all flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again to dust.”

Death could be likened to unplugging a T.V. set. When power flows through the set it is alive, producing voices, images and movement. But when it is switched off or unplugged, the power is withdrawn and taken away from the set and returns to the national grid, resulting in no voices or movement. The set hasn’t gone anywhere, neither have any of its internal parts; the power that activated all its parts has simply been withdrawn. In order for the set to come alive, the power must return, and until it does, it remains dead.

The same applies to humans at death. Many Scriptures teach that death is an unconscious, inactive state. “In death there is no remembrance” (Ps. 6:5); “His breath goes forth; he returns to the earth; in that very day his thoughts perish” (Ps. 146:4); “The living know that they shall die, but the dead know not anything” (Ecc. 9:4-6, 10).

In view of the unconscious state of death, it is not surprising that some Scriptures refer to it as a “sleep” or “rest.” Ps. 13:3. Isa. 57:1-2. Dan. 12:13. Jn. 11:11-14. Act. 7:60. 13:36. 1 Cor. 11:30. 1 Cor. 15:6, 18, 20, 51. 1 Thes. 4:13-15.

Death is called a “sleep” because there shall be an awakening and a rising up from the grave at the resurrection. “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). Man has pre-eminence over animals in this respect.

If the dead are not really dead, but their immortal soul has gone to glory and joy unspeakable in heaven to be in the divine presence praising God, why is there so much sadness and grief when death occurs? The answer is because the strength of natural instinct can never be overcome by theological fiction! Men will never practically believe the occurrence of death to be the commencement of life, when they see it to be the end of all they ever knew or felt of life!

LIFE AFTER DEATH EXPERIENCES

To offset what has been said, some would make reference to various claims that have been made of life after death experiences, involving

voices, feelings of exhilaration and light at the end of a tunnel etc. But what these people overlook is the fact that none of the people who have had these experiences were really dead in the full clinical sense of the word. As all physicians agree; a person isn't dead when the heart stops or when breathing ceases. A person is dead when the brain cells have died and there is no possibility of revival. Oxygen still remains in the brain cells for several minutes after the heart stops beating and breathing ceases, during which period the mental machinery is still alive. The electrical impulses in the brain are still quite capable of creating pictures and visions. It is all very subjective of course but very real to the one experiencing it.

If cases could be cited in which identity survived the destruction of the brain, the case would stand differently. Such, however, is never the case. Those who claim life after death experiences have all been revived before the brain cells died. They were not really dead at all in the true sense of the word!

Similar tunnel effects experienced by those who are dying are experienced by fighter pilots when subjected to high G forces as a result of massive acceleration. The blood drains from their brain and they black out. Sensations that are associated with the blackout nearly always include a tunnelling of the vision down to a central point where you just have light ahead of you. Lack of blood flow causes this and cardiac arrest has the same effect. The sudden rush of blood and oxygen to the brain as a result of revival, can also cause various physical and subjective experiences. To base a doctrine on life after death on such subjective experiences would be a deception.

THE DEAD DO NOT PRAISE GOD

It should be evident then, that if death is an unconscious state, those who have died are not in heaven praising and worshipping God. Psalm 115:17 plainly declares that “the dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence.” For this reason the Psalmist said: “I will sing to the Lord as long as I live: I will sing praise to my God while I have my being” (Ps. 104: 33). When King Hezekiah was dying he prayed to God for an extension of life saying: “For the grave cannot praise you, death cannot celebrate you: ... The living, the living, he shall praise you as I do this day ...” (Isa. 38:18-19).

Except for Jesus, no man has ascended to heaven (Jn. 3:13). King David certainly hasn't ascended to heaven (Act. 2:29, 34). All the heroes

of faith in Biblical times have “died in faith not having received the promises ... God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect” (Heb. 11:13, 40).

The doctrine of the immortality of the soul contradicts this teaching. It basically teaches that we do not really die and therefore negates death. Let's face it: if the dead are not dead, but have gone somewhere else, they are still alive. They have merely had a change of state; they have changed a place of “temporal” for a place of eternal abode. The word “death,” therefore, in its original Biblical meaning, has no real application to man. It is no longer the antithesis of life. It no longer means the cessation of life, but simply a change of habitation or state.

“A man die? No, impossible! he may go out of the body, but he cannot die.” This is the popular traditional sentiment of the world's philosophical wisdom. It is the modern equivalent of the serpent's lie and is a poisonous root that has caused many false and mischievous doctrines in Christendom. It is a reversal and contradiction of the divine decree. God imposed death as a punishment for sin and a curse, but man doesn't want to accept it as that. So what has he done? He has changed it into a blessing and time of joy by convincing himself that those who have died are in a better place than what they were. How ingeniously they have neutralized the Word of God by this doctrine!

It is surely significant that the first lie recorded in the Bible relates to, and contradicts the very issue of life and death. God had plainly warned Adam and Eve that death would be the result of disobedience. But the serpent contradicted this and said: “You shall not die.” This lie has been perpetuated in all the creeds of paganism and Christendom which state that man, in view of his “immortal soul,” does not really die. And, like the serpent, it is subtle, because it gives the impression of believing in death by agreeing that the body is dead, but in actual fact it is a deceit because it does not believe that the body is the real person, and therefore the person is not really dead at all.

According to the Bible, those who die are not alive, as we read in Isa. 38:1: “You shall die and not live.” Death and life are opposites! Death is the end of life and of conscious existence.

When man was first created, he was given access to the tree of life, but as a result of sin, he was expelled from the garden of Eden “lest he put forth his hand and take of the tree of life and live forever” (Gen. 3:22). It is evident from this that man was not created with inherent immortality in the form of an immortal soul. It would be nonsense for God to prevent access to the tree of life so that man could not live forever, if he possessed

an immortal soul that would live forever anyway!

It is evident that if Adam and Eve had continued to have access to the tree of life, they would have lived forever as physical bodily beings. This is very significant, because it teaches us that God's purpose was for man to live forever in a physical bodily state, not an immaterial disembodied state, as is taught in the doctrine of the immortality of the soul.

This therefore implies that if God wants those who die to live again, He will have to bring them back from the dust of death and the grave, and form them into physical beings again. According to Scripture, this and this alone, is the divine purpose and solution to death, and it is called "resurrection."

IMMORTALITY DEPENDS ON RESURRECTION

After being told that man does not possess an immortal soul that immediately departs to heaven at death, many imagine that this involves a denial of future hope and reward. This reveals the extent to which life after death is based upon, and depends upon the immortality of the soul by those who believe it. In fact, the hope of life after death to some people revolves so completely around the immortality of the soul, they place little importance on resurrection of the body. So much so, that they regard those who don't believe in the immortality of the soul and whose only hope is in resurrection, as being "annihilationists."

Such people obviously do not see the second coming of Christ and resurrection as a great hope or consolation. It does not seem to occur to them that there is a "blessed hope" in the Gospel which does not need or depend upon the immortality of the soul, and which in fact, is totally foreign to it. It is evident from this therefore, that the doctrine of the immortality of the soul has the effect of negating and rendering superfluous the second coming of Christ and resurrection of the dead.

The fact that man is wholly mortal and at death returns to the same unconscious state in the dust that he was in when first created, establishes the doctrine of the resurrection on the firm foundation of necessity; for in this view, life after death is only possible by resurrection. The true Christian faith does not involve two hopes: one at death and the other at Christ's second coming. There is only "one hope" (Eph. 4:4). This means that without resurrection at Christ's return, there is no hope of life after death. No wonder it is listed among the first principles of the doctrine of Christ in Heb. 6:1-2.

This is why Paul states in 2 Tim. 2:16-18 that the false teachers in his

day who were denying future resurrection, were overthrowing the Christian faith. But how could denial of resurrection overthrow the faith if our soul is immortal and goes to be with Christ at death? Whether resurrected or not, we would be in heaven with Christ anyway!

But if man does not possess an immortal soul, and his faith in life after death is based entirely on resurrection, then denial of resurrection would be a disaster - fatal; it would undermine and overthrow his faith and leave him without a hope. Paul's statement therefore clearly reveals that his hope in future life lay in resurrection, not an immortal soul.

It is certainly evident in 1 Cor. 15 where Paul majors on the doctrine of resurrection, that he believed there was no other hope besides this. In v18 he says that without resurrection all who belong to Christ and die would "have perished." But if man has an immortal soul that goes to heaven at death, how could it be said that he has perished if his body is not resurrected? In view of resurrection of the body being the only hope of life after death, no wonder it is such a major theme in Scripture. Many verses could be quoted.

A PROMISE NOT A POSSESSION

Immortality then, is a promise, not a present possession. It is a hope, not a present realization. As mentioned before: the expressions "immortal soul" or "immortality of the soul" are foreign to Scripture. They are unbiblical. There are no verses in the Bible where the words immortal or immortality are associated with the soul.

The word "immortal" only occurs once in the Bible and it occurs in relation to God (1 Tim. 1:17). "Immortality" occurs 5 times; once in relation to God (1 Tim. 6:15-16), and 4 times in relation to those who belong to Christ (Rom. 2:7. 1 Cor. 15:53, 54. 2 Tim. 1:10). In each of these places, the theory of the immortality of the soul is not mentioned and supported. Let's have a quick look at these 4 verses.

The reference in Rom. 2:7 says eternal life will be given to "those who by patient continuance in well doing seek for ... immortality." Here, immortality is clearly not presented as a present possession, but something that has to be sought by patient continuance in well doing. It is obviously not an existing condition possessed by all, but a conditional gift to be bestowed in the future. Verse 16 confirms that it will be bestowed at the second coming of Christ.

The references to the word immortality in 1 Cor. 15:53-54 also teach that it is not something now possessed, but something that will be "put

on” at resurrection. It is made clear in these verses that immortality is not possible until our body is changed. It will only be when our mortal, corruptible body has been changed into an immortal, incorruptible body at Christ’s return, that death will be swallowed up in victory. Until then, all who have died will remain dead (“asleep”).

Throughout 1 Cor. 15 which deals specifically with the subject of life after death, Paul associates immortality with a physical, material “body.” His whole concept of immortality has nothing to do with some vague, invisible, immaterial soul or spirit. An immortal body, not a disembodied immortal is the gospel he preached and the hope he taught.

Immortality therefore is not something we inherit from birth whether we want it or not, or like it or not. It is, as we read in Rom. 6:23, a gift from God through the atoning sacrifice of Christ who will bestow it when he returns. But if everyone already possesses an immortal soul, why the need for Christ to bestow eternal life when he returns? And if everyone possesses immortality already, both the believers and unbelievers, righteous and wicked; this means that all without exception will live forever in some place or other. It is at this point that the bizarre nature of the doctrine of the immortality of the soul becomes particularly apparent.

If the wicked have an immortal soul and live eternally in hell, they must have eternal life! But Rom. 6:23 says “the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Or, as we read in Ps. 145:20: “The Lord preserves all them that love Him, but all the wicked He will destroy.” Here are 2 opposites: eternal life and death; preservation and destruction. The one cannot be the other. That which is destroyed no longer exists. That which is preserved exists as long as the preservation continues. “Eternal life” and “death” cannot, by any form of twisting of words, mean the same thing. “Eternal life” means continued existence and “death” means discontinued existence.

The Roman Catholic church and many others in Christendom have completely confused and contradicted this simple concept in order to uphold the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. They have assigned eternal life to saint and sinner alike. Both saints and sinners live forever!

This indiscriminate distribution of eternal life contradicts all that Scripture affirms on the subject. The concept of an immortal sinner is contradiction. 1 Jn. 3:15 says: “No murderer has eternal life abiding in him.” But human philosophy has furnished him with eternal life by giving him an immortal soul!

According to this doctrine then, eternal life ceases to be a special gift of God bestowed on the basis of faith in the atoning work of Christ. It

becomes something freely and indiscriminately bestowed on all men, murderers included. Any doctrine which gives eternal life to sinners and murderers must be rejected as the most serious violation possible of the purpose and promises of God.

If the wicked have eternal life, it would no longer constitute the reward of the righteous. In that case, instead of eternal life being seen as the reward, only the happiness enjoyed by the righteous during their eternal life could be seen as the reward, not the eternal life itself. This concept which the doctrine of the immortality of the soul forces upon us, is completely contrary to the teaching of Scripture on the subject of eternal life.

PAGAN PHILOSOPHY

Without a divine revelation, it would not be easy or natural to believe in resurrection. It would in fact seem foolish and ridiculous to believe that a person whose corpse is rotting or whose skeleton is disintegrating into dust could be brought back to life and live forever as a physical bodily being.

For this reason, those in ancient times who did not know God's revelation or power, and who did not want to accept that death is a reality, adopted the philosophy of the immortality of the soul.

From time immemorial, the pagan nations had adopted this philosophy in an attempt to take the sting or pain out of death. The ancient Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Greeks and Romans etc all believed it. This was the pagan's doctrine of life after death, and it was finally adopted and superimposed upon the Christian faith by the apostate Roman Catholic church, and later adopted by other churches.

The doctrine of the immortality of the soul gives all these churches a common denominator with all the non-Christian religions of the world. No wonder the apostle Paul issued the warning to "beware lest anyone make a prey of you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the elements of the world, and not according to Christ" (Col. 2:8).

According to the apostle Paul, the sting will never be taken out of death until resurrection of the body at Christ's second coming (1 Cor. 15:51-55). The doctrine of the immortality of the soul is therefore not only a false doctrine but also a false hope and comfort.

When writing to the Christians at Thessalonica concerning those who had died, he told them that they should "sorrow not like others who have

no hope.” He then went on to tell them that “the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first ...Therefore comfort one another with these words” (1 Thes. 4:13-18).

This is very significant. Paul did not say that Christians should comfort the bereaved with the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. No! He said they should comfort them with the doctrine of resurrection of the body at Christ’s return!

The pagan mind, especially of the Greeks, found the doctrine of the resurrection of the body hard to accept because they had been indoctrinated with the philosophy that the body, being material, was just a cumbersome, burdensome shell; and it was an advantage to shake it off in death. They believed that this view of life after death was superior, and that resurrection of the body would be a retrograde step - too materialistic and earth bound. They much preferred to believe in something ethereal and nebulous. The more intangible, indefinable and mysterious it was, the more they liked it, and the more “spiritual” they regarded it.

For this reason, “when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked” (Act. 17:32). The preaching of Jesus and resurrection was “strange” to them (v18).

Although those in Christendom today would not be prepared to admit it, their reasons for majoring on the immortality of the soul more than on resurrection of the body are very similar to the Greek philosophers.

JESUS BROUGHT IMMORTALITY TO LIGHT

It is evident in the New Testament that Christ’s resurrection is the very keystone to the arch of Christianity. The special significance of his resurrection can only be appreciated when it is realized that he is the first man in history to be raised from the dead to life everlasting - the first man to experience immortality by becoming an immortal body.

When it is understood that in death a person is a helpless, unconscious corpse; and that from Adam to Christ death reigned and triumphed over all men, holding them captive in this state; then Christ’s reappearance from the grave to eternal life becomes an astounding victory and breakthrough. Without his resurrection, there would be no breakthrough from mortality to immortality, making immortality impossible for all men. (1 Cor. 15:16-18).

But Christ’s resurrection is robbed of its power and importance and almost rendered superfluous when it is believed that up until that time,

and afterwards, men didn't really die anyway, but lived on without a body, without their own or Christ's resurrection being necessary.

If man possesses an immortal soul that lives on after death, Christ would have lived on whether his body was resurrected or not. And if we are expected to believe that our dead friends live on as immortal souls after death, without being able to see them in a body, then why couldn't Christ's friends have believed and preached that he lived on when his body died on the cross, without having to see him in a body? Why were they so depressed and despondent until he appeared to them in his body?

Being the first man to rise from death to immortality, Jesus has, as we read in 1 Tim. 1:10: "Brought life and immortality to light." It is evident from this that up until Christ's resurrection, no man had witnessed or experienced immortality. If immortality had been experienced by all who died prior to Christ's resurrection, it could hardly be said that he brought immortality to light.

In the resurrection of Jesus, immortality was "brought to light" by being displayed and demonstrated for the first time in a man. For the first time in history, people witnessed in the resurrection body of Jesus, the immortality promised by God to man. Christ is therefore referred to in 1 Cor. 15:23 as the "first fruits" of those who have died, and those who belong to him will be made like him at his coming.

As first fruits on a tree are a sample or specimen of the crop that will follow, the immortal body of Jesus is a sample of the immortality that all his true followers will experience when he comes. He will change their body and fashion it like his glorious body, causing them to be like him (Plp. 3:20-21. 1 Jn. 3:2). This is the true doctrine of immortality taught in the Bible.

NEGATES JUDGEMENT

Not only does the doctrine of the immortality of the soul negate death, resurrection and the second coming of Christ, but also judgement.

Let's face it: if immortal souls are consigned to their reward at death, some ascending to bliss in heaven, and others descending to blisters in hell, what would be the point in having a judgement at Christ's second coming? Judgement would have already taken place for those who had died! Rewarding and punishing people first, then judging them afterwards, would be a very back to front procedure, not at all consistent with divine judgement.

Heb. 9:27 plainly says: "It is appointed unto men once to die, but

after this the judgement.” Immortal souls do not spend time in heaven or hell during the interim period between death and judgement! Rewarding and punishing during the interim period would be a judgement in itself, so what would be the point of having another judgement at Christ’s return?

In human courts, a second judgement only occurs as a result of a retrial due to doubts being raised concerning the correctness of the verdict at the first trial. Surely no one believes that at death some immortal souls might have been mistakenly sent to heaven instead of hell or to hell instead of heaven, and therefore must be brought back into their bodies to appear before the judgement seat of Christ to be re-assessed!

The doctrine of the immortality of the soul makes a mockery of the doctrine of judgement at Christ’s return. It eliminates the need for judgement along with Christ’s return and the resurrection, not to mention God’s kingdom on earth. As things stand, according to this pernicious doctrine, the saints would live on eternally in God’s kingdom in heaven whether Christ returned to raise and judge the dead or not.

No wonder the apostle Paul said that any doctrine which negates the future resurrection at Christ’s coming overthrows the true Christian faith.

One reformer who could see the ramifications of the doctrine of the immortality of the soul penned these words: “The dogma of the immortal soul in sinful flesh has eaten out the marrow and fatness, the flesh and sinew, of the doctrine of Christ; and has left behind only an ill-conditioned and ulcerated skeleton of Christianity, whose dry bones rattle in the winds of doctrine that are blowing around us, chopping and changing to every point of the compass.”

OBJECTIONS

We have seen that the Bible teaches that man is wholly mortal and does not possess an immortal soul that lives on after death. At death man enters into an unconscious state called a “sleep.” His only hope of life after death is a physical resurrection at the second coming of Christ. Immortality is promised not possessed.

However, certain statements are made in the Bible which are regarded by some as teaching the immortality of the soul and attention will now be given to them. We will start in the Old Testament then work through to the New Testament to the gospels, epistles and the book of Revelation.

Gen. 35:18 is first on the list which refers to Rachel’s death in terms of her soul departing. As pointed out before, the word soul is quite an

elastic word and has a variety of meanings. One of the primary meanings is “life.” It has, in fact, been translated life 114 times in the Old Testament and 40 times in the New Testament, and this is the significance of soul in Gen. 35:18. Reference to Rachel’s soul departing simply means her life was ebbing away. She was breathing her last, getting weaker and weaker. The New English Bible captures the sense by translating it in these words: “with her last breath as she was dying.” The Jerusalem Bible puts it like this: “At the moment when she breathed her last, for she was dying...”

Elsewhere this same process of death is expressed in the Authorised Version as “giving up the ghost,” which literally means to breathe out or expire. (“Ghost” is an old English word which means “gust” i.e. breath, blow or spirit. Giving up the ghost is the same as giving up the spirit).

It is interesting to note that in Job 11:20 and Jer. 15:9 where the phrase “gave up the ghost” occurs, the Hebrew word for ghost is *nepesh*, which is the same word elsewhere translated “soul.” This confirms that the giving up, or departing of the soul simply means to breathe out the breath of life; to expire and die.

If the giving “up” of the ghost or soul means the departure to heaven of an immortal soul, what are we to make of Job 11:20 which says this is also the destiny of the wicked? Do the souls of the wicked go to heaven also?

Gen. 25:8 says “Abraham gave up the ghost and died.” If this means his immortal soul went up to heaven, then the same must apply to his carnal, ungodly “wild ass” of a son Ishmael, whose death is recorded in exactly the same terms in Gen. 25:17. In Job 14:10 we read: “Man dies and wastes away: yea, man gives up the ghost, and where is he?” In the following verses Job answers the question by stating that dead men are asleep in the earth.

While we are on the subject of breathing out, an interesting statement is made in 1 Kng. 10:5. It says that “there was no more spirit” in the queen of Sheba when she saw all of Solomon’s wisdom, wealth and power. This statement of course, has nothing to do with an immortal soul leaving her body! Some modern translations capture the sense by rendering it like this: “it left her breathless.” In other words, she was flabbergasted; speechless.

Likewise, Josh. 5:1 tells us that when the enemies of Israel heard about the miracles and wonders the Lord had performed for Israel, “their heart melted, neither was there spirit in them anymore.” Once again, this has nothing to do with immortal souls leaving their bodies. Today the experience would be described as the wind being taken out of their sails;

they were breathless; limp. They were astounded and flabbergasted.

We now turn to 1 Kng. 17:21-22 which provides another example of soul signifying life. It relates to Elijah restoring to life a child who had died. The Authorised Version records the incident in these words: “And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried to the Lord, and said: O lord my God, I pray Thee, let this child’s soul come into him again. And the Lord heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived.”

Elijah was simply asking the Lord to give the breath or spirit of life back to the lad again to revive him and cause him to live. In fact, the death of the lad is referred to in v17 in these words: “There was no more breath in him.” The New English Bible therefore translates v21 like this: “Elijah breathed deeply upon the child three times and called on the Lord, ‘O Lord my God, let the breath of life, I pray return to the body of this child...’” The translators of the New English Bible clearly recognized that the Hebrew word “nephesh,” translated “soul” in the Authorised Version signified life in this case.

The same applies in Lk. 8:55. When Jesus prayed for a dead girl to be restored to life, it is recorded that “her spirit came again and she arose.” The “spirit” refers to the breath of life which caused her to breathe again.

In connection with these examples, 2 Kng. 4:34 is worth mentioning. It refers to an occasion when Elisha went to pray for a young lad who had died. The verse says he “lay upon the child and put his mouth upon his mouth.” This is reminiscent of the Lord breathing the breath of life into Adam’s nostrils. Being the Lord’s prophet and possessing the power of the Holy Spirit, Elisha was able to breathe the spirit of life into the child as did Elijah before him.

SAMUEL’S APPEARANCE AFTER DEATH

Let us now turn to 1 Sam. 28 which refers to Samuel making an appearance after his death. This happened as a result of king Saul, an apostate king of Israel, visiting a witch at Endor, (a spiritualist medium). Saul wanted her to try and contact the prophet Samuel who had died some time before. Saul had failed to get answers from God to his prayers so he hoped to be able to contact Samuel. Being apostate, Saul had false ideas about the death state. Like the pagans, he believed in the immortality of the soul, and therefore did not believe that those who had died were really dead.

Now, because they believed immortal souls or spirits were immaterial

and therefore invisible, having neither body nor parts, they did not expect to see anything or hear a verbal voice. Mediums generally claimed to receive a message inside their head without an audible voice being heard.

Well, when the witch attempted to contact Samuel, the whole of hell broke loose, and it is hard to understand why anyone would quote the incident as proof of the immortality of the soul. The witch actually saw Samuel himself - "an old man wrapped in a robe," coming up out of the earth where he had been buried and it freaked her out. She had never witnessed anything like this before.

Samuel then spoke to Saul and said: "Why have you disturbed me to bring me up?" Two points should be noted here. The first is that Samuel was not in heaven. If he was, he would have said: "Why have you brought me down." But he didn't; he said "Why have you disturbed me to bring me up" i.e. up out of the grave from which he was seen emerging.

The second point is that the word "disturbed" is a word used in relation to interrupting sleep. Prior to coming up out of the grave, Samuel was not conscious, but in an unconscious sleep. Many Scriptures teach that this is the state of the dead. Because of the apostasy and rebellion of Saul and his sons, Samuel went on to tell Saul that he and his sons were going to be killed. This is how Samuel put it: "Tomorrow you and your sons shall be with me." This is a significant statement. Death would cause Saul and his sons to join Samuel. It is evident from this that Samuel would not be in heaven, for it would be ridiculous to imagine that an apostate rebel like Saul would be going there.

The fact of the matter is that both the righteous and wicked are buried in the earth and remain there until the resurrection and judgement. Jesus will judge both "the living and dead," (which clearly implies the dead are not living!) The Bible teaches this time and time again and Samuel's words confirm it.

Now, the witch clearly did not have the power to cause Samuel to appear from the grave, and she clearly did not expect this to happen. Only God has the power to do this and it is evident that He intervened here, either by temporarily raising Samuel from the dead, or by creating a vision of it, in order to pronounce judgement on Saul and his sons.

And if anyone finds it objectionable that God would temporarily raise Samuel from the dead, attention should be drawn to the fact that He has done this on other occasions. There are examples in both the Old and New Testament of people being raised from the dead for a temporary extension of life. Admittedly, not as short an extension as Samuel, but a temporary extension nevertheless.

But let us not miss the main point: the incident regarding the appearance of Samuel has got nothing to do with immortal souls and does not even remotely support such a concept. It relates to resurrection from the dead - revival from the unconscious sleep state of the dead.

Regarding the possibility that God created a vision of Samuel; we are reminded of the scene of Christ's transfiguration when Moses and Elijah long after their death appeared and spoke to him. It is recorded in Matt. 17:9 that Jesus told his disciples that it was a "vision."

Strangely enough, those who believe that there is life after death as an immortal soul, sometimes quote the transfiguration scene as proof. But there is no reference here to disembodied spirits, but bodily beings. Neither are they seen in heaven but on earth. Heb. 11 clearly teaches that Moses and all other Old Testament characters "have died in faith not having received the promises..."

"NOT ABLE TO KILL THE SOUL"

So much then for references in the Old Testament. Let us now turn to the gospels in the New Testament. Quoting Jesus, Matt. 10:28 says: "And fear not those who can kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul." This statement is regarded by many as proof positive that the soul is immortal and indestructible. But the next statement disproves this. It says: "But rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." It is affirmed here that the soul can be destroyed.

The question is: What is meant by the word soul in this verse? As pointed out before, one of the primary meanings is life, and this seems to be the significance here. Looked at in this light, Jesus was teaching that men may have authority and control over a Christian's body, and be able to put it to death, but they do not have authority and control over life. Only God has the authority and control of both the body and life, because He is the source of life and no one can take it away from Him. He is able to give life back to those of His people who die, and He is able to kill and deprive of life forever those who are His enemies. They will be cast into the lake of fire and never be resurrected to life again.

According to Col. 3:3 the "life" of a Christian is "hid with Christ in God." Jesus is "the way, the truth and the life" - "the resurrection and the life." At his second coming he will resurrect all in the grave who belong to him and give them eternal life. As Col. 3:4 says: "When Christ who is our life, shall appear, then shall you also appear with him in glory." The power over our life is therefore in Christ's control and no man can destroy

it or deprive us of it. In the words of Lk. 12:4: “Be not afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.”

“NOT THE GOD OF THE DEAD”

A statement made by Jesus, recorded in Lk. 20:38 is also regarded as teaching the immortality of the soul. This is what he said; “God is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for all live unto Him.” Many see in this statement evidence that people live on in the presence of God in a disembodied state after the death of their body.

However, as the saying goes: “A text without a context is a pretext.” In its context, the statement forms part of a conversation between Jesus and the Saducees in relation to resurrection of the body. The passage has nothing to do with immortal souls or disembodied existence in heaven or any other place.

The Saducees denied resurrection and any other form of life after death, and tried to make a mockery of it by putting a silly hypothetical question to Jesus. Jesus therefore set out to prove that there will be life after death through resurrection. He said: “Now, that the dead are raised, even Moses showed at the bush, when he called the Lord the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” Here Jesus points out that long after the death of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, God was nevertheless referred to as being their God. Jesus then concludes by saying: “God is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for all live unto Him.”

The passage has got nothing to do with immortal souls. Christ’s argument for the resurrection of the dead is destroyed the moment we say that he was teaching that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are still alive and never really died. How could God’s purpose to raise these men from the dead be proved by asserting that they were still alive and never really died? Christ’s argument requires that they are dead in order to be subjects of resurrection. As pointed out before, Heb. 11 clearly affirms that “these all died in faith...” The essence then, of Jesus’ argument is this: God is a God of living people, not dead people, for the dead cannot praise the Lord. Therefore, the fact that he is referred to as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, long after they had died, implies He must intend to raise them from the dead. So sure and certain is His purpose to do this, it is as good as done! They are as good as being alive already, for in His omniscient mind which sees the end from the beginning, they “live unto Him.”

HE WHO BELIEVES HAS ETERNAL LIFE

Let us now consider the references in the gospel of John to Jesus saying that those who believe in him “have” eternal life. These statements are interpreted by some to mean that believers already possess eternal life and it is concluded that this refers to the immortal soul.

But, as pointed out previously: If, as is commonly believed, everyone is born with an immortal soul, then everyone, good and bad, has eternal life whether they believe in Christ or not. Therefore, Christ’s promise would not be offering any more than what people possess already, making his promise empty and superfluous.

If man is born with immortality which would be the case if he has an immortal soul, he doesn’t need to be born again or need Christ in order to live forever.

When Jesus said that he who believes in him “hath eternal life,” he was speaking prospectively. This is evident from the fact that after saying this he said: “and I will raise him up at the last day” (Jn. 6:40, 54). Resurrection to eternal life is so sure and certain for the true believer, that it is as good as done, and therefore Jesus speaks of it in terms of being accomplished.

It is quite common in Scripture for God’s future purposes to be referred to as an accomplished fact due to their certainty of fulfilment. For example, God said to Abraham, before he had any children, “unto thy seed I have (not “will”) given this land” (Gen. 15:18). Later, before Isaac was born, God said: “I have made you a father of many nations” (Gen. 17:5). The apostle Paul comments on this in Rom. 4:17 and says: “God, who quickens the dead, speaks of things that do not exist as if they already exist.”

Because God intended to “quicken” and rejuvenate Abraham and Sarah’s reproductive powers, enabling them to produce a child in their old age, He spoke of it as being an accomplished fact. And, because God intends to quicken the dead who belong to Christ at the resurrection, and give them eternal life, Jesus refers to it as an accomplished fact. For those who belong to Him, it is as good as done.

When the believers are raised from the dead to eternal life, they shall, in the words of Jesus: “never die” - “never see death” (Jn. 8:51. 11:26). Unfortunately, even these statements are sometimes regarded as teaching the immortality of the soul. But to give them this application causes a contradiction of Scripture. For example: in Rev. 2:10 Jesus exhorts his church to be “faithful unto death.” Martyrdom was impending. Some were

going to die for their faith. In view of this, the words of Jesus recorded in John's gospel, that believers shall "never die" must relate to their hope of eternal life after resurrection. If not, it involves a contradiction. Not only that, but if Jesus said that his followers would "never die" due to possessing an immortal soul, then what is the big deal, because those who don't follow Jesus are also supposed to have an immortal soul and don't die either, according to tradition!

There is also another way of looking at the words "never die." They could be understood in the light of another statement made by Jesus in relation to Jairus' daughter who died. Jesus said: "The damsel is not dead but sleeps" (Mk. 5:35-39). Because Jesus intended to raise her from the dead and restore her life, he preferred to not refer to her as being dead, but asleep. As far as he was concerned, she never died; she was just asleep.

The same applied to Lazarus. In Jn. 11:4 we read that Jesus said his friend's sickness "is not unto death." However, the record goes on to say that he did die. But Jesus said to his disciples: "Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may awake him out of sleep" (v11). The word "death" has a finality about it which is not appropriate to those who will be raised from the dead. For this reason Scripture prefers to not use the word in relation to those who will be raised, but uses the word sleep instead.

GREAT IS YOUR REWARD IN HEAVEN

On another occasion Jesus said: "Rejoice and be exceeding glad for great is your reward in heaven" (Matt. 5:12). This promise is often interpreted to mean that the immortal souls of the righteous go to heaven at death. But the statement itself makes no mention of where, when and how the reward will be bestowed. Just because it is in heaven, does not necessarily mean the righteous have to ascend into heaven to receive it. For example, if a child is told there are some lollies kept up in the cupboard as a reward for good behaviour, that does not mean he has to climb up there to get them himself. They will be brought down for him when the time arrives for him to be rewarded.

And so it is with our reward in heaven. Listen to the words of Jesus recorded in Rev. 22:12: "Behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give to every man according to his works." We learn from this that we do not ascend to heaven to receive the reward but that Jesus descends from heaven to give us the reward. This is confirmed in other places. For example, Matt. 16:27: "For the son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels and then shall he reward every man according to

his works.” Lk. 14:14: “And you shall be rewarded at the resurrection of the just.” 2 Tim. 4:8: “And now there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give on that day; and not to me only, but to all who love his appearing.” 1 Pet. 5:4: “And when the chief shepherd shall appear, you shall receive a crown of glory that fades not away.”

It is evident from these and many other verses that the second coming of Christ and resurrection is the blessed hope of the true Christian faith. Without it, there would be no reward. Without it, there would be no eternal life. Without the resurrection all who die would remain dead in their graves. The doctrine of immortal souls going to heaven is a false hope. True, many who believe in the immortality of the soul give lip service to the second coming and resurrection, but in reality they do not need these events. Whether Christ comes to raise the dead or not, they believe that they have eternal life in heaven anyway.

MANY MANSIONS

One of the most popular texts quoted to support the doctrine of the immortality of the soul is Jn. 14:1-3, and it is frequently quoted at funerals for this reason. It records the words of Jesus, saying: “Let not your heart be troubled, you believe in God, believe also in me. In my father’s house are many mansions (abiding places, rooms) if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.” The traditional view of this among the churches in Christendom is that Jesus was promising to prepare a place in heaven for the immortal souls of those who die belonging to him. However, it should be noted that the word “soul” does not occur in the text let alone “immortal soul.” And neither is it stated that those who go there, do so the moment they die, before Christ returns to earth to raise and judge the dead.

Quite the opposite! If we read on and finish what Jesus said instead of stopping half way through, we find that he went on to say: “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself so that where I am, there you may be also.”

Jesus clearly states here that those who belong to him will not get to be with him until he “comes again,” referring of course, to his second coming. When he comes he will receive his friends to himself so that where he is, they can be also. He also referred to this on another occasion, recorded in Matt. 24:30: “... 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 the horizon to the other.”

This event involving the gathering up of the saints at the second coming of Christ is sometimes called “the Rapture.” 1 Thes. 4:16-17 also relates to it: “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in clouds, to meet the Lord in the air.”

According to Rev. 21, the city of God, which is the “tabernacle” or “house” of God, will descend to earth at the coming of Christ. The saints will be caught up into this city to meet Jesus as he descends. It will be their eternal home. From this centre, which will hover over Zion and the land of Israel and which will constitute the new Jerusalem, Christ and the saints will reign over the earth.

CARRIED INTO ABRAHAM’S BOSOM

Another principle passage which is regarded as teaching the immortality of the soul is one that records a story told by Jesus about a rich man and a beggar named Lazarus. It is recorded in Lk. 16. The story says: “The beggar died and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom. The rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and saw Abraham afar off and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame...”

It is a mystery how anyone can imagine that this story supports the disembodied state of immortal souls. How could something that is immaterial be carried by angels? How could something that is disembodied have eyes, a bosom, a finger and a tongue which could be cooled by water? The story is clearly talking about bodies not a disembodied state.

The story goes on to say that the rich man asked Abraham to send Lazarus to his five brethren, to testify to them lest they should end up in the same place of torment. Are we to understand this request to mean that the rich man wanted the immaterial and invisible soul of Lazarus to float invisibly alongside the brethren and whisper the message in their ears? By no means! Listen to Abraham’s revealing reply: “If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead” (v31).

This statement is very significant. It is the key to the correct interpretation of the whole story. The statement “though one rose from the dead” refers to Lazarus. Lazarus was alive as a result of resurrection. He was an immortal body not a disembodied immortal. The reference to resurrection in v31 is the story’s own interpretation of v22 which states that Lazarus “died and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom.” The word “and” i.e. “died and was carried” - bridges an unspecified period of time. Lazarus died, then at some unspecified time afterwards, he was resurrected and taken by the angels to be with Abraham.

The expression “Abraham’s bosom” alludes to the posture of the Jews at table. They reclined on couches and sometimes those who were near and dear to them lay next to them with their head resting on their bosom (chest). John did this at supper with Jesus (Jn. 13:23-25).

To the Jew, Abraham was esteemed very highly and to be next to him with head resting on his bosom would be a high honour. For the same reason, Jesus’ close relationship with his Father is described in Jn. 1:18 as being “in the bosom of his Father.” And Jesus’ care and love for his followers is referred to in Isa. 40:11 in terms of carrying them “in his bosom.”

The true Christian and Jewish hope is to be united with Abraham and receive with him the promised inheritance. Referring to this time, Jesus said: “Many shall come from the east and west (gathered by angels) and shall recline at table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.” But he goes on to say that others shall be cast out into outer darkness, causing weeping and gnashing of teeth. The rich man in the story in Lk. 16 obviously fits into this category.

Like Lazarus, the rich man “died and was buried.” He was also resurrected. This is signified in the statement that “in hell (Grk “hades” i.e. the grave where he was “buried”), he lifted up his eyes.” When dead men die and are buried, their eyes are closed. To open the eyes afterwards requires resurrection, and this is obviously what is signified. But, instead of ending up at table with Abraham up in the city of God, he was “afar off” separated by a great gulf and in “torments.”

The whole story is one of the many parables that Jesus gave, and spiritual discernment needs to be exercised to properly interpret it. Much more could be said about it but not now. Sufficient has been said to show that it does not teach or support the doctrine of the immortality of the soul.

“YOU SHALL BE WITH ME IN PARADISE”

Another very popular text which is regarded as teaching the immortality of the soul is the one that narrates Christ’s discussion with the thief on the cross recorded in Lk. 24:42-43.

The thief said to Jesus: “Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” The Authorised Version records Jesus’ reply in these words: “Verily I say to you, today you shall be with me in paradise.”

This is commonly interpreted to mean that on that very day when Jesus and the thief died, they went to heaven. But there are problems with this view. Jesus did not go to heaven that day! He previously said: “The son of man shall be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” On the day that Jesus died and during the following two days, he was in a tomb in the earth, not in heaven. He was not awake and conscious but asleep and unconscious, as is clearly implied in 1 Cor. 15:20 which states he was “the first fruits of them that slept.” When he died, he was asleep!

After his resurrection, three days after his death on the cross, Jesus said to Mary: “I have not yet ascended to my Father” (Jn. 20:17). This clinches it: Jesus did not go to heaven on the day he died.

Strangely enough, many of those who contend that Jesus went to heaven when he died, also contend, on the basis of a statement in 1 Pet. 3:18-19 that he went and preached to disembodied spirits (immortal souls) in hell. So they have him in three places at the same time: heaven, hell and the tomb, involving contradiction and confusion.

Eph. 4:9-10 teaches that Jesus “descended first” before he ascended i.e. he went into the tomb before heaven. This teaches that the Jesus who descended into the tomb was the Jesus who ascended to heaven. Seeing that the Jesus who descended was a physical bodily being, the Jesus who ascended must have been the same. The Jesus who rose from the dead and ascended to heaven certainly was a physical tangible being, and it is clearly this ascension to heaven to which Eph. 4:9-10 refers. Scripture knows of no other type of ascension. This rules out the notion of a disembodied Jesus ascending to heaven.

1 Cor. 15:3-4 presents the order of events as: death, burial, resurrection. One would search Scripture in vain to find a reference to Jesus ascending to heaven before his body was buried or before it was resurrected. Act. 2:31 says his “soul” lay dead in the grave on the day of his crucifixion. It was not in heaven. The thief was laid to rest also, like all other dead men.

So then, if the Authorised Version translation is correct, Jesus’ words:

“Today you will be with me in paradise” would have to mean that paradise is in hell i.e. the grave, because that’s where Jesus was that day. The merit and accuracy of this translation or punctuation obviously needs to be seriously questioned at this point.

It is important to realize that there were no commas in the Greek manuscripts when the New Testament was originally written. The punctuation has been added by the English translators, and they, not being inspired, put commas where they thought they should be. In many cases their decision was determined by their doctrinal prejudices.

Unfortunately, the interpretation of the verse under consideration depends entirely on punctuation. It is determined by whether the comma is placed before or after the word “today.” If it is placed before, it reads: “Truly I tell you, today you shall be with me in paradise.” But if it is placed after, it reads: “Truly I tell you today, you shall be with me in paradise.” Many believe that this is the correct punctuation. This is not tinkering with the text and is in accord with the New Testament adverb “today,” for out of its 221 uses, in no less than 170 the comma is placed after the adverb, not before.

In the Old Testament the rule is the same. For instance: Deu. 8:19: “I testify against you this day.” Many other examples like this could be quoted.

Not only is this punctuation consistent with the usage of the word “today” elsewhere in Scripture, but more importantly it is consistent with the doctrinal teaching of the Bible which does not support the concept of people ascending to heaven the day they die.

By putting the comma after the word “today,” the word “today” is made solemn and emphatic. By saying to the thief: “Truly I say to you today,” Jesus was stressing the time of his promise, not the time he would be in paradise. The thief asked Jesus to remember him when he comes into his kingdom. Jesus, in his reply, virtually says: “Let me assure you this very day - this day of seeming hopelessness and despair - this day that we hang, nailed to a cross full of pain and agony- this day that we are going to die - let me assure you that you will be with me in paradise when I come in my kingdom.”

It is important to remember that the promise given by Jesus to the repentant thief was a direct reply to his question or request. The thief did not say: “Lord, remember my soul when your soul ascends to heaven.” No! The thief did not have a going to heaven at death in mind but a coming from heaven of the Lord at his return, at which time he will raise the dead and establish his kingdom. The thief said: “Lord, remember me

when you come into your kingdom.” He gave expression to the one true hope of the gospel which Jesus and his apostles preached, not the false and vain hope taught in the doctrine of the immortality of the soul.

SPIRITS IN PRISON

On the basis of a statement in 1 Pet. 3:18-19, some believe that when Jesus died, his spirit went and preached to other disembodied spirits in hell. The passage reads like this: “For Christ also has once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened (made alive) by the Spirit, by which also he went and preached to the spirits in prison.”

As pointed out before, the problem with the traditional interpretation of this Scripture is that it means Jesus did not really die on the cross, for dead men cannot preach! It also involves a contradiction because, as we have seen, tradition also maintains that the spirit of Jesus went to heaven when he died. This is maintained on the basis of his promise to the thief on the cross, and also his dying statement on the cross: “Father, into Thy hands I commit my spirit.” Tradition therefore affirms in one breath that Jesus went to heaven and then in the next breath that he went to hell. Both views are wrong! Jesus went to a tomb!

A careful reading of 1 Pet. 3:18-19 reveals that the preaching to the spirits in prison took place after Christ’s resurrection, not while his body lay dead in the tomb. It says he was put to death in the flesh, but made alive again by the Spirit, by which (i.e. by the Holy Spirit) he also went and preached to the spirits in prison. It does not say that Jesus went and preached “as” a spirit, but “by” the Spirit. The statement is simply saying that by the same Spirit power of God which raised him from the dead, Jesus went and preached to the spirits in prison.

So then, in order to identify the “spirits in prison,” we need to focus attention on the preaching work of the Holy Spirit after the resurrection of Jesus.

After his resurrection, Jesus did not, of course, personally preach himself, but he did so by the Holy Spirit through the apostles. To hear them was to hear him! They were his representatives - his “body,” doing his work in response to direction from him as their “head.” For this reason Paul said: “I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ has not wrought by me to make the Gentiles obedient.”

When preaching takes place, the message is not aimed at penetrating the arms or legs of people, but their spirit; it is the spirit that is converted

i.e. as Eph. 4:23 puts it: “The spirit of the mind.” (Like the word “soul,” spirit is quite a flexible word and is given a variety of applications in Scripture. In quite a few instances it relates to the deep inner regions of the mind, and also sometimes relates to the attitude or disposition of the mind).

Seeing that preaching is always aimed at the “inner man” of people - the spirit of their mind, we can reasonably conclude that the “spirits,” to whom the preaching was directed in 1 Pet. 3:19 relates to the minds of certain people, and the “prison” they were in, must be interpreted in this light.

An old hymn which many of the traditional churches sing, unwittingly provides a clue to the significance of this. It says: “Long my imprisoned spirit lay, fast bound by sin.” This is simply giving expression to the fact that prior to the mind being enlightened by the preaching of the gospel, it is locked away - bound and imprisoned by sin, alias the devil. It is imprisoned in the darkness of ignorance, having no faith in God and no hope in His kingdom, and unable to release and free itself in praise and thanksgiving to God for His salvation in Christ. The words: “Set my spirit free that I might praise Thee,” as expressed in another song, are therefore quite relevant.

The gospel is preached to set people’s spirit free from a prison of unbelief and until they hear it, their spirits are in “prison.” Those who know the Scriptures will be aware of the fact that there are a number of verses in which the words “prison” and “prisoners” are used in a metaphorical sense to describe the spiritual state or position of those who are alienated from God in their mind, and have no hope.

For example, Isa. 61:1: “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because He has anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek; He has sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.”

Jesus quoted this at the commencement of his preaching ministry to the Jews, and it had nothing to do with criminals in gaol! The preaching work of Jesus to the gentiles by the Holy Spirit through the apostles after his resurrection is referred to in the same terms. For example Isa. 42:1 refers to the Holy Spirit being upon him causing him to be a light to the gentiles, “to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.”

In passing it should be pointed out that the Greek word “phulakee,” translated “prison” in 1 Pet. 3, is used almost 50 times in the New Testament. But it is never used to relate to some place in the deep regions

of the earth where disembodied spirits are supposed to be!

1 Pet. 3:20 goes on to say that in times past, in Noah's day, imprisoned spirits were disobedient and were not saved, because only Noah and his family - eight souls, survived the flood.

According to 2 Pet. 2:5, Noah preached to his contemporaries, who were of course, bound by sin, but they did not respond and were therefore not spared from the judgement. This acted as a warning to all succeeding generations, and Peter refers to it for that reason.

Tradition reads 1 Pet. 3:20 to mean that the spirits in prison to whom Christ preached were the same spirits (immortal souls) of those who died in Noah's day. But if they were disobedient and refused to listen to Noah's preaching, why should they be given a second chance? And why give a second chance to just those who died in Noah's day? What about those who died in Abraham's, Moses' day etc? Why not give them and everyone else in every generation a second chance?!

This interpretation of giving the dead a second chance, led to the false doctrine of purgatory, which is contrary to the Word of God. It is a pernicious doctrine, and more will be said about it later.

The principle of interpretation that I have applied to 1 Pet. 3:20 is illustrated in 1 Pet. 2:9-10. Addressing his contemporary first century generation of gentile Christians, Peter says: "You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood..." He then goes on to say: "who in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God." Peter is actually quoting words uttered over 700 years before by the prophet Hosea in relation to the gentiles who lived contemporary with him (Hos. 2:23). Also see Rom. 9:24-25). At that time, and indeed right through to the time of Peter, the gentiles were not the people of God. But it would clearly be wrong to conclude that the people to whom Peter was writing were the same generation of gentiles that lived 700 years before in the time of Hosea.

In the same way, when Peter talks about the gentiles of his own time (spirits in prison) being preached to, and then says: "who formerly were disobedient... in the days of Noah," he is not implying that the generation of gentiles that lived contemporary with Noah was the same group of gentiles to whom the gospel was being preached after the resurrection of Jesus.

Another statement made by Peter in 1 Pet. 4:6 has also been misconstrued to support the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. In this statement Peter refers to the gospel being preached to "those who are dead." But Peter does not say the gospel was preached to them "when they were dead." He is not talking about the gospel being preached to

dead people. He is simply stating that those who are now dead once had the gospel preached to them.

A similar expression occurs in Ruth 1:8 where Naomi said to Ruth: “The Lord deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me.” The “dead” with whom Ruth had dealt kindly was her husband, Naomi’s son, who was now dead. While he was alive, Ruth was a good wife to him and dealt kindly with him. This is what Naomi was referring to when she said: “You have dealt kindly with the dead” i.e. with him who is now dead. No one would read this to mean that Ruth was a good wife to him while he was dead. Likewise, we should not try and read 1 Pet. 4:6 to mean that the gospel was preached to dead people!

OUT OF THE BODY

Let us move on now to some statements made in the writings of the apostle Paul which have been misconstrued to support the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. To start with, in 2 Cor. 12:1-4 Paul says: “I knew a man in Christ, (i.e. Paul himself) whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knows; such an one was caught up into paradise and heard indescribable words.”

According to the book of Revelation, paradise is the garden city of God which is coming to earth when Christ returns. This is evident from the fact that Rev. 22:1-2 refers to the tree of life being in the midst of the city, and Rev. 2:7 refers to it being in the midst of paradise. From this it is a natural deduction that paradise is the city of God.

Paul’s reference to not knowing if he was caught up there in the body or out of the body, is regarded by many as proof that we can live outside the body in a disembodied immaterial state, and don’t need a body to have conscious existence. But, if the body cannot live without the so-called immortal soul or spirit, (“the body without the spirit is dead” according to Jam. 2:26), then Paul would have died if his spirit left his body! And if he died and came back to life would he not have known it? Of course he would. So why would he say: “Whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell.” It is hard to believe that he would not know whether or not he died.

It should be evident from this that Paul is not talking about an immortal soul leaving the body and taking a trip to heaven. The key to what he is talking about is indicated in the first verse where he refers to receiving visions and revelations of the lord, and he repeats it in v7. This is the context in which the statement about being caught up into paradise

must be interpreted.

Paul is simply saying that he was given a vision or revelation of paradise and it was so vivid and real that it was like being there in person. It was so real that he couldn't tell whether he was actually taken there in person, or whether his mind and thoughts were projected there beyond the geographical location of his body. In other words: Paul could not tell whether the vision was subjective or objective.

Compare Peter's experience. When he was released from prison by an angel, we are told in Act. 12:9 that he did not know that what was happening was real - he did not know that he really was physically walking out; he thought he was dreaming or seeing a vision. But v11 says that when Peter "came to himself," i.e. when he realized what had happened, he knew it was a real physical experience.

As we know, God has created the mind of man with the unique ability to be projected beyond the present physical senses and environment of the body, to other places upon and above the earth. The ability of our thoughts, particularly in vivid dreams or deep meditation, to travel to other places, can make us feel like we have left the body.

Some people, under anaesthetic, have dreamed that they are hovering over their body, looking down on it. People who lack the ability to concentrate are sometimes said to have a "wandering mind." Or, it might be said of someone who fails to pay attention, that his mind is in other places. But none of these expressions mean that a part of the brain has physically left the body and gone on a journey!

A DESIRE TO DEPART AND BE WITH CHRIST

Another statement made by the apostle Paul which some regard as teaching the immortality of the soul is in Plp. 1:23: "For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better."

This is commonly interpreted to mean that the moment Paul died, his immortal soul or spirit would be in heaven with Christ. However, it should be noted that Paul makes no reference to "soul" or "spirit;" the words do not occur here. Neither does Paul actually say that he would be with Christ the moment he departed or died. As it stands, the statement merely expresses a sequence of events, without indicating whether or not there would be an interval between the two events. Depart (die) first; then be with Christ; but whether immediately after departing, or some time after departing, Paul does not say. The same applies to the statement in Heb.

9:27: “It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgement.” On the surface this statement might be taken to mean that judgement takes place immediately after death. In actual fact, it takes place at the second coming of Christ. For many people, this will be hundreds and even thousands of years after they died. But, because death is a sleep - an unconscious state during which there is no awareness of the passing of time, the next conscious moment after death will be in the presence of Jesus at the judgement. It will seem like they died one minute and were alive the next - just like going to sleep at night and waking up in the morning, not being aware of the hours that have passed. (Compare the word “awake” in Ps. 17:15. Dan. 12:2).

Attention was also directed earlier to a statement in Lk. 16 which also gives the impression that there is no interval between death and judgement. Verse 6 says “The beggar died and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom.” In essence, this is no different from Paul’s statement in Plp. 1:23 that he desired to depart and to be with Christ. As we have seen, the beggar did not go to “Abraham’s bosom” until he was raised from the dead, and the same applies to Paul. He will not be with Christ until he is raised from the dead. And this will not take place until Christ returns to the earth. Paul, who knew the Scriptures well, knew that when he died he would be asleep in the grave where time stood still. He knew that his next conscious moment would be in the presence of Jesus. For this reason he could say that he had a desire to depart and to be with Christ. The whole weight of Biblical testimony especially in Paul’s writings, is that those who die belonging to Christ will not see him until he comes again and raises them from the dead, and Paul’s statement in Plp. 1:23 does not contradict this teaching.

Take for example 2 Tim. 4:1-8 in which Paul speaks about Jesus judging the living and dead at his appearing and kingdom. Paul goes on to say that his “departure (death) is at hand,” and that “there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but to all who love his appearing.”

Paul talks here about his death in terms of a “departure” but makes it quite clear that he did not expect to immediately ascend to heaven in a disembodied state. No! his whole hope lay in the coming and appearing of Jesus from heaven. It would not be until that day that Paul would receive his crown.

It is clearly a mistake to assume that when Paul refers to his departure that he meant ascending to heaven. Quite the opposite is the case. Death involves a descent not ascent, for it involves departing from the land of

the living and descending into the grave to await resurrection.

The words “depart” and “death” are sometimes used synonymously in Scripture. For example Lk. 2:26 records Simeon saying that the Lord told him he would not see “death” before seeing Christ. After he had seen Christ, he said: “Lord, now let thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word.”

Significantly enough, the Greek word “*analuō*” which is translated “depart” in Plp. 1:23 only occurs in one other place in the New Testament, in Lk. 12:36 where it is rendered “return”: “And be ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when he will return from the wedding.” Here the word refers to the second coming of Christ.

“*Analuō*” literally means to “unloose.” Jesus’ return will be an unloosing from heaven. Death also is an unloosing from life and involves a journey to the grave. All who die “return” to the dust from which they came.

On the 22 occasions that *analuō* occurs in the Greek Old Testament, it always signifies “return.” For example, Josh. 22:8: “Return with much riches to your tents” etc.

In view of this there is considerable merit in the Emphatic Diaglott’s translation of Plp. 1:23 which reads: “I have an earnest desire for the returning, and being with Christ, since it is very much to be preferred.”

TO DIE IS GAIN

It is natural to wonder why Paul would have a desire to die and be in a sleep state while waiting for Christ to return. How could this be “gain” to him as we read in Plp. 1:21 where he says: “For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” How could it be a gain to Paul to die?

The answer is quite simple: At the time of penning those words, Paul was in prison, and during his life he experienced much suffering. In v16 he refers to “affliction in my bonds” and mentions suffering conflict in verses 29-30. A long list of the kind of trials, troubles and hardships he experienced as a result of being an apostle of Christ, is presented in detail in 2 Cor. 11:23-29. To remain alive meant trouble and anxiety. Death brought rest and relief. “To die is gain.”

Referring to the same kind of situation, Rev. 14:13 puts it like this: “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, ...that they may rest from their labours.”

Job also sought relief from his suffering, but not by ascending to heaven as a disembodied immortal. No! His plea to God was: “O that you

would hide me in the grave... until your wrath be past, and then remember me when it is the appointed time” (Job 14:13). In the following verses it is evident that by “appointed time” Job had in mind the resurrection. Job, like Paul, would have been happy to die and sleep peacefully without any more suffering until the day of resurrection and reward.

Again in Ecc. 4:1-3 reference is made to those who were oppressed and afflicted. Solomon says: “Those who had already died were more fortunate than those who were still alive.” Death, to them, was “gain.”

However, although Paul knew he could rest and avoid much suffering and affliction if he died, he also knew it would be to the disadvantage and detriment of the church to not have him around. Being the unselfish person he was, having such a deep concern for the spiritual welfare of the church, he went on to say: “Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. And fully believing this, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith” (Plp. 1:24-25).

ABSENT FROM THE BODY

The last passage to consider in Paul’s writings which is sometimes quoted to promote the concept of the immortality of the soul, is 2 Cor. 5. In this passage Paul says that: “While we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord.” He then goes on to say: “We are confident and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.”

The phrase “absent from the body” is of course regarded by tradition as referring to the departure of the immortal soul from the body at death, in order to be “present with the Lord” in heaven, without a body. But a careful consideration of these statements in their context reveals that the subject in hand is not disembodied immortals ascending to heaven at death, but immortal bodies on earth as a result of Jesus descending from heaven to raise the dead.

Starting at 2 Cor. 5:1 reference is made to the “earthly house” or “tabernacle” (i.e. tent) we live in, which in time dissolves, i.e. dies and corrupts away. This is then contrasted with the “eternal” “building” or “house” reserved in heaven in Christ which God has provided for us to live in.

As in other Scriptures, the “house” or “tabernacle” is a metaphorical reference to our body. For example, in Ecc. 12:3 “keepers of the house” refers to the arms which serve and protect the body. In 2 Pet. 1:13-14 Peter says: “I think it is right, as long as I am in this tabernacle (i.e. while

my body is alive) to stir you up... knowing that shortly I must put off my tabernacle (i.e. die or “decease” v15).

In 2 Cor. 5 a contrast is made between our present mortal body and our future immortality which is “hid with Christ in God” in heaven, and which will be bestowed when he returns to earth. Our present mortal body, like a tent, is only a temporary habitation. Our future immortal body, like a building, will be permanent, “eternal.” Because our immortal body or eternal house can only be conferred through power from heaven coming upon us, it is referred to as being in heaven, and coming from heaven. Heaven is the source of immortality. It is not inherent.

2 Cor. 5:2 continues: “For in this (i.e. in our present temporary body or house) we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is (coming) from heaven.”

It is important to note that Paul speaks of our “house which is from heaven.” He does not say that it is a house we ascend to in heaven where we will dwell as immaterial entities and have a disembodied existence. No! He says the house will be brought to us from heaven and shall be clothed upon us. The statement in v4 is more explicit. It says: “We shall be clothed upon so that mortality might be swallowed up by life” i.e. swallowed up by eternal life. This statement is clearly an echo of another statement of Paul in 1 Cor. 15:54 where, speaking about the resurrection he says: “Death is swallowed up in victory,” i.e. due to our mortal body putting on immortality. Without a doubt, this relates to the new immortal body with which we shall be clothed at the resurrection at Christ’s second coming.

Being “unclothed” is a metaphorical expression relating to the death, decay and disintegration into dust of our mortal corruptible body. As we saw in 2 Pet. 1:14, Peter, when referring to his forthcoming death, said: “I must put off my tabernacle.”

Being “clothed upon” signifies being invested with a new immortal, incorruptible body at the resurrection. It is put like this in 1 Cor. 15:53-54: “For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.”

Paul’s reference in 2 Cor. 5:2 to “groaning, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house,” parallels with his reference in Rom. 8:23 to Christians groaning within themselves for “the redemption of their body.” The redemption of the body, of course, takes place at the resurrection when the saints will be clothed with an immortal body or “house.”

It is evident from the expressions used by Paul in 2 Cor. 5 such as “clothed upon” and “house” that he is talking about a material body, not

something immaterial. The words “soul” or “spirit” do not occur in the passage, and no hint is given of any such thing leaving the body at death to live in heaven. Blind doctrinal prejudice reads such things into this passage but they are not there.

That Paul had in mind the period of the second coming of Christ is further indicated in 2 Cor. 5:10 where he says: “For we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body according to what he has done, whether it be good or bad.”

If Paul’s desire was to leave behind the mortal body and depart to heaven as a disembodied immortal, and if he used the expression “unclothed” to signify this, why did he emphasize three times that his desire to be unclothed was that he might be “clothed upon,” and not remain unclothed? This only makes sense when it is understood that he was expressing a desire to discard his weak mortal corruptible body and have it replaced with an immortal incorruptible body.

Nowhere in 2 Cor. 5 does Paul express a desire for disembodiment. In v3 he indicates that he did not want to be left “naked” i.e. without a body. In connection with this word “naked,” Paul, in 1 Cor. 15:37 likens those who are dead in the grave waiting to rise to a new immortal body, to a “naked grain” in the ground to which God “gives it a body” i.e. makes it a full-bodied plant when it sprouts.

Paul’s reference in 2 Cor. 5:4 to “groaning” while we live in our present mortal “tent,” is no doubt because of the weaknesses and anxieties that are experienced by it. And when he says his desire is “not that we would be unclothed (i.e. die and dissolve into dust) but be clothed upon (i.e. be bestowed with an immortal body in the blinking of an eye at Christ’s return), Paul is expressing hope that he might be among those he refers to in 1 Thes. 4 who will remain alive (remain “clothed”) to witness Christ’s return, and therefore not die (i.e. not be “unclothed” and not become “naked”), but rather be “clothed upon” with immortality in the blinking of an eye (1 Cor. 15:50-58).

These verses quickly dispose of the false doctrine of the immortality of the soul, which, in contrast, desires to be unclothed from the body, not clothed upon.

The words “tent” and “house” involve a dwelling, and of course a tenant. The “tenant” is the “inner man” - “the spirit of the mind” - the character and personality which is never forgotten by God, but is, as we read in Mal. 3:16, written and recorded in God’s “book of remembrance.” At the return of Christ, the character and personality will be re-created by

divine power and clothed with a permanent habitation - an immortal “building” or body.

It is in the light and context of all this that Paul’s much misunderstood statement in 2 Cor. 5:6 appears: “Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord; (for we walk by faith, not by sight): we are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.”

It is clear from the context that the “body” from which Paul desired to be “absent” was the present natural mortal body. His desire was to discard it and have it replaced at Christ’s return with a spiritual immortal body. According to 1 Cor. 15:44: “There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.”

Therefore, as long as we are at home in the mortal body, Christ has obviously not returned. He is not present with us in person, but in heaven, and we are therefore “absent” from him, physically speaking. And, as Paul says in his parenthetical statement in 2 Cor. 5:7, this time of absence is a time during which we walk by faith and not by sight. However, when the Lord returns and fashions our mortal body like his glorious immortal body (Plp. 3:21), our faith will be turned into sight for we shall see him face to face and “be like him” (1 Jn. 3:2).

When the immortal nature is bestowed upon the saints, they will be absent from the old mortal body for it will have been discarded. They will be present with the Lord in his kingdom on earth in their new immortal bodies. No wonder Paul says: “We are confident and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord” (v8).

Paul then says: “Therefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted by him” (v9).

It should be evident that the word “present” here cannot relate to immortal souls being in the presence of the Lord in heaven, neither can it relate to immortal bodies being in the presence of the Lord in his kingdom on earth. It is a foregone conclusion that for immortal souls to be in the presence of the Lord in heaven, or for immortal bodies to be in his presence in his kingdom on earth, they would have to be accepted by him. So why would Paul express a hope that those who are present with the Lord, be it in heaven or earth, might be accepted by him if they are already accepted and immortal?

This consideration seems to force upon us the conclusion that the word “present” in this particular verse refers to those who are in attendance among those living in mortal bodies just prior to Christ’s

return, and “absent” would refer to those who were out of sight due to being dead and buried.

When Jesus returns, many saints will be alive and many will be dead, but all will have made it their aim in life to be accepted by the Lord, whether they are dead or alive at his return. This seems to be the significance of Paul’s statement about making it our ambition, that, “whether present or absent, we may be accepted by him.”

His very next statement in v10 is consistent with this: “For we must all (i.e. the living and dead) appear before the judgement seat of Christ, so that each one may receive good or evil, according to what he has done in the body.”

SOULS UNDER THE ALTAR

The final passage to consider in the New Testament which is sometimes quoted in support of the doctrine of the immortality of the soul is Rev. 6:9 which refers to John seeing the souls of those who were slain “under the altar.” But there are a number of difficulties with the traditional interpretation of this:

1. These souls are referred to in Rev. 20:4 as being beheaded. How could a disembodied spirit have a head?

2. Rev. 6:11 says white robes were given to the souls. How could spirits without bodies wear robes? How could John see them if they are immaterial?

3. The altar represents an altar of sacrifice where victims have been slain. Such an altar could hardly exist in heaven, and there is no reference to it being in heaven. The souls are depicted under the altar, just as victims slain upon an altar would pour out their blood beneath it, and fall by its side. It would be incongruous for saints to be slain and fall in heaven! The only altar we read about in heaven is the altar of incense (8:3), but it would not be correct to represent victims slain under such an altar, because an incense altar was never used in this way.

4. If the souls are saints in a disembodied state in heaven, why are they shut up and confined under the altar, and why are they told to “rest”? It is generally believed and taught that immortals freely walk the streets of gold in heaven and float on clouds actively playing harps and singing.

5. Verse 11 depicts the souls crying with a loud voice for vengeance to be inflicted upon the enemy who killed them. Is it conceivable that souls in heaven, basking in the joy and glory of God, would be so preoccupied with vengeance being inflicted on their enemies, that they

would be unhappy and dissatisfied until it was inflicted? Would they not rather rejoice that they had been killed and hastened into the presence of God in heaven, at whose right hand there is fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore? It is generally taught and believed that there is no sorrow or sadness, crying or tears in heaven. In view of this, it is difficult to see the souls crying out under the altar in Rev. 6:9 as representing a scene in heaven.

6. Verse 11 plainly says the souls were killed. No distinction is made between body and soul. It does not say that just the body was killed. It is clearly the souls themselves who are referred to as being killed. This being the case, the souls are obviously neither immortal nor immaterial.

So then, what are we to make of the souls under the altar. For a start, we come back to the fact already established that one of the primary meanings of the Hebrew and Greek words translated “soul” is “life.” And, because the life is in the blood, the same words sometimes relate to blood. For example, we read in Deu. 12:23 that “the blood is the life.” The word “life” here comes from *nephesh*, translated “soul” elsewhere. Hence, Deu. 12:23 could read: “The blood is the soul.” Reference is actually made to “the blood of the souls” in Jer. 2:34 (Authorised Version). Ps. 72:14 also refers to souls having blood, and in Isa. 53:12 we read that Jesus, in his sacrifice, “poured out his soul unto death.”

In view of this, it is believed that the souls under the altar either refers to the blood of the slain, or the bodies themselves whose blood had been shed, or both. It was common for the enemy to leave the bodies of those they killed, lying in their blood exposed on the ground, unburied, as an act of contempt (Ps. 79:2-3. Rev. 11:8).

Of particular significance is the fact that the blood from Israel’s sacrifices was poured out at the base of the altar at Jerusalem (Ex. 29:12. Lev. 4:7). The blood was not, of course, poured out at the base of the altar of incense inside the temple, but at the base of the altar of burnt offerings outside the temple.

Regarding the altar at Jerusalem: The word of prophecy teaches that there will be a Jewish temple and altar at Jerusalem in the end time: (Dan. 12:11. Joel 1:8, 13-16. 2:17. 2 Thes. 2:4. Rev. 11:1-2). As in the past, when Zechariah was slain between the altar and the temple, some end-time Jewish Christians will suffer a similar fate when the anti-god “beast” invades Israel. If Pilate had no scruples about mixing the blood of Jews he killed with the sacrifices on the altar (Lk. 13:1), the beast would have no compunction killing Christ’s witnesses at the altar as an act of contempt towards the altar and the witnesses. Reference is certainly made in Rev.

11:7-8 to the beast killing witnesses in Jerusalem and leaving their dead bodies lying on the ground. If the man of sin (beast) deliberately desecrates the temple by sitting in it (2 Thes. 2), he would have no scruples about desecrating the altar by sacrificing humans upon it.

By leaving dead bodies lying unburied upon the ground or by shedding their blood at the altar, the beast will intend to bring ignominy, shame and contempt upon Christ's witnesses. But, as far as Jesus is concerned, being their Lord, the witnesses are at his feet i.e. in submission under his control. In Heb. 13:10 Jesus is referred to as our altar, because it is through him that we offer ourselves as a living sacrifice to God. Therefore, when our service to God results in being killed and our blood being shed, it is poured out, as it were, at the foot of the altar.

The concept of a Christian's life being offered up, as on an altar, as a sacrifice in Christ's service, is conveyed in several Scriptures: (Rom. 12:1. Plp. 2:17. 3:8-11. 2 Tim. 4:6).

Some may wonder how blood or dead bodies could cry out to the Lord as depicted in Rev. 6:10. The answer is: in the same way that the blood of Abel could cry to God from the ground as we read in Gen. 4:10 and Heb. 12:24. Abel's blood is obviously personified, and in a book like Revelation where there is so much symbology and metaphor, such personification is not surprising. For example: in Rev. 6:8 death is depicted riding a horse. How could anyone dead let alone death itself, ride a horse? The answer is: in the same way that blood or dead bodies can be depicted crying out and being clothed with robes! Anything is possible in symbolic vision. Even birds and beasts are depicted speaking in Revelation, and wages are referred to as crying out in Jam. 5:4. Such statements are clearly expected to be spiritually discerned and not to be taken literally at face value.



CHAPTER FIVE

6. FALLEN ANGEL DEVIL

For centuries the Roman Catholic church has taught that the devil is a fallen angel, and therefore a supernatural being. On the basis of certain Scriptures, it is claimed that his name is Lucifer, and that he was originally perfect and of very high rank, being an archangel. But due to pride he sinned by rebelling against God, resulting in being cast out of heaven to earth with one third of God's angels who supported his rebellion. Since that time, these rebel angels have been roaming the earth using their power to influence people against God, commencing at the very beginning of human history by using a serpent to bring about the fall of man.

Without a doubt there are many references to devil and satan in Scripture, but there is no foundation for this particular concept of the devil. A careful analysis of the foundation verses used to support the Roman Catholic view, (which many other churches have inherited) reveals that they have been taken out of context and misapplied.

UNDERMINES THE CHRISTIAN HOPE

The traditional view of the devil being a fallen angel is a serious error, because it undermines the Christian hope and creates numerous contradictions.

The hope that Jesus offered his disciples was that they will be resurrected and never die again because they will be equal with the angels (Lk. 20:35-36).

We learn from this that angels cannot die, which means they cannot sin, because death is the result of sin. And if they cannot sin they cannot be tempted, because the process of sin starts with temptation as we are taught in Jam. 1:14-15.

To affirm therefore that holy angels can and did succumb to temptation and sinned, is to contradict Scripture. It also undermines the Christian hope of being equal with them.

Let's face it: if divine holy angels can still be tempted, sin and rebel against God, and be cast out of heaven and ultimately perish, then what hope is it to be equal with them? If one third of God's angels were able to be tempted into sin, so could we! And if this is the case, then the divine immortal state is no better than the present, as far as isolation and

insulation from sin is concerned.

CONTRADICTIONS

Even if angels could and did sin, it would be contrary to divine principle to allow them to continue as immortals, perpetuating their sin and rebellion. An immortal sinner is a contradiction of terms. All who rebel against God's authority and sin, incur the death penalty, and there are many examples of this in Scripture.

The idea of God casting out an immortal rebel from heaven down to earth where he can teach rebellion to one generation after another is nonsense. Rather than be a punishment, it would be a reward - the very thing a rebel would want to do.

If angels possessing the power of God sinned, would God, in banishing them, allow them to retain His power and use it against Him to inspire rebellion in others? No! This would be a kingdom divided against itself. God always withdraws His power from those who sin and rebel against Him, and there are examples in Scripture of this.

One thing is certain: God is the one and only source of supernatural power in the universe (Rom. 13:1). Angels do not originate their power themselves; they derive it from God. If a fallen angel had a separate source of supernatural power, he would be another God - a rival God. This is what the polytheism of paganism believed and taught, and this basically is what the Roman Catholic doctrine of the devil teaches.

The ancient Persians for example, as a result of the teaching of Zoroaster, believed that there were two major deities constantly in conflict with each other: Ahura Mazda, god of light and good, and Ahriman, god of darkness and evil. But significantly enough, in a prophecy in which Cyrus, a Persian king is being addressed, God declares that He alone is God, and creates both light and darkness, peace and evil (Isa. 45:1-7).

Being a Persian, Cyrus believed that good and evil came from two separate and mutually antagonistic supernatural sources. But God repudiates the idea of a supernatural rival. He alone is responsible for both good and evil (i.e. calamities and disasters like floods, famines, pestilence (disease), storms, earthquakes etc).

THE ANGELS THAT SINNED

There is a reference to angels that sinned in 2 Pet. 2:4 and Jude v6, but this does not contradict what has been said.

According to these verses, the angels did not stay within the limits of their authority, and they departed from their dwelling place, incurring punishment from God. The punishment involved being cast down to the lower regions of the earth where they are in everlasting chains under darkness, reserved for the judgement of the great day.

Unfortunately, many do not understand or appreciate that the word “angel,” translated from the Greek word “angelos” simply means “messenger.” But the word itself does not denote the nature of the messenger. The messenger could be human or divine. The same word is applied equally to both in Scripture.

Realizing this, some translations of the Bible have tried to help make a distinction between the two, by translating angelos two different ways. When they thought that the reference was to a human messenger, they simply translated it “messenger.” But when they thought it referred to a divine messenger, they transliterated it; i.e. they carried the “angel” part of “angelos” straight over into the English.

“Angelos” has actually been translated “messenger” in relation to human messengers in the following places in the New Testament: Matt. 11:10. Mk. 1:2. Lk. 7:24, 27. 9:52. Jam. 2:25.

The same applies in the Old Testament. The Hebrew word “malak” is translated “angel” 111 times, and “messenger” 98 times.

The translators no doubt meant well when they gave us these two different words from one and the same Hebrew and Greek words, but did they get it right every time? They certainly didn’t get it right when they gave us “angels that sinned,” in view of the fact that angels, in the sense of divine immortal beings, cannot sin. The traditional translation has created a contradiction. It should read “messengers that sinned,” because it refers to human beings, not divine. Some translators do actually render it “messengers that sinned.”

There is only one incident in the Bible that fits the description of the men who did not stay within the limits of their authority and departed from their dwelling place, resulting in being cast down into the bowels of the earth, namely the rebellion led by Korah, recorded in Num. 16.

Korah was from the same priestly tribe of Levi as Moses and Aaron, but Moses and Aaron had been given more authority by God. Korah however, and his fellow Levite priests, although subordinate to Moses and Aaron, had an important office and ministry. They were given considerable authority in relation to the service of the tabernacle and their dwelling place was near the tabernacle on the south side.

Mal. 2:7 refers to the Levite priests and says that each one is “the

messenger of the Lord.” The word “messenger” comes from the same Hebrew word elsewhere translated “angel.” The Levites were therefore the “angels” of the Old Testament church!

In connection with this, it is interesting to note that the leaders of the New Testament church are also called angels in Rev. 1:20. 2:1, 8, 12, 18. 3:1, 7, 14.

It is also interesting to note that the marginal reference in Mal. 2:7 refers to Ecc. 5:6 which relates to a vow being declared before “the angel.” The fact that the translators have connected the messenger of the Lord with the angel indicates they believed the angel was a Levite - a priest. The Good News Bible actually translates it as “God’s priest” instead of angel.

Korah then, and his fellow priests were “angels,” and they certainly sinned. They did not stay within the limits of their authority as Num. 16 reveals. They became jealous of Moses and Aaron, resentful that they had more authority. So they stirred up a rebellion against them. They left their dwelling place south of the tabernacle and marched up to accuse Moses and Aaron of assuming too much authority. They claimed that they were just as entitled to do the things Moses and Aaron had been appointed to do, such as offering up incense.

Moses therefore invited them to attempt it and see the outcome. Being presumptuous and self-willed they did. The result was: “God did not spare them, but cast them down to hell.” We are told in Num. 16 that the ground opened up under them and swallowed them up, then closed over them. “They were delivered into chains under darkness, reserved for the judgement of the great day.”

It is significant to note that the verses in 2 Pet. 2:24 and Jude v6 relating to the angels that sinned, do not mention the words “devil” or “satan.” To affirm that these “angels” are a fallen angel devil and satan is an assumption. The text does not teach that.

Neither is there any mention of heaven being the place from which they were cast down. One does not have to be in heaven to be cast into the bowels of the earth.

Neither is there any hint or suggestion that those cast into hell are freely and actively roaming the earth, tempting people to sin and rebel. Quite the opposite. They have been delivered into everlasting chains, reserved for judgement.

THE SONS OF GOD TOOK WIVES

Gen. 6:1-4 is also regarded as teaching that angels sinned. The passage refers to the sons of God being attracted to the daughters of men, and marrying them. Reference is also made to giants being there in those days. From this it has been concluded that the sons of God were angels, and the giants were the product of their marriage.

Now, it is true that angels are sometimes referred to as sons of God in the Bible, but so also are men. So how do we decide between the two? Quite easily, because Jesus plainly taught that angels do not marry! (Lk. 20:35-36). The sons of God in Gen. 6 must therefore be men.

It is natural to wonder why the sons of God are referred to as “of God,” and the women “of men.” The answer is that “of God” signifies spiritual birth, and “of men” signifies natural birth, i.e. of the flesh. For example, Jn. 1:13 says those who are converted and spiritual are “born, not of man, but of God.”

The world was divided into two groups: the woman’s seed and the serpent’s seed, i.e. the church and the world. The woman’s seed were the descendants of Seth who “called upon the name of the Lord” (Gen. 4:26). The serpent’s seed were the descendants of Cain who were violent and vindictive (Gen. 4:23-24).

We read in Lk. 3:38 that Adam was a “son of God” and his genealogy through to Christ is traced through Seth. Seth’s line was the holy line, and consisted of many great holy men of God who were sons of God.

Noah and his family were descendants of Seth. They were “of God.” There were others also, but they started mingling with and marrying the descendants of Cain. They were attracted to the beautiful women of the world. Drawn away by the lust of the eye and flesh, they abandoned the divine principle that the holy seed should not mingle with the unholy, nor be unequally yoked together in marriage. This led to a great apostasy - a “falling away” from the faith, resulting in 8 people - Noah and his family, being the only ones left who faithfully walked with God.

Regarding the reference to the giants: A careful reading of Gen. 6:1-4 reveals that they were not the product of marriage between the sons of God and daughters of men. The record clearly states that there were already giants in existence beforehand.

LUCIFER

Isa. 14:12 is another foundation text used to support the view that the devil is a fallen angel. In the A.V. it reads:

“How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How art thou cut to the ground, you who have weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north; I will ascend above the height of the clouds; I will be like the Most High.”

The saying that “a text without a context is a pretext,” is particularly true in this instance. By not taking into account the context of the statement, it has been misinterpreted and misapplied.

It is clearly stated in the fourth verse that it is a proverb against the king of Babylon. We learn from this that 2 key points govern the interpretation: 1. The discourse is a “proverb.” 2. It concerns “the king of Babylon,” not an angel. The words “angel,” “devil” and “satan” do not occur in the whole passage.

Verse 16 refers to Lucifer as “the man who made the earth to tremble.” The humanity and mortality of this man is reinforced in v11, 15 where, as a result of his fall, he is depicted lying down helpless in a grave as a rotting corpse, covered with worms and maggots. Did this happen to tradition’s sinful angels as a result of their fall?!

Isa. 14:10 says that as a result of Lucifer’s fall, he became weak and powerless like various kings he toppled from their thrones. Once again the weakness and powerlessness of Lucifer as a result of his fall is not consistent with the lively, active, powerful devil who is supposed to have been roaming the earth since his fall, seeking to devour like a lion.

In the first 3 verses of Isa. 14, reference is made to Israel receiving God’s mercy as a result of the enemy falling. Verse 3 says it results in “rest” for Israel and “rest, quiet, singing and rejoicing” for the rest of the earth (v7-8). Was this the result of the devil being cast out of heaven? According to tradition, quite the opposite was the case.

A careful reading of Isa. 14 reveals that the discourse is prophetic, not historical. It relates to the future not the past. The prophecy was given around 700 B.C. and relates to the fall of Babylon which took place 160 years later in 539 B.C. It has nothing to do with rebel angels being cast out of heaven over 3,000 years beforehand. Isa. 14 is at least 3,000 years too late to be predicting such an event!

A PROVERB

In attempting to interpret the passage, it is particularly important to keep in mind that it is a “proverb.” A proverb is a method of conveying truth by the use of metaphor and hyperbole - language which cannot be accepted on face value and which is not expected to be taken literally.

This is evident in v8 where nations, represented as trees which Babylon had attacked and chopped down, are depicted as rejoicing over the fact that Babylon also has finally been chopped down like a tree.

In its context, the name Lucifer is applied to the king of Babylon. It has been translated from the Hebrew word “heylel” which means brightness, and relates to the morning star, i.e. the planet Venus. Many modern translations render it “bright morning star.”

The reason for the king of Babylon being likened to the planet Venus is because after climbing higher and higher in the sky morning by morning, Venus never reaches the zenith but hesitates, and then day by day sinks back to the horizon and disappears from sight. The sinking or falling takes place at a faster rate than its ascent.

In his pride, the king of Babylon likewise had a soaring ambition to rise above all kings and nations to be brighter and more conspicuous, but slipped back and fell into oblivion.

In the words of the New Bible Commentary: “The picture is of a highly metaphorical nature, and deals with the eclipse, overthrow and death of the Babylonian tyrant. The colours of the taunting poetry and imagery are superb and awesome ...”

ORIGIN OF THE WORD LUCIFER

It would be natural to wonder how the word “Lucifer” originated. During the third century B.C. the Hebrew Scriptures were translated into Greek, and the Hebrew word “heylel” was translated into the Greek word “phos,” from which the word “phosphorous” is derived, which means brightness, luminous. “Phos” was the name given by the Greeks to Venus.

About 650 years later, during the fourth century A.D. Jerome, the renowned Roman Catholic theologian, translated the Greek and Hebrew Scriptures into Latin. This translation became known as the Vulgate, and was accepted as the authentic text of the Scriptures by the Roman Catholic church.

Jerome translated the Hebrew “heylel” and the Greek “phos” into the

Latin equivalent which was Lucifer, the Latin name for Venus. This is how the word originated. It is a Latin word, chosen by a Roman Catholic theologian, and first appeared in print in a Bible 300 years after New Testament times.

Most authorities agree that it was from around the period of Jerome, in the third century A.D. that Lucifer started to be regarded as the name of Satan - an angel cast out of heaven. But it is clear that the New Testament Christians and those after them during the next few centuries never used the name!

During the sixteenth century, England broke away from the Roman Catholic church, resulting in the formation of the Church of England. Naturally, they wanted a Bible in their own language, so they translated the Vulgate into English.

The English people had, for centuries, espoused the Roman Catholic doctrine of Lucifer being the name of the devil, so they retained the name in their translation. Instead of translating Lucifer into English and giving "daystar" or "bright morning star," they left it as it was and transliterated it, i.e. carried it over letter by letter. In so doing, they superimposed a Latin word on the English translation.

And so the name Lucifer was retained and perpetuated, resulting in millions of people throughout the ensuing centuries believing it was the name of a fallen angel devil.

But the simple truth is that Lucifer refers to the planet Venus and is applied metaphorically to the king of Babylon. Many modern Bible Dictionaries and Commentaries agree with this.

The footnote to Isa. 14:12 in an early edition of the Amplified Bible says this: "Light-bringer" or "shining one," was originally translated "Lucifer," but because of the association of that name with satan it is not now used. Conscientious students agree that the application of the name Lucifer to satan, in spite of long and confident teaching to that effect, is completely erroneous ... Nowhere in the Bible is satan called Lucifer. The misapplication of the name has existed since the third century A.D."

I WILL ASCEND INTO HEAVEN

The metaphorical nature of the proverbial discourse in Isa. 14 is certainly apparent where the king is referred to as saying in his heart: "I will ascend into heaven; I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will sit upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will be like the Most High."

There are several ways of interpreting the king's ambition to ascend into heaven:

A. In Dan. 4 the king of Babylon is represented by a tree which grew to a great height, reaching up to heaven, but which the Lord caused to be cut down and fall to the ground. It represented the king's proud and soaring ambition to be great and exalted above all other kings and nations. Like many ancient pagan kings, he no doubt wanted to be deified and regarded as a god.

It is evident that "heaven" in this instance, represents the political power and greatness of the king - his lofty, exalted and dominant position, not to mention the pride that went with it, which is mentioned in Dan. 4:30.

Clouds and heaven are used metaphorically in Job 20:6 in relation to the pride and soaring ambition of the ungodly: "Though his pride mount up to the heavens, and his head reach the clouds, yet he shall perish forever."

The fall of Jerusalem and its king is described in Lam. 2:1 as "cast down from heaven upon earth."

Similar language is applied to Babylon in Jer. 51:53: "Though Babylon should mount up to heaven and though she should fortify her strong height, yet from Me shall destroyers come to her says the Lord."

Also the city of Capernaum: "And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shall be thrust down to hell" (Lk. 10:15).

A parallelism in Isa. 1:2 and 10 shows that "heavens" can signify "rulers" i.e. those in elevated positions.

Even though Christians have their feet firmly on the ground, they are referred to in Eph. 1:3, 10 as being in "heavenly places" because of their position in Christ. The same expression is also used in Eph. 3:10 and 6:12 in relation to political and secular rulers, i.e. governments and authorities, referred to as "principalities and powers" in the A.V. i.e. "higher powers" (Rom. 13:1).

These principalities and powers have nothing to do with fallen angels. This is evident in Titus 3:1 where Christians are told to be subject to them. This obviously does not mean they have to submit to, and obey sinful angels! The following statement explains the meaning: "Obey magistrates, to be ready for every good work."

Eph. 3:10 refers to the church preaching to the principalities and powers to convert them. But the New Testament church was not commissioned to preach to fallen angels! It did, however, try to convert people in high places - kings, queens, princes, tetrarchs, governors etc.

B. Many Scriptures use the word “heaven” in a general sense to refer to the air or far distant horizon. In Isa. 13:5, the Medes (who lived in a mountainous area south of the Caspian Sea) are referred to as coming “from the end of heaven,” which is explained in the same verse to mean “from a far country.” Similar to this is a reference in Deu. 30:4 to Israel being driven to “the uttermost parts of heaven.” This refers to being dispersed to far distant horizons.

On this basis, the king of Babylon’s words: “I will ascend into heaven” could mean: “I will go into a far country - to the far distant horizon - up into the remote mountains.” If so, what place did he have in mind? A clue is given in the words that follow: “I will sit upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north ... I will be like the Most High.”

THE MOUNT OF THE CONGREGATION IN THE SIDES OF THE NORTH

These same words are used in Ps. 48:1-2 to describe Jerusalem, the city of God. Being the place chosen by God for the tribes of Israel to congregate for worship, it was the “mount of the congregation.”

The city of Jerusalem was on an elevated site consisting of a number of mountains, and the temple of God was built on one of these. Ps. 78:68-69 says it was built “like the high heavens” and its destruction by the Babylonians is referred to in Lam. 2:1 in terms of being “cast down from heaven.”

Not only was the temple “in heaven” in the sense of being on an elevated site, but it also represented heaven, for the Lord dwelt in it. The ark of the covenant in the most holy place represented God’s throne on earth.

In view of this, it is not difficult to see Isa. 14:13 as a prophecy foretelling the time when the king of Babylon would cast his proud and ambitious eyes toward the far distant horizon of heaven, to the mountain heights of Judah, and ascend there to the mount of the temple of the Lord, and sit there imagining in his conceit that he had usurped the throne of the Most High God of Israel.

ABOVE THE STARS OF GOD

The context of the reference to the king of Babylon’s ambition to exalt his throne “above the stars of God,” relates to ascending to Jerusalem

and sitting on the holy temple mount.

As in the case of the “day star” (Lucifer) representing the king of Babylon, the stars of God are also metaphorical, not literal. They are associated with “the mount of the congregation” in Jerusalem, and therefore involve Israelites who were eventually conquered by the king of Babylon.

Stars were used as a metaphor for Israel very early in her history as can be seen in Gen. 37:9-10.

Stars also represent Israelites in Dan. 8. Verses 9-10 refer to an enemy attacking “the army of heaven, the stars themselves, casting some of them to the ground and trampling upon them.” Verses 23-24 inform us that the stars represent “the holy people” (Jews) who were going to be cast down by a Gentile king.

The 12 stars in Rev. 12:1 of course, refer to the 12 tribes of Israel. Revelation chapter 12 is another passage which forms part of the foundation of the doctrine of the fallen angel devil and will be considered shortly.

WAS LUCIFER A TYPE?

Some concede that the primary reference in Isa. 14 is to the king of Babylon, but claim that it does not refer solely to him. They believe that the fall of the king of Babylon was a type of the fall of an angel-devil, and therefore a double fulfilment is involved. But a type must precede an antitype; it must occur before the event to which it points, and not point backwards to events that took place in the past. Isa. 14 is at least 3,000 years too late to be a type of the fall of tradition’s devil!

Whenever Scripture goes to the trouble of providing types, it also makes clear reference to the antitype. This is where the traditional concept of a fallen angel devil falls down badly. It claims that Isa. 14 (and Ezk. 28 which will be covered shortly) are a type of the fall of their angel-devil, but cannot provide an antitype in the Bible to back it up. It is like assuming a word has a certain meaning, then quoting the word to prove the meaning. We call this reasoning in a circle.

One exponent of the traditional view of the devil wrote these words: “If Isa. 14 and Ezk. 28 are not accepted as types of the fall of the devil, we would be left in the dark concerning the entrance of sin into the universe, and with little information concerning the history and ambitions of the enemy of God and man.”

This is quite an admission but very true. Take away Isa. 14 and Ezk.

28 as types and the doctrine has no foundation to stand upon, and this is the position. It is based upon self-appointed types. It is a concept that has no origin in the Word of God.

REVELATION TWELVE

Let us now turn to Rev. 12 which, as mentioned before, also forms part of the foundation of tradition's doctrine of a fallen angel devil.

This chapter refers to a woman in heaven clothed with the sun and the moon under her feet and upon her head a crown of 12 stars. It also refers to a great red dragon in heaven, having 7 heads and 10 horns, who lashes out with his tail and casts one third of the woman's stars to the earth. Then Michael the archangel appears and fights against the dragon and casts him and his agents down to the earth.

Tradition tells us that the dragon refers to an angel who rebelled against God and was cast out of heaven along with one third of the angels who supported his rebellion. This was supposed to have happened around the time of the fall of man. But there are several problems with this interpretation.

First: the one third of the stars that were cast down to the earth belonged to the woman not the dragon. They were the woman's allies not the dragons. Tradition has muddled and twisted the facts. It claims God cast one third of the stars down because they were allies of the dragon. But that is not what the text says. It says the dragon cast the stars down because they belonged to the woman.

Second point: The book of Revelation is prophetic (Rev. 1:1, 3). The message relates to events that would take place "hereafter" (1:19. 4:1) i.e. after the first century when it was revealed. The message does not relate to historical events that took place prior to the first century. It is impossible therefore to relate Rev. 12 back to the time of the fall of man 4,000 years in the past. Rev. 12 is 4,000 years too late to account for the origin of tradition's devil. It relates to end time events, not events at the beginning of time.

Evidence that Rev. 12 is prophetic of end time events can be seen in Rev. 12 itself in v10 where we are told that as a result of the dragon being cast out, the kingdom of God comes. God's kingdom certainly didn't come when tradition's devil was supposed to have been cast down to earth. Paradise was lost, not regained! God's kingdom won't come until Christ comes, and Rev. 12 relates to events that will occur during that epoch of history.

As most students of Bible prophecy know, Israel is the focal centre of Bible prophecy, especially end time prophecy. Many prophecies teach that the battle of Armageddon and the second coming of Christ will be precipitated by the invasion of Israel by anti-Israel forces.

Israel is certainly the focal centre of Rev. 12. She is signified by the woman with 12 stars. The 12 stars are the give-away sign! As far back as Joseph's dream of the stars in Gen. 37, 12 stars have symbolized the 12 tribes of Israel. (Also see Dan. 8:10, 24).

The dragon actually refers to the crocodile and in Old Testament times it symbolized the anti-Israel forces of Egypt and Babylon (Iraq today). These nations crushed, devoured and swallowed Israel. For examples of Egypt and Babylon being referred to as a dragon, see Jer. 51:34, 53. Isa. 51:9. In Isa. 27:1 Egypt is referred to not only as a dragon but also a serpent. And the fact that Isa. 51:9 refers to the Egyptian dragon being "in ancient times... in generations of old," we can see how Egypt could be referred to not only as "the great dragon" but also "that old serpent."

And she could certainly be called "devil" and "satan," which simply mean false accuser and adversary. As we shall see: anyone among fallen man, be it an individual, nation or nations, if they slander and oppose God or His people, they are devil and satan.

The dragon in Rev. 12 symbolizes anti-Israel forces which will invade and attack Israel and destroy one third of the Jewish population prior to divine deliverance. The symbol of the dragon can be compared with the beast in Dan. 7 which had 10 horns, and which represented a confederacy of nations which would persecute God's people, both natural and spiritual Israel.

My own personal view is that the dragon in Rev. 12 refers to Israel's old arch enemy Egypt and the 10 horns represent 10 anti-Israel Moslem nations who will confederate with Egypt in the end time and invade Israel. Several prophecies indicate that Egypt will turn against Israel in the end time and be her adversary (satan). See Joel 3:19.

We have to continually bear in mind that the language in Revelation is symbolic and cannot be taken literally. Reference to a woman in heaven clothed with the sun and the moon under her feet and a third of the stars being cast upon the earth and travailing is obviously symbolic. Refusal to acknowledge this would force tradition into believing their fallen-angel devil is not an angel, but a hideous creature - a crocodile with 7 heads and 10 horns and a long swishing tail that extends light years out into space!

Reference to the woman and dragon being "in heaven" simply

signifies, as in the Lucifer passage in Isa. 14, political power. And who can deny the political and military power that Israel has attained in the Middle East? She is the number one power. She even has nuclear warheads to cover and protect herself, which could be signified by being clothed with the sun. (A nuclear warhead is a miniature sun, involving the same fiery process that takes place on the sun, generating incredibly intense heat).

The anti-Israel confederacy represented by the dragon and 10 horns, also occupies a position of power and for that reason is also depicted as being “in heaven.” It is important to note that both the woman and the dragon are depicted as being in heaven, not just the dragon. They are side by side in heaven. Significantly enough, the rise to political power of Moslem nations in the Middle East, due to oil wealth, has synchronized with Israel’s revival as a nation and rise to power.

Reference to being “in heaven” could also be designed to indicate the advent of aviation and aerial power in the form of an air force. One could well imagine the war that would take place “in heaven” i.e. in the atmosphere, in the event of enemy nations, including fighter planes, attacking Israel.

The fact that Michael the archangel comes to defend and deliver the woman from the dragon confirms that the woman signifies Israel, because it clearly taught in Dan. 12:1 that Michael’s mission is to have charge of and defend Israel.

Much more time could be spent on Rev. 12 explaining the various symbols, but a full exposition of this passage of Scripture does not come within the scope of this present treatise.

SATAN AS LIGHTNING FELL FROM HEAVEN

The statement of Jesus that he “beheld satan as lightning fall from heaven” (Lk. 10:18) is also quoted to support the fallen-angel devil theory. But nowhere is it stated that satan is a fallen angel, and as we shall see, the word satan does not mean that. And as far as “heaven” is concerned in Lk. 10:18, it is surely significant that only 3 verses before this, in v15, Jesus used the word metaphorically, saying: “And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shall be thrust down to hell.”

The metaphorical usage of the word here, not to mention the other places in the Bible, should be taken into account before rushing in and giving it a literal application.

To regard satan in Lk. 10:18 as a fallen angel creates a contradiction.

In its context, Jesus' statement: "I beheld satan as lightning fall from heaven" was made in response to his disciples rejoicing over the fact that they had been successful in casting out demons, i.e. healing those who were mentally and physically sick.

Now, according to the common view, satan and his cohorts were cast out of heaven about 4,000 years before Christ. And, as a result of being expelled, they are supposed to have been functioning as demons invading and possessing people, afflicting them with mental and physical sicknesses.

But Lk. 10:18 teaches the opposite. Instead of linking demon possession with the fall of satan, it links dispossession. Instead of teaching that demons invade people as a result of satan's fall, it teaches that demons were being cast out of people as a result of satan's fall. Jesus clearly equates victory and success over sickness and disease with satan's fall, whereas tradition equates the advent of sickness with satan's fall.

Whoever satan was, he "fell" during Christ's ministry when power over sickness was manifested, not 4,000 years beforehand. And the "fall" was very conspicuous by the remarkable and outstanding healings that were taking place. Jesus referred to lightning flashing across a dark cloudy sky as an example of the conspicuousness.

As shall be pointed out, "satan" simply means adversary, and has a number of applications in Scripture. In Lk. 10:18 the adversary is the cause of people being inflicted with sickness. This immediately identifies the adversary as sin, because sin is constantly presented in Scripture as the cause of sickness. For this reason sin is frequently personified in Scripture. It is treated as a personal, malignant enemy, enthroned over the world, ruling with great power, tempting people to disobey God, and causing people to be inflicted with sickness, disease and death.

When Jesus came, sin was a great champion, having ruled and reigned over everyone. But Jesus toppled this enemy from his high tower as prince of the world, and cast him down, and this was evident in the spectacular deliverances from sickness and death performed by Jesus and his disciples.

SATAN TRANSFORMED INTO AN ANGEL OF LIGHT

In looking at the passages of Scripture which are thought to teach that satan is a fallen angel, 2 Cor. 11:14-15 should be included. It reads:

"Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as ministers of

righteousness”

This statement says nothing about satan having once been, or now being in reality, an angel, let alone a fallen angel. It says satan “transforms” himself into an angel. But how could he transform himself into an angel if he was already an angel?

The word “transform” means to change into something different. Some modern translations use the word “disguise” or “masquerade.” This means that whoever the satan is, he is not really an angel; he only gives the appearance of being one; he disguises or masquerades as such.

Keeping in mind the fact that “satan” simply means adversary, and “angel” means “messenger,” and can apply to humans, it is not difficult to understand the statement as referring to a human adversary (a false teacher), under the power of sin, masquerading as a messenger of God.

The context of 2 Cor. 11:14-15 confirms this application. A careful comparison between verses 14, 15, 23, reveals that the phrase “messenger of light” runs parallel with “ministers of righteousness,” and “ministers of Christ.” It is clear from this that the word “light” relates to “righteousness” which of course relates to Christ.

The “satan” or adversary in 2 Cor. 11:14 relates to an enemy of Christ claiming to be a light bearer of divine truths and whose followers claimed to be ministers of Christ. In actual fact they were “false apostles and deceitful workers” as we read in verse 13.

This section of Scripture has nothing to do with fallen angels, but apostate Jews who were undermining Paul’s influence in the church. Paul indicates this when he says: “Are they Hebrews? so am I. Are they Israelites? so am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so am I” (v22).

THE ANOINTED CHERUB

Ezk. 28 is also one of the foundation texts for the doctrine of a fallen angel devil. This chapter refers to a certain person who had been in “Eden the garden of God,” and upon “the holy mountain of God.” He was “perfect” from the day he was created until his heart got filled with pride, causing him to sin and be cast out.

There is no mention of the words devil, satan, angel or heaven in this passage. To conclude that it refers to an angel-devil cast out of heaven is to assume something that is not stated in the text.

According to v12, the whole discourse is “a lamentation over the king of Tyre.” It concerns a man, not an angel. The word “man” is stated twice in v2, 9, but never “angel.”

TYRE

Tyre was a city on the Mediterranean coast of Phoenicia, known as Lebanon today. She was a great maritime power and her fleets of ships traded far and wide with many nations. This is what is meant by the statement: “You have been in Eden, the garden of God.” This does not refer to the “garden eastward in Eden” in which the Lord placed Adam and Eve (Gen. 2:8). “Eden the garden of God” is quite a different description from “a garden eastward in Eden.” Eden was a large extensive area of land throughout which Tyre traded and did business. But the garden in which Adam was placed was not all Eden, but “eastward in Eden,” i.e. the garden did not occupy the whole territory of Eden, but just an eastern sector of it.

The following references in Scripture to Eden indicate that it was a large and extensive area, at least encompassing the whole of Mesopotamia, if not the whole territory of the Assyrian empire: 2 Kng. 19:12 and Isa. 37:12. Ezk. 31. Ezk. 27:33.

According to Ezk. 27:17, Judah (the Jews) and Israel were also among Tyre’s merchants who traded with her, and the land of Israel could very well have been encompassed in the area designated “Eden.”

“The holy mountain of God” referred to in Ezk. 28:14 on which the king of Tyre had walked, refers to the holy mount in Jerusalem, as many Scriptures testify. (Ezk. 20:40. Dan. 9:16, 20. 11:45. Ps. 48:1. Obad. v16).

The “holy mountain of God” is actually the same place referred to as “the mount of the congregation” in Isa. 14:13 where the king of Babylon aspired to sit.

It is not surprising that the king of Tyre had been there in view of the fact that he had supplied timber for the temple that was built there, and sent craftsmen to help construct it.

The king of Tyre became very rich through his extensive trade, and accumulated great wealth, including precious stones of all varieties. “Every precious stone was thy covering” is how it is put in Ezk. 28:13 in the A.V. The Good News Bible puts it like this: “You wore gems of every kind.” This is simply stating that the king adorned himself, and no doubt his palace and temples, with the treasures he accumulated.

In the early days, the king was “perfect” i.e. blameless; of exemplary character. He loved David, the king of Israel, and when David’s son Solomon ascended the throne, the king of Tyre rejoiced and praised the God of Israel. A league was made between them which is referred to in Amos 1:9 as a “brotherly covenant.” As already mentioned, the king of

Tyre provided Solomon with servants and materials to build a palace and temple at Jerusalem (1 Kng. 5. 2 Sam. 5:11. 2 Chr. 2:12-14).

INIQUITY WAS FOUND

But the king's high standard of conduct was not maintained. As Ezk. 28:15 says: "Iniquity was found in you." The nature of his sin is indicated in v16-18: "Your commerce grew so great, lawlessness filled your heart and you went wrong ... Your beauty made you arrogant; you misused your wisdom to increase your dignity ... So great was your sin in your wicked trading, that you desecrated your sanctuaries."

The beauty of the king's port and his own adornment, and the success of trade went to his head. Riches and prosperity filled him with pride and greed, causing him to stoop to unrighteous trading and corrupt attitudes and practices.

The king became so power drunk and inflated with pride, that he started thinking of himself in terms of being a god, imagining himself to be wiser than Daniel (Ezk. 28:1-3). He became obsessed with an ambition to be wiser than one of Israel's wisest men. This competitive spirit suggests rivalry and jealousy - an unhealthy attitude towards Israel.

This attitude stood in sharp contrast to the attitude of the king in David and Solomon's day. Solomon was the wisest man in Israel in his time and the king of Tyre was happy to acknowledge it and not try and compete in a proud and jealous spirit (2 Chr. 2:12).

Times have clearly changed in Ezk. 28. The king is no longer kindly disposed towards Israel. In fact, as Ezk. 26:1-2 indicates, Tyre had become quite hateful towards Israel, reacting with great joy and rejoicing when the Babylonians destroyed the city of Jerusalem and the temple with fire, and took the surviving Jews captive. In fact, some see the reference in Ezk. 28:14 to the king of Tyre walking up and down among the stones of fire on the holy mountain, as referring to him walking among the smouldering ruins of the temple, gloating over its destruction.

Ezk. 26:2 makes reference to Tyre rejoicing over the downfall of Jerusalem, being delighted because Israel's commercial power was broken, and she stood to gain in trade as a result.

To make matters worse, they captured Jewish fugitives fleeing from the Babylonians, and handed them over to their enemy, the Edomites. Both Lam. 1:2 and Amos 1:9 refer to this, saying that Tyre did not keep the treaty of friendship she had made, and betrayed her ally.

Tyre failed to realize that her prosperity was due to blessing Israel,

and that the moment she turned against Israel, she would sign her death warrant and come under God's curse. It was Ezekiel's duty to draw attention to this, and this is what chapters 26 to 28 are all about. A sinful fallen angel is totally irrelevant!

ANOINTED CHERUB

The reference to the anointed cherub that covers in Ezk. 28:14 is applied to the king of Tyre in the A.V. but Hebrew scholars point out that it is an obscure and uncertain passage in the Hebrew text and difficult to decipher.

Many modern translations do not give the sense that the king of Tyre himself was the anointed cherub. They render it to mean that an anointed cherub was provided by God to be a covering or guardian for Tyre. This teaches that God provided Tyre with special protection during the time of exemplary character when supporting Israel. But, because Tyre turned against Israel, God turned against her. The anointed cherub that covered and protected her, destroyed and banished her by making her fall prey to the Babylonians.

Even if the A.V. was correct and the king of Tyre himself was referred to as "the anointed cherub that covers," it could still be understood in that light without having to apply it to an angel.

For example, Cyrus the king of Persia is referred to as the Lord's "anointed," because he was specially appointed by God to conquer Babylon, and release the Jewish captives so that they could return to their land and rebuild the temple (Isa. 44:28 to 45:4). Tyre was likewise "anointed" to help Israel build the temple, and to "cover" Israel by acting as a buffer zone, protecting her from armies invading from the north. The covenant or league into which Tyre and Israel entered, no doubt involved agreement to "cover" for each other in the event of invasion by an enemy.

Regarding the "cherub" being applied to the king of Tyre: Hastings Bible Dictionary presents the view that the king is being compared to a holy angel i.e. the king was "like an angel." the N.I.V. seems to give this sense: 'You were anointed as a guardian cherub.'

If so, this would not be the first time that a man was likened to an angel. Four times in the Old Testament we read that David was "as an angel of God" (1 Sam. 29:9. 2 Sam. 14:17, 20. 19:27). In Zech. 12:8 we read the Jews at Jerusalem "shall be as the angel of the Lord," and it is recorded in Gal. 4:14 that Paul said to the church: "You received me as an angel of God."

Those who believe that the guardian cherub in Ezk. 28 is a fallen angel, usually maintain that he is the same person as the cherubim in Gen. 3:24 which guarded the path to the tree of life.

In answer to this it needs to be pointed out that the cherubim in Gen. 3 took up the position to guard the path after Adam and Eve sinned and were expelled from the garden. If, as tradition believes, the rebel angel was cast out of heaven before Adam and Eve sinned, and used the serpent to tempt them into sin, would God use that same sinful angel to guard the entrance to the garden to keep sinners out? Would God use an unholy being to guard and protect holy things? Not likely!

THE SERPENT

In seeking to understand the origin and true nature of the devil, we need to go back to the beginning to the time when sin originated. Attention must therefore be directed to the serpent in Gen. 3. Original sin was clearly caused by the serpent deceiving Eve into disobeying a command to not eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

THREE MAJOR FACTORS

There were three major factors which led to sin and the fall of our first parents: 1. The tree of knowledge of good and evil. 2. The command to not eat from it. 3. The serpent who deceived Eve into eating, by telling a lie. Take away any one of these factors and the sin would not have been committed. All three played a part in the process.

Now, if we were to ask the question, "Who made the tree, the command and the serpent?" the answer of Scripture is "God." He was responsible for all three. (Gen. 2:8-9; 16-17. 3:1). God, of course, did not make the serpent lie or Adam and Eve sin, and we need to be clear about that. However, it is an unavoidable fact that He did make the tree, the command and the serpent, and that they were involved in the circumstances which led to the fall.

Now, God in His foreknowledge would have foreseen this, yet He still brought those three factors into existence. This being the case, there must have been a good reason for so doing. Unfortunately, failure to understand this has led to misconceptions concerning the serpent, so we need to go back to the beginning to get the proper perspective.

VERY GOOD - NO GOOD

Gen. 1:31 tells us that “God saw everything He had made, and behold, it was very good.” This “very good” condition prior to the fall of man, is contrasted in Rom. 7:18 with the condition after the fall: “I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing.” Paul is referring, as he says in v 17, to “sin that dwells within me.” It is evident from the context that Paul is referring to sinful impulses and inclinations deep within his flesh nature which are opposed to law and righteousness and have a constant bias towards evil.

Originally, man was not created with such sinful propensities. He was created “very good.” However, this does not mean that Adam and Eve were created with a ready-made, fully developed and mature godly character. This is not how God goes about developing such character. This is not what “very good” means in Gen. 1:31, as is evident from the fact that the statement is applied to “everything God had made.” This includes not just man, but animals, birds, fish etc which are incapable of the moral and spiritual qualities and attributes that are usually associated with a godly character from the divine point of view.

Everything was very good in a natural physical sense, being well formed, well ordered and constituted. As far as man was concerned, he was a good physical being with a good body and brain. The mind functioned well in its thinking and reasoning processes, and all the bodily parts worked perfectly.

But man was made with these things. He didn’t have to develop them himself. No personal effort was required. He didn’t have to exercise any moral or spiritual powers to acquire them.

NOT CREATED WITH CHARACTER

Character, however, is an entirely different matter. It cannot be immediately or mechanically produced. It cannot be instantly or automatically printed on a person’s mind like words or pictures are printed on a piece of paper as it passes through a photo-copy machine.

Character is something that grows and develops through personal experiences, which require exercising and applying moral and spiritual principles and making decisions and choices.

In this respect, God’s work on man was not finished or complete. The divine edict “Let us make man in our image” had more in view than just a good physical body with a good brain mechanism. The sequel reveals that

the Creator particularly had in mind a man who was good spiritually, who took His word seriously and who made decisions and choices that pleased Him.

MORE WORK TO BE DONE

So then, at the end of the six days of creation, God's physical external work of creation was completed and very good, but in another sense - an internal spiritual sense, it was a work about to begin. There lay ahead a deeper and more wonderful development on a moral and spiritual plane, before God's glory could be fully manifested in man - before man could become in the image of God in the fullest sense.

As we know, physical development and strength requires physical exercise, otherwise the muscles get weak and the flesh goes flabby. And so Adam was required to do physical exercise. He had to cultivate and till the ground (Gen. 2:5, 15). Spiritual development and strength also requires exercise. Heb. 5:14 informs us that spiritually minded people are those who have "exercised their senses to discern both good and evil." It is not difficult to infer from this that both good and evil have to co-exist and be confronted and encountered, before spiritual discernment and the development of godly character can be achieved. Other Scriptures, as we shall see, certainly teach this.

INNOCENT OF GOOD AND EVIL

Now, when Adam and Eve were first created, they were ignorant of both good and evil, and therefore had no opportunity to exercise their senses to discern between the two and develop character. This is obvious from the reference to the tree of knowledge of good and evil. If Adam and Eve already had knowledge of, and knew good and evil, and had exercised their senses to discern between them, why is the tree referred to as the source of such knowledge and why are they told not to partake of it?

It is not difficult to conclude that the reason for the tree being put there was to lay a basis upon which a particular series of circumstances could be set in motion, to give Adam and Eve the opportunity to "exercise their senses to discern both good and evil", and so set in motion the processes required for the development of godly character.

FAITH AND OBEDIENCE

Godly character is obviously character that pleases God, and this can be summed up in two words: “faith” and “obedience.” Faith, according to the Bible’s definition in Heb. 11:1 is “confidence in things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” Faith is basically to believe in God and His promises. We are told in Rom. 10:17 that “faith comes from hearing the word of God”, but other Scriptures make it clear that if faith stops at just hearing and doesn’t result in doing, i.e. obedience, it is valueless. True faith is not passive but active. This is the kind of faith Heb. 11:6 refers to when it says “Without faith it is impossible to please God.” Obedient faith is the key to godly character!

It should be evident from this then, as mentioned before, that nobody, including Adam, starts life with a ready-made, fully developed, obedient faith. Had this been the case with Adam, he would not have disobeyed God and sinned!

It should also be evident that faith does not grow naturally and automatically like hair or nails, without any spiritual influence or input. No! It requires contact with the word of God and a positive obedient response and application. No one, including Adam and Eve, starts life with this obedient faith, but most are born with the potential for it to be developed.

Being created in the likeness of God, man has a mind endowed with tremendous capabilities. He is capable of tremendous good or evil. He is capable of being very believing or unbelieving, obedient or disobedient, positive or negative, constructive or destructive, divine or diabolical. It is all a question of how he allows his creative potential to be exploited, influenced and directed.

NO BASIS FOR FAITH AND OBEDIENCE

Now, some may feel it is incorrect to say that Adam was not created with a ready-made fully developed obedient faith. This point should therefore be clarified. As pointed out before, faith is defined in Heb. 11:1 as “confidence of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” Now, when first created, Adam was not required to be convinced of things not seen, not even as far as the presence of God was concerned because divine visitations were made, during which Adam could see and talk to the Lord (Gen. 3:8).

Neither was Adam required to confidently anticipate or hope for

anything. He had everything a man could hope for! He lived in perfect conditions - a paradise in which there were no weeds, wild animals, sickness, disease, war, famine, pestilence and no prospect or fear of death. There were not even any neighbours to argue and contend with or neighbours' wives or husbands to covet.

Adam had perfect uninterrupted fellowship and peace with God. Man, God and all creation were united. Total harmony reigned. As things stood, the conditions requiring faith and hope were non-existent. There was no basis upon which they could develop and be manifested.

The same applies to obedience. When first created, Adam was not obedient in the real sense of the word. He lacked opportunity to exercise obedience because there were not, at that stage, any commandments to obey. At this point, the need for the Lord making a commandment should start to be appreciated. Otherwise it is hard to see the sense in putting a tree in the garden and then commanding them to keep away from it.

A STATE OF FLUX

It would be wrong, of course, to say that Adam was unbelieving and disobedient. This was equally impossible because he had nothing to disbelieve or disobey. Without a law or commandments, both obedience and disobedience are impossible. So Adam was neither believing nor unbelieving, obedient nor disobedient in the strict sense of the words. He was in what has been styled "a provisional state" - a state of flux - a neutral gear, able to go into either forward or reverse.

Adam was innocent of both good and evil, yet capable of both. It all hinged on how he would react and respond when placed under the appropriate conditions and confronted with the opportunity to make his own decision and choice.

Adam was unquestionably in a unique situation and it required a unique set of circumstances to make faith and obedience possible, and this is what the early chapters in Genesis are all about, concerning the tree, the command and the serpent. God was setting in motion a certain train of events to lay a basis on which godly character could be developed.

The command involved a simple law - a prohibition notice on one particular tree, as we read in Gen. 2:16-17: "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat, but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day you eat, dying you shall die."

GOOD AND EVIL

The penalty for disobedience was mortality and death. This is the “evil” that would result from partaking of the forbidden fruit. With mortality, of course, would come all sorts of other evils as well, such as sickness, disease, sorrow and countless other pressures and problems. And, as a result of experiencing such evils, they would then “know,” as never before (i.e. know experimentally), the “good” they had been experiencing beforehand.

Good and evil are relative conditions and the one cannot be properly known without the other. The same applies to hot and cold, fast and slow, light and dark etc. A person would not really know or understand and appreciate the one without experiencing the other. And so it is with good and evil. One who only saw and experienced good and never evil, would not know how good the good was, and would know nothing about evil. It is the experiencing of evil that throws good into sharp relief, and reveals its goodness. The prodigal son, and many other sons and daughters since, discovered this when they ran away from a good home which they took for granted, and ended up in a bad one.

In the light of all this, it should be appreciated why the forbidden tree is called “the tree of knowledge of good and evil.” To partake of this tree constituted transgression of law, which is sin, which results in a bad and guilty conscience, a sense of condemnation and alienation from God, and fear of death.

The fruit of the tree, whatever it was, was not necessary to produce such evils, for they were all the effect of the act of disobedience. For this reason the whole emphasis in the Bible is on sin and death entering the world through the act of disobedience. For this reason also we are not told what kind of fruit it was and we need not be concerned about knowing.

TEMPTING AND TESTING

It cannot be denied that God deliberately placed something forbidden before Adam and Eve - something “good for food and pleasant to the eyes - a tree to be desired to make one wise” (Gen. 3:6). Yet He refused to let them have access and partake, and warned that death would result if they did.

Now, this clearly was not a case of God tempting them because it is emphatically affirmed in the Bible that He will never do this (Jam. 1:13). However, He does test and there is a difference, although the Authorised

Version has failed to make the distinction in some places, as for example in Gen. 22:1.

According to Jam. 1:14-15 temptation involves a person being lured and enticed by their own lust or desire. So when the Bible says God does not tempt, it means He does not physically manipulate our mind or emotions or perform some sort of surgical operation, or exercise an hypnotic influence on our brain to inflame and excite our desires and make us sin.

He does, however, test, by arranging or allowing an opportunity to sin to be placed before us. For example He sometimes creates situations which arouse sinful desires, but whether or not we sin, depends on whether we yield to the desires or resist them.

One thing is certain: God will never make us yield. We can never blame Him for that. His desire is that we resist and conquer the desires that lead to sin and build up a strong godly character as a result.

There are many examples in the Bible of God testing His people. For example, He allowed or maybe providentially arranged for David to see Bathsheba in her birthday suit, but He did not inflame David's passions and make him sin. David was lured and enticed into adultery by his own desires and sinned due to yielding to them instead of resisting them.

Such tests are not laying a trap to make people stumble and fall. No! It is a case of "all things working together for good." This is a major theme in the Bible and it starts in the garden of Eden.

Now, in the simple law given to Adam and Eve, they were given something to believe and obey, which they didn't have up till that point of time. They now had opportunity to be convinced of something they could not see, and which their natural senses had never experienced, namely, death. Because sin had not been committed at that stage, the death sentence had not been passed. Death was an unknown quantity. Adam was therefore required to believe the word of God and be convinced of the certainty and reality of what God had stated. Such belief constituted faith, and this had to be put into practice by obeying the commandment.

Of course, as already mentioned, not only did the law provide a basis and opportunity for faith and obedience, but also unbelief and disobedience.

FREEWILL

It should be evident from all this, that man was created with freewill. If not, there was no point in giving him the commandment. Freewill - the

power of choice, is one of the unique abilities with which man has been created. It permits him to decide his own destiny. It enables him to voluntarily follow or defy God.

God, of course, could have made man to be a scrupulously obedient robot if He had desired a mechanical type obedience. He could have placed a fixed printed circuit in man's head, as men do to robots and machines, causing him to only do what the Creator wanted. But God clearly did not want man to be a human machine that blindly obeys without thought, reason or choice. For this reason, God risked the entrance of sin into the world, so that man might be bound to Him by love and not force. God clearly desires moral obedience, not mechanical.

If man's mind had been "programmed" to automatically obey, there could not have been a voluntary love relationship springing from his own personal spontaneous will and desire. There would be no character or depth in it. It would be a very artificial and superficial arrangement, like teaching a parrot to say "I love you," or hypnotising a member of the opposite sex to love and be loyal to you. There could be no satisfaction with that kind of love and loyalty, knowing that it did not spring from the person's own will and desire and choice. There would be no heart and soul in such a relationship. And so, because God is love - a moral God with heart and soul, He would not settle for anything less than a voluntary relationship - a relationship in which His children personally chose to love, serve and obey Him.

It was inevitable therefore, that not only would He create man with freewill, but that He would also create a situation which would provide him with the opportunity to exercise it. This, of course, required two different directions from which to choose - the way of obeying God's word and the way of disobeying.

In view of this, it should be evident how wise and necessary it was for Adam to have access not only to a tree of life in the garden, but also a tree of death, and for God to issue the command in relation to the tree of death.

THE THIRD FACTOR

We now turn our attention to the third major factor which led to the fall of Adam and Eve - the serpent. Can the wisdom of God be seen in making this creature and allowing him to come on the scene? God in His foreknowledge would have known that the serpent would use his subtlety to question and challenge the commandment, yet He allowed it.

Did He allow it as a test of faith and obedience, as a result of which the utmost good could come if the right response was given? Or was the serpent an unwanted, underhanded and unnecessary intrusion and interference by an enemy of God whose presence in the garden could do no possible good at all? Let's think about this and do some digging beneath the surface.

A TESTED FAITH

As we have seen, the tree of knowledge of good and evil and the commandment to not eat from it, were necessary as part of a process designed to bring about obedient faith. However, a passive quiescent faith is one thing, but a tried and tested and active faith is quite another. And it is emphasized throughout the Bible that an untried and untested faith is of no value to God. It is only the faith that stands the test of trials that is "much more precious than gold" (1 Pet. 1:7).

You see, it is relatively easy to believe and have faith when nothing questions, challenges or opposes it. It is easy to have faith when it is never subjected to pressure, criticism, contradiction and opposition. It is easy to have faith when a wall of protection surrounds us, preventing us from being exposed to adverse and antagonistic influences.

Faith can look good like hot-house plants which are protected from the elements, but which can't survive being exposed to the real world - to fluctuating temperatures, wind, hail, frost and snow.

The wise man Solomon wrote: "If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small" (Prov. 24:10). And so God in His wisdom allows His people to be subjected to adversity and conflicts of faith to test and develop them. See 1 Pet. 4:12. Jam. 1:12. Job. 23:10.

GOD ALLOWS EVIL FOR GOOD

When everything is good and going well there can be no trial. Whether we like it or not, there has to be evil - adverse circumstances - negative pressures, before trials can take place. So it should not surprise us that the testing processes of God require the existence of evil, and He therefore allows it. But He does not require fallen angels to produce it! Let's look at some examples.

In Gen. 22 we read that God put Abraham to the test by allowing a message to come to him asking him to do something which in reality was contrary to the divine will, and which God never really intended to be

carried out, namely, the killing of his own son Isaac.

In Judg. 2:21 to 3:3, we read that in order to test Israel, to see whether or not they would be obedient, the Lord left the Canaanites in the land and did not drive them out. In a sense it was like leaving serpents in the garden to test and develop faith and obedience.

In Deu. 13:1-4 we are told that the Lord, in order to test the love and loyalty of His people, would allow false prophets to come in among them telling lies trying to deceive them into turning their back on God and His word.

In some cases, when God's people are bent on pursuing a wrong course and abandoning truth and righteousness, God will actually confirm and strengthen their deception and hurry them to their destruction. An example of this can be found in 1 Kng. 22. This chapter relates to wicked king Ahab who pushed the patience of God too far, resulting in Him sending an angel to be a "lying spirit" in the mouth of the king's prophets. Through these prophets, the angel deceived Ahab into leading his army out to do battle with the Syrians, resulting in his defeat and death.

In Num. 22 we read that due to the prophet Balaam's persistence, God put him to the test by telling him to do something that he had previously been told not to do and was angry with him when he did it. Balaam was expected to know that God does not change His mind in such matters and it proved to be fatal for the prophet.

We learn from 2 Sam. 24:1 and 1 Chr. 21:1 that God put David to the test by allowing him to be provoked into taking a course of action that was contrary to the Divine will. This action involved assessing his military strength by numbering Israel.

In 2 Thes. 2:10-12 the apostle Paul goes so far to say that God will send a strong delusion to those who refuse to welcome and love the truth, causing them to believe a lie, resulting in them being condemned.

GOD CREATES GOOD AND EVIL

It should be clear from these examples that God not only allows evil, but sometimes even creates it. Scripture in fact plainly states this in Isa. 45:7: "I form the light and create darkness: I make peace and create evil. I the Lord do all these things." The word "evil" here means adversity - adverse circumstances, including affliction and death.

Sometimes God does this simply to provide a basis upon which the faith and obedience of His people can be tested and developed, in much the same way as a manufacturer deliberately creates harsh and adverse

conditions and climate to test the strength and endurance of his product before getting a seal of approval. He doesn't do it because he hates his product but because he wants it to be strong and successful.

Other times God creates evil to punish sin. So we need to clearly understand that reference to God creating evil does not mean He creates sin. No! He creates evil to punish sin, and some of the evils He creates to do this are floods, earthquakes, famines and pestilences. There are many examples in the Bible of God doing this.

EVIL ANGELS

More often than not, God uses His holy angels to inflict these evils. For this reason they are referred to in Ps. 78:49 as "evil angels" (Authorised Version). Modern translations render it "destroying angels," or "messengers of calamity" - "messengers of adversity." Because angels are "spirits," the Berkley translation renders "evil angels" as "evil spirits."

Now, when an holy angel is used by God to adversely affect someone, whether it be to test their faith or to punish sin, it is not uncommon for that angel to be referred to as "satan," which means "adversary." An example of this can be found in Num. 22:22 where an angel is called "adversary," which is "satan" in Hebrew, because he stood in the middle of a narrow path forcing Balaam's ass to move over and crush his foot against the wall.

JOB'S SATAN

A particularly good example of God using an angel to create adverse circumstances as a test, is recorded in the book of Job. This angel is referred to as "satan" because of the adversity he inflicted upon Job. But this was no fallen angel. He had not been cast out or banished from heaven. Quite the opposite! He had free access to heaven and engaged in conversation with God, and all the adversity he inflicted on Job was done with the Lord's permission. Throughout the book of Job, the "evil" he experienced is attributed to God many times, but never to a fallen-angel devil! (More about this later).

Job, like Adam, had an hedge around him and his life was pleasant and sweet. He was protected and prospered by God. Under the circumstances it was relatively easy to have faith and be obedient. So God, in His wisdom, allowed the angel to make a breach in the hedge

around Job's "garden", and let waves of adversity enter.

This "evil" had a twofold purpose. It acted as a test and trial of Job's faith and obedience, resulting in him being purged of some deep-rooted and hidden weaknesses, and becoming a stronger and more mature character. And it acted as a punishment upon Job's sinful sons and daughters to whom life had become just one continual round of partying and pleasure seeking.

BACK TO ADAM AND EVE

With these thoughts in mind we come back to Adam and Eve. As things stood, when God first presented them with the commandment to not eat from the tree, there was nothing difficult about this. It wasn't hard to believe and obey. Being innocent and ignorant of good and evil, they simply believed God without doubting, questioning or challenging the commandment. By itself, the commandment did not present a trial to their faith.

Adam and Eve's response was totally passive. There was no resistance, objection or opposition, just total unquestioning submission. The reason for this is because sin had not entered the world at that stage. As pointed out earlier, there was no "sin in the flesh." Their nature was "very good" in contrast to becoming "no good" when sin was finally committed.

When the commandment was presented to Adam, it would not have awakened any desire within him to disobey. At that stage, there was no natural bias or tendency in the flesh nature to rebel against law, as there was afterwards as a result of sin. Human nature since the fall is affected by law quite differently. Rom. 7:9 explains it in these words: "When law comes, sin springs to life."

ANTI-AUTHORITY SPIRIT

Because of sin, a rebellious, anti-law, anti-authority spirit took possession of fallen man, resulting in law having a negative effect. Law and authority provokes and aggravates sin, causing it to manifest itself in rebellion and disobedience. Where there is no law, there is no restraint or restriction on sin. The flesh is left free to do as it pleases and fulfil its ungodly lusts without any sense of shame or guilt. But, when law is imposed, sin resists the restraints and restrictions, and resents not being able to be free to please itself.

Since the fall, sin in the flesh became the prime source of testing of the faith and obedience of God's people. It is the daily battle with this enemy of God that develops godly character.

However, it is important to remember that when God's law was given to Adam and Eve, it did not cause any rebellious thoughts to intrude and resist, because there were no negative or sinful propensities in their nature. The flesh, at that stage, could not produce the desire to disobey and sin.

So, no trial of their faith and obedience was involved up to this point. Something else - another element or factor was required to make the character-developing process complete. Obviously, some adverse circumstance was needed - some dissenting voice which challenged God's commandment and questioned their faith and obedience. Adam and Eve needed to be subjected to a pressure situation in which their freewill could be exercised by making a choice between believing or not believing - obeying or not obeying God.

SIGNIFICANT TIMING

Is it not significant, therefore, that it is precisely at this very point in the Genesis narrative that we are introduced to the serpent, and that he fulfilled the very function that was required to complete the basis on which faith and obedience could be tested? It is very significant indeed, and with these thoughts in mind, we are in a better position to appreciate the role that the serpent played.

THE SERPENT

Gen. 3:1-6 is God's revelation of how sin originated. We are not "left in the dark and with little information" as one exponent of the traditional view has stated, if we don't regard Isa. 14, Ezk. 28 and Rev. 12 as relating to a fallen-angel. Gen. 3 provides us with all the information we need to explain the origin of sin, and if it is not enough to explain the traditional belief, then there is something wrong with that belief. If we are still in the dark after reading Gen. 3, then we are truly in the dark, because all the light that is necessary to explain the origin of sin is shed in this chapter.

Taking it as it stands, Gen. 3 speaks about a serpent "more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made." This "beast" (creature) suggested a course of action be taken contrary to what

God commanded. It involved crossing the law-line established by God. This aroused Eve's desires and induced them in a direction opposite to God's will. She yielded to these newly excited lusts and allowed them to take control of her mind and emotions and lure her into committing sin, and Adam later followed suit.

A STRAIGHTFORWARD ACCOUNT

This is Scripture's simple straightforward account of how sin originated and entered the world. We read this account and ask ourselves; "where is tradition's fallen-angel devil in this transaction?" We are directed to the tempter. We have a good look at him, and find that he is a serpent, an animal - a creature of the field which the Lord made more subtle than any other creature. We say, "Here is the tempter, a serpent, but where is the fallen angel?"

Tradition tells us that the fallen angel used the serpent to bring about the fall. We ask for proof - just one verse in the Bible will do, but not one is forthcoming. All that can be offered is the argument that it is impossible for a serpent to speak by itself, and therefore it must have been someone else. This assumption is the point at which all the error starts. This is the big stumbling-block. It is, in fact, from this single point that the doctrine of a fallen-angel devil has developed.

TRUTH CAN BE STRANGER THAN FICTION

In view of the fact that there is no foundation in the Bible for a fallen-angel devil, and no reference to such a devil speaking through the serpent, requires us, whether we like it or not, to accept what Gen. 3 says about the serpent speaking himself. To reject this on the grounds that we have never heard a serpent speak is not good enough.

Asses don't normally speak either, but it is recorded in Num. 22 that Balaam's ass did, and the New Testament confirms this (2 Pet. 2:15-16). Do we conclude it could not have been the ass himself who spoke, simply because we have never heard one speak? Are we going to use our own experiences as a yardstick to decide what is possible and impossible in God's purposes?

Serpents don't normally turn into sticks or swallow other serpents, but Ex. 7:9-12 says God caused this to happen. Whales don't normally swallow men and vomit them out alive on the shore three days later, but God arranged for this to happen to Jonah. Ravens don't normally bring

food to a man each day to sustain him during famine, but God arranged it for Elijah. The sun dial doesn't normally go back ten degrees, and neither do axe heads float in water.....

In Balaam's day, God's purpose required the ass to speak, so this ability was bestowed upon the animal. The same applies to the serpent in Gen. 3, and no one believing in the power of God should have any difficulty accepting it.

GOD CHOOSES FOOLISH THINGS

Human nature, governed by its own natural earth-bound instincts and intellect, tends to shudder and back away from the idea of a serpent speaking. It does, on the face of it, seem a foolish thing to have to believe. But this is fully in accord with the way God often works, as we read in 1 Cor. 1:27: "God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise."

Tradition, claiming to be wise, regards it as foolish to believe the serpent himself spoke. And this has resulted in attempting to rationalize Gen. 3 away with another idea, to make it more plausible and palatable to the human instinct and intellect. As a result, many minds have been confused and confounded, as is evident in the twisting and misapplication of so many Scriptures to support the rather bizarre doctrine that one third of God's holy angels rebelled against Him, and were expelled to earth to use His power to teach others to rebel, and have been allowed to continue doing this for 6000 years without being stopped or punished.

How true, as the apostle Paul wrote in 2 Thes. 2:10-12, that when the truth is not accepted, strong delusion will be the result, causing lies to be believed. In the final analysis, refusal to accept the truth stated in Gen. 3 that the serpent himself spoke, is at the root of tradition's doctrine of a fallen-angel devil.

FACING THE FACTS

The fact is that the Genesis record gives us a serpent and nothing but a serpent. To add a fallen angel to this is to add to the divine record which we are clearly warned against doing. It is evident that the circumstances at the time required Adam and Eve's faith and obedience to be put to the test and this required a challenge from an external source. Had there been a fallen-angel devil available, God may have allowed him to make the challenge. But there wasn't, so God had to allow the adverse

influence to come from one of the other living creatures which He had created on earth. And the serpent, due to being more subtle than all the creatures God had made, became the creature that fulfilled that function.

A talking serpent could not, of course, be produced by nature or human power, but nothing is impossible for divine Power. In a parrot we have an example of a speaking creature minus ideas and reasoning powers. In the serpent we have a creature who not only spoke, but also reasoned and expressed ideas, because “God made it more subtle than any other creature.”

A DIVINE ARRANGEMENT

The Sovereign Lord, not a sinful angel, was in control. Divine wisdom, not diabolical devilry, was behind the whole arrangement, with the utmost good in mind for man. This was not a sneaky, unnecessary and unwanted attempt behind God’s back, to undermine His purpose by an arch enemy. No! It was something the providence of God permitted in order to develop faith and obedience in the progenitors of the human race.

Left to themselves, obedience would have been a matter of course. But it is not obedience of this mild passive type that is well pleasing to God. Obedience under trial is what pleases Him. Obedience without pressures and problems is a flimsy superficial type of obedience - a mere circumstantial type due to favourable circumstances and conditions.

God’s purpose was to produce willing obedience in a free-willed race. Willing obedience requires the opportunity to obey or disobey, and this required God to arrange circumstances that would make that choice possible. This was achieved by the serpent.

As far as Gen. 3 is concerned, God tested Adam and Eve, the serpent beguiled (deceived) them by making sin sound logical and plausible, and Adam and Eve were tempted by yielding to the sinful desires aroused within them by the serpent, resulting in them being drawn away into sin. Jam. 1:13-15 quite clearly states that God does not tempt, and that man is tempted when he is drawn away by his own lust.

A LITERAL SERPENT

It is obviously significant that prior to saying the serpent spoke and reasoned, it is expressly stated in Gen. 3 that God created it more subtle than any other creature. This information surely indicates that the serpent itself had something to do with the ideas it expressed. After all,

why create the serpent subtle if it was merely a tool used by a subtle fallen angel to speak through? Under such circumstances the serpent would not need to be subtle. It could have been a dumb speechless animal and it would not have made any difference.

Referring to the serpent, Jesus said: “When he speaks a lie, he speaks of his own, for he is a liar, and the father of it” (Jn. 8:44). Jesus teaches here that the serpent spoke “of his own” i.e. the speech came from the serpent itself, not a fallen angel.

2 Cor. 11:3 confirms this: “The serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety.” Paul affirms two things here:

1. It was a literal serpent who beguiled Eve.

2. The serpent beguiled Eve “through his subtlety” i.e. the subtlety of the serpent itself was what led to Eve being beguiled, not the subtlety of someone else.

That it was the serpent who spoke is further indicated by the fact that firstly, Eve blamed the serpent and not someone else saying: “The serpent beguiled me and I did eat.” Secondly: God cursed the serpent saying: “Thou hast done this... cursed art thou... upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life.

Thirdly: The serpent, although subtle, and able to speak, did not deny the accusation and made no attempt to shift the blame to a fallen angel. “Of course not” someone may reply, “Because the real cause, Lucifer, had made a quick exit leaving the serpent speechless.”

But if this were the case, would not Omniscient God know that? Of course He would! Then why did He direct His question to a dumb speechless animal if a fallen angel was really to blame? And why would He punish the serpent if it was an innocent helpless creature, and let the real culprit go free to cause more rebellion?

God would not pick on a snake if an angel was to blame, and any doctrine that implies He did would be a serious reflection on His intelligence. Such a doctrine makes a mockery of Gen. 3, and raises far more moral and spiritual problems than the view which believes the account means what it says, and takes the serpent literally.

So then, Gen. 3 deals with 3 parties: Adam, Eve and the serpent. An alleged 4th party - a fallen angel, is not mentioned or even hinted at, neither here nor in any other Scripture. He is purely and simply an added extra of human speculation and tradition - a myth. In view of this, one cannot help call to mind Paul’s warning in 2 Tim. 4:3-4 that: “The time will come when sound teaching will not be tolerated... ears will turn away from the truth, causing people to wander into myths.”

THE SERPENT AND SIN

The serpent's statement actually represented sin, for sin is transgression of the law, and this is what the serpent advocated. As a result of Adam and Eve hearkening to the serpent and disobeying God, sin entered the world, and a bias or propensity to sin became established in the flesh.

Prior to the fall, there was no sinful tendency in the flesh that tempted man and inclined him towards disobedience, because God did not create him with this. Man was created "very good" (Gen. 1:31) but when man decided to yield to the sinful desires inflamed and aroused in his mind by the serpent, a propensity towards that choice became implanted in the human-spirit in the deep sub-conscious part of the brain. The Bible calls it "sin in the flesh" and says it is "no good." All who are born of the flesh inherit it (Rom. 7 to 8:3). The effects of one man's sin were obviously imputed to all his posterity by reason of genetic connection.

The individual historical serpent in Eden has, of course, long since passed away, but the effects of sin aroused by his lie continue to live on in the sinful nature of all who descend from Adam, which is the whole human race. In this sense the serpent is still very much alive in the world today, and will continue to exert influence as long as sinful desires in the flesh assert themselves against God.

Because sin was originally aroused by a personal agent, the serpent; it is often personified in Scripture and referred to in terms which connect it with the serpent. Barclay in his book on New Testament words points out that in Paul's writings "sin becomes almost personalized until sin could be spelled with a capital letter, and could be thought of as a malignant, personal power which has man in its grasp."

As we shall see, the same applies to the word "devil" due to it being in many cases, a synonym for the tempting power and influence of sin in the flesh. If we could regard every temptation as an enactment of the original temptation in Eden, it would greatly help us in our warfare against sin.

The relationship between the serpent and sin is quite an impressive theme in the New Testament. For example, Rom. 7:7-11 refers to sin as a personal enemy which seeks opportunity through God's law to produce in man all manner of lust. Verse 9 speaks about sin springing to life as soon as God's commandment is given. Verse 11 goes on to speak about sin, finding opportunity in the commandment, "deceived me, and by it killed me."

Sin is personified in quite a dramatic way here. It is referred to as a personal wicked being, seeking to use God's law as a means of arousing ungodly lust in man, which is what the serpent did in Eden.

The reference in v9 to sin springing to life as soon as God's commandment came, also calls to mind the fact that the serpent appeared on the scene when God's commandment came to Adam. And the serpent's action of finding opportunity in God's commandment to deceive and kill, was no doubt in Paul's mind in v11 where he refers to the working of sin in the same terms.

In every respect, Paul describes the working of sin in terms which link up with the original serpent. The various figures of speech, principles and processes which originally related to the serpent, have been transferred to, and applied to sin. Originally, the deceit which led to sin and death, came from the serpent. But since the fall, Scripture says deceit is an attribute of sin, and springs from man's sinful heart (Heb. 3:13. Mk. 7:21-22. Jer. 17:9).

The serpent not only became a symbol of the sinful desires of the flesh, but also the people whose lives are ruled and controlled by those desires and who become the physical embodiment of them. Such people are referred to as the "seed" of the serpent in Gen. 3:15, and are called "serpents" in many places e.g. Matt. 3:7. 12:34. 23:33.

THE HUMAN HEART IS THE SOURCE

Once man was induced to sin by the serpent in Eden and ended up with a sin-prone nature, it is difficult to understand why some fallen-angel devil should be needed to keep the process of sin going. It gathers force under its own momentum. As the flesh population multiplies, so does sin which resides within it! All the necessary tests for faith and obedience are provided within the human race itself, without needing super human influences to be added. The sin in fallen man is more than enough to cope with, without throwing fallen angels against him as well.

Jam. 1:13-15 plainly teaches that "every man is tempted when drawn away by his own lust." And Jam. 4:1-3 goes on to say that wars and fightings spring from man's own lusts.

The words of Jesus on this subject, recorded in Matt. 15:16-20. Mk. 7:15-23, are very instructive: "Are you without understanding? ... There is nothing outside of man that can enter and defile the man. The things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries,

fornication, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.”

Listen also to Paul’s words in Gal. 5:19-21: “Now the works of the flesh (i.e. the effects of sin in the flesh) are clear, which are these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lust, idolatry, witchcraft, (i.e. spiritualism), hatred, quarrels, jealousy, bad temper, strife, divisions, heresies, envying, murders, drunkenness, orgies, and other things like these.”

Now, the question that needs to be asked is: If the flesh produces all these sins - if they all arise out of man’s own sinful nature, what is there left for a fallen angel to do? Can anyone think of a sin which is not covered in this list? It is clearly wrong to attribute to fallen angels what Scripture attributes to fallen man.

SERPENT, SIN, DEVIL AND SATAN

As mentioned before, the word “devil” in many cases is a synonym for sin the flesh. It is therefore to be expected that there will be a connection between the serpent and the devil as there is between the serpent and sin. This can be seen in Rev. 12:9 where reference is made to “that old serpent called the devil and satan.” It is evident here that the words serpent, devil and satan are interchangeable terms.

Another example of serpent and devil being synonymous is in Jn. 8:44 where Jesus refers to the serpent as “devil.” Speaking to the serpent’s seed, i.e. the Jews who falsely accused him and were intent on “bruising” him, Jesus said: “You are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from himself, for he is a liar, and the father of it.”

Notice how Jesus links the sinful lusts of fallen man with the serpent who originally aroused them! It seems clear from what Jesus says here that the Bible devil originated with the serpent in the garden of Eden, and not in a rebellion of angels in heaven. There is no reference in Scripture to a devil becoming a serpent. It was the serpent who became devil!

One of the best examples of the word devil relating to sin in the flesh can be seen in the parallel between Rom. 8:3 and Heb. 2:14.

Romans 8:3.

1. Made in the likeness of sinful flesh.
2. As a sacrifice for sin.
3. Condemned.
4. Sin in the flesh.

Hebrews 2:14.

- Took part of the same flesh.
- Through his death.
- Destroyed.
- The devil.

The last item in this list of parallels indicates that the devil is sin in the flesh. This is why Jesus had to be conceived by a woman and partake of the same flesh in order to condemn and destroy the devil. He achieved this by never succumbing to the prompting of sin in his flesh and finally once and for all putting them to death in his body of flesh upon the cross.

The fact that Jesus had to partake of the same flesh as fallen man and put it to death in order to destroy the devil, is proof positive that the devil relates to the flesh. If the devil was a supernatural fallen angel, surely Jesus would have come as a supernatural being to fight him. How could the death of Christ's flesh on the cross, destroy a supernatural angel? And if it did destroy him, why does tradition teach that he is still alive and well?

REASONING IN A CIRCLE

Although the words "devil" and "satan" occur many times in the Bible, there is not a single verse that defines them in terms of a fallen angel. The concept of a fallen angel is read into these words as a result of doctrinal prejudice, but they do not mean or teach that. Tradition, without any foundation at all, has put its own particular sense on these words, then quotes the words to prove the sense. It is another case of reasoning in a circle.

For example: reference is made in 1 Pet. 5:8 to the devil being an adversary who, like a roaring lion, walks about seeking whom he may devour. And Rev. 2:10 refers to the devil casting Christians into prison. But neither of these statements say that the devil is a fallen angel, so they cannot be quoted to prove that. Careful study reveals that the devil on these occasions is fallen man ruled by sin, resulting in opposition and persecution of the church.

THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS

Many quote the account of Jesus being tempted in the wilderness by the devil as proof of a fallen angel, but none of the gospel records define the devil in these terms.

If the devil was a fallen angel, Jesus would know him. This being the case, can it be seriously imagined that he would allow such a diabolical person to lead, carry and remove him physically from place to place, miles across the wilderness to Jerusalem up to the pinnacle of the temple, and up the steep slopes of a high mountain, before saying "no"?

The temptation took place in the wilderness, but the temple was at Jerusalem, not in the wilderness. And there are no mountains in the wilderness (or anywhere else on earth), from which all the kingdoms of the world can be seen, let alone the glory of them.

These facts strongly indicate that the temptation experiences of Jesus were subjective, i.e. in the mind, prompted by his own flesh nature as in the case of all other men. After all, every man is tempted when he is drawn away by his own will (Jam. 1:14), and Jesus was “tempted in all points like us” (Heb. 4:15). And we are all certainly aware of how quickly our minds can transport us to other places and give flashes of thoughts that appeal to the flesh.

Gal. 5:17 says: “The flesh lusts against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary to each other.” We all know from experience how contrary the thoughts of the flesh are to the spirit, and how they can speak to us, prompting us to act contrary to the spirit. Being the same flesh, Jesus experienced this, and in his temptation we see a conflict or “war” between his flesh and the spirit. But he won the battle because his resolve was: “Not as I (the flesh) will but as you (God) will” (Matt. 26:39). This is what spiritual warfare is all about - a battle between the flesh and the spirit. (The word “war” is used in this respect in Jam. 4:1. 1 Pet. 2:11).

Christ’s temptations did not involve literal physical journeys to a temple pinnacle and mountain. They were short and brief struggles in his mind, as is indicated in Lk. 4:5 where reference to one of them says it took place “in a moment of time” i.e. it was a temporary, fleeting thought.

Jesus’ mind, in a moment of time, while meditating in the wilderness, transported him to certain vantage points, to consider options that were open to him. He would not have been human or the same flesh, had he not been capable of doing this. He was led by the Spirit of God into the wilderness to be tested after receiving the Holy Spirit at his baptism, prior to commencing his ministry. It was therefore a test ordained by God to see if His son would allow his newly acquired powers to be controlled by the flesh or the spirit - to see if he would use the power for self-satisfaction, pleasure and glory, or for the pleasure and glory of God.

When the personification of sin in the Word of God is understood and appreciated; being presented as a personal malignant enemy who sets out to tempt, manipulate, master and rule over man; reference to the devil coming to Jesus and speaking to him can easily be understood in this light. Compare the language in Gen. 4:7: “Sin is crouching at the door and his desire is towards you, but you must rule over him.”

Sin in the flesh, alias the devil, is personified to remind us of the original temptation of our first parents through the prompting of the serpent. According to 1 Jn. 2:16, the 3 main avenues along which temptation comes are: “The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life.” These were involved in Adam and Eve’s temptation. Gen. 3:6 says Eve “saw that the tree was good for food (lust of the flesh), and that it was pleasant to the eyes (lust of the eye), and a tree to be desired to make one wise, and to become as the gods,” i.e. divine (pride of life).

Significantly enough, these same 3 avenues of temptation were involved in Christ’s temptation in the wilderness.

Adam and Eve failed their test by yielding to temptation and sinning, bringing sin and death upon the world. But Jesus, as a “last Adam” (1 Cor. 15:45) dealt with the problem that the “first Adam” caused, and he did this by conquering the serpent, called the devil.

For this reason, sin in the flesh (devil) is very appropriately personified. It is as if it were the actual original serpent himself standing before Jesus seeking his downfall, so that we might see Jesus as the woman’s seed who was to come and bruise the serpent on the head.

That the devil who tempted Jesus was the prompting of the natural impulses of his own flesh, is particularly evident in the statement that: “All the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them belongs to me, and I can give it to anyone I choose.”

There is no evidence anywhere in Scripture that God handed over the kingdoms of the world to a fallen angel, and gave him permission to give it to anyone else.

Jesus knew the Scriptures which taught “the earth is the Lord’s and the fullness of it” and “the most High God rules in the kingdom of men and gives it to whoever He will,” and that He has never given it to rebel angels.

The only person God has ever promised to give the kingdoms of the world to and all glory, and the authority to share it with others; is Jesus himself (Ps. 2:7-8. Jn. 3:35. 13:3. Rev. 11:15. 2:26. 3:21).

GET REAL!

Now, imagine if you were promised an estate by your father as your inheritance, and it had been signed and sealed in his will. Then someone you know to be a liar and a deceiver, who does not even belong to your family, comes to you claiming the inheritance is his and offers to give it to you if you serve him. Such a claim would be so outrageous and

preposterous that it would be funny if it were not so serious. You would think the person was either joking or had gone mad.

The temptation would not be real. It would be no temptation at all. For a temptation to be real and a challenge and test of faith, it has to be feasible, plausible and credible. So we must interpret the temptation of Christ in a way that meets such requirements, otherwise we can end up making a farce of the whole account.

There was no one besides Jesus himself who could claim that the kingdom and glory belonged to him, and this is really the key to it all. In view of this, the subjective nature of the temptation is again made apparent, being a battle in Jesus' own mind between the will of the flesh and the will of the spirit - between submitting to and serving the flesh or God. Jesus had a choice between doing things his own way and in his own time, or doing it God's way and in His time.

The temptation could be paraphrased something like this: "All these kingdoms have been promised to me and are mine for the taking. I could take possession of them now for I have the power to do so." It was a temptation to look after self and put self first - to take control of the kingdoms there and then, without denying himself and going to the cross first. It was a very appealing thought to the flesh which hates pain, suffering and dishonour. It was a flesh-inspired temptation seeking to bring Jesus into subjection to its selfish and flesh centred ways. But the spirit in Christ immediately rejected and crucified it before it could conceive and bring forth sin.

Other examples of this duality of flesh and spirit contending with each other in Jesus' mind: i.e. situations where his own flesh produced the temptation, and the spirit gave the answer, all without any other party being involved; can be seen in Jn. 12:27. Matt. 26:39, 51-54.

DIABOLOS

Two different Greek words, "diabolos" and "daimon," have both been translated "devil" in the A.V. but the Revised versions correctly make a distinction between them, translating diabolos as "devil" and daimon as "demon." Diabolos is the subject at the moment and basically means "false accuser" or "slanderer," and can refer to anyone or anything in human circles which has a smearing or sinister effect on the Christian faith or community. It is an appropriate title for sin, but as in the case of "serpent," the word "devil" not only relates to the sinful prompting of the flesh, but also those who are ruled and controlled by them, and who

become the physical embodiment and manifestation of them. Such people are not only called serpents, but also devil and satan.

An example of this can be seen in relation to Judas. We read in Jn. 13:2 that the devil put it into his heart to betray Jesus. Verse 27 says: “satan entered into him.” This refers to sin’s impulses welling up from the flesh, entering the heart and poisoning the mind. When Judas yielded to the temptation, he became the physical embodiment and manifestation of the devil principle, and is therefore called devil by Jesus: “Have I not chosen you twelve and one of you is a devil?” (Jn. 6:70). (The devil here is clearly defined as one of the 12 apostles, not one of God’s angels)!

Another example can be seen in relation to Peter. Lk. 22:31 records Jesus as saying to him: “Satan has desired to have you,” which simply means, in the words of Gen. 4:7: “Sin is crouching at the door (of your heart), and his desire is toward you.” But when Peter allowed the thoughts of the flesh to take control and expressed them, Jesus called him satan, saying: “Get behind me satan” (Matt. 16:23).

It is particularly of interest to note that Jesus explains why he called Peter satan. He did not call him satan because his thoughts were inspired by, or according to the will of a fallen angel, but because they were according to the will of man! He said: “Get behind me satan: you are a stumbling block to me, for you do not savour the things that are of God, but those that be of men.”

Once again the link between satan and fallen man can be seen here!

Also compare Act. 5:3 where Peter said to Ananias: “Why has satan filled your heart to lie?” But v4 makes it clear that no external influences from a fallen angel were involved, for it says: “Why have you conceived this thing in your heart?” Jesus made it clear that lies (false witness) come from the human heart (Matt. 15:19).

The expression “satan filled your heart” can be compared with “sorrow filled your heart” (Jn. 16:6). Nobody concludes from this that sorrow is a personal morbid external being. As in the case of the personification of sin or the devil, the human emotion of sorrow is also personified.

Coming back to the Greek word diabolos, translated devil: the same word is also translated “slanderers” in 1 Tim. 3:11 and “false accusers” in 2 Tim. 3:3. Titus 2:3: In each of these places, as in the case of Judas, diabolos relates to fallen humanity, not fallen angels. It relates to people ruled and controlled by sin in the flesh.

Inconsistency on the part of the translators who held to the traditional view is evident here. When they came across diabolos in places where it

obviously applied to fallen man, and could not be applied to their fallen angel, they translated it “false accuser” or “slanderer.” But in other places where they felt it could be applied to their fallen angel, they translated it “devil.” It is a figment of the imagination, borrowed from pagan mythology and superstition.

SATAN

The word “satan” occurs 16 times in the Old Testament and 37 times in the New Testament. It is not an English word translated from Hebrew or Greek, but a Hebrew word that has been transliterated, i.e. carried over letter by letter from the Hebrew Old Testament into the Greek New Testament, and from the Greek into English.

In Hebrew, “satan” is quite an ordinary word with a simple meaning, namely: adversary; one who opposes, attacks or accuses another. As in the case of the word “devil,” there is nothing in the word itself which signifies fallen angel, and none of the verses where the word occurs defines it in terms of a fallen angel.

The word satan has a variety of applications, for the simple reason that an adversary can be good, bad or indifferent, all depending on who or what he opposes. A good person can be an adversary (satan) to an evil person, and an evil person can be an adversary (satan) to a good person. For this reason the word satan is applied to fallen man as well as holy angels, but never fallen angels.

As in the case of the word devil, the translators have also been inconsistent in their translation of satan. When it was obvious from the context that the word applied to man or a holy angel, they translated it “adversary.” But when they felt it could be made to apply to their fallen-angel devil, they transliterated it “satan.” Not content with that, they also gave it a capital “S” and treated it as a proper noun instead of an appellative.

The actual Hebrew word satan occurs 30 times in the Old Testament, but as already mentioned, has only been rendered “satan” 16 times. On the other 14 occasions it has been translated into its proper English equivalent. It has been translated “withstand” once, “resist” once, and “adversary” or “adversaries” 12 times.

For example, in 1 Sam. 29:4 we read that the Philistines did not want David to join them in battle against Israel “lest in battle he be an adversary to us.” In the Hebrew text this literally reads: “lest in battle he be satan to us.” This clearly demonstrates that the word satan does not

mean fallen angel.

2 Sam. 19:22 records David saying to certain men in his army who had made life difficult for him: “You have become adversaries to me” i.e. you have become satan to me.”

At the peak of his power Solomon said: “The Lord has given me rest on every side, so that there is no adversary” (satan).

This is particularly interesting because it says there was no satan during this period of Solomon’s reign. No wonder the King James translators gave the word “adversary” here instead of “satan,” because the concept of there being no satan at any time in history did not fit in with their traditional doctrine of an ever active, tireless fallen angel.

The reference to no satan simply refers to the fact that the surrounding enemy nations of Israel were subdued. They were “bound” and unable to make war against Israel.

As we have previously seen, this is the significance of the dragon, called “satan” in Rev. 20, being bound during the millennial reign of the “greater than Solomon,” Jesus Christ. The coalition of nations signified by the dragon, which is anti-Israel and therefore Israel’s “satan” (adversary), will be “bound with chains” i.e. subdued by Christ at his second coming.

Towards the end of Christ’s millennial reign, the divine restraint on sin and rebellion will be lifted, enabling rebellious hearts to be manifested, giving the flesh one last opportunity to assert itself and defy Christ’s rule. This will result in a dramatic and decisive judgement on all flesh, giving a grand finale to the millennium, resulting in God becoming “all in all.”

This rebellion resulting from the lifting of divine restraint is expressed in Rev. 20 in symbolic terms as the dragon being loosed from his prison. And a similar thing happened at the end of Solomon’s reign, although for quite a different reason and with a different outcome.

We read in 1 Kng. 11:14 that “the Lord stirred up an adversary (satan) unto Solomon.” Reference is made here to the enemy nation of Edom, on the south-east border of Israel. During Solomon’s reign, this nation, along with all others around Israel, was subdued and in subjection to Solomon’s rule, resulting, as we have seen, in there being “no adversary” i.e. no satan. But the Lord lifted the restraint and “stirred up an adversary.” Up until this time, Edom was confined and restricted - kept in “chains” so to speak. Then the Lord loosed him out of prison.

1 Kng. 11:23 goes on to say that “God stirred up another adversary (satan) against Solomon.” Another satan! How would tradition interpret this? The passage goes on to explain that it refers to “Rezon,” who was

king of Syria. Verse 25 says he was “an adversary” (satan) to Israel all the days of Solomon.

The satan in Zech. 3:1 refers to the adversaries mentioned in Ezra 4:1 who opposed the rebuilding of the Jewish temple at Jerusalem. But the Lord through Michael the archangel, rebuked the adversary and the way in which he did this is recorded in Ezra 6. Jude refers to this in his epistle (v9) and refers to the Jews as “the body of Moses.” Because the nation had been “baptized unto Moses” (1 Cor. 10:2), they are called the body of Moses in the same way that those baptized into Christ are called the body of Christ.

Other examples of satan being translated “adversary” in reference to men are in Ps. 38:20. 71:13. 109:4, 6, 20, 29.

AN HOLY ANGEL CAN ALSO BE SATAN

It should be quite evident from all this, that satan is not the name of any particular person, but simply a term or title used to describe anyone who is an adversary to another. And it is also clear that one does not have to be sinister or sinful to be referred to as satan, as is evident in the case of David being referred to as satan by the Philistines.

This is further demonstrated by the fact that even a righteous holy angel, due to resisting and opposing a person, is referred to as that person’s satan. We see this in Num. 22:22 where we read that God’s anger was aroused because the prophet Balaam went on a journey he had been told not to take; “and the angel of the Lord stood on the road as his adversary” (satan). Verse 32 says the angel said to Balaam: “I went out to withstand you.” The words “to withstand you” are “satan” in the Hebrew text, and literally mean “to be satan.” The marginal reference in the King James translation says: “to be an adversary to you.”

Here then, is a case of an angel being satan - a supernatural satan! But it is far removed from the fallen-angel concept.

With these thoughts in mind, we turn to 2 Sam. 24:1: “The anger of the Lord was aroused against Israel, and He moved David to number Israel.” 1 Chr. 21:1 is a parallel account of this and says: “Satan stood up against Israel and moved David to number Israel.”

By comparing these two parallel accounts, we see that what one attributes to the Lord, the other attributes to satan. 2 Sam. 24:1 says the Lord moved David to number Israel, and 1 Chr. 21:1 says satan did it. This either means the Lord was satan, or he used an adversary (angel or man) to do it. Either view could be correct. Whatever view we take makes

no difference for it amounts to the same thing, namely; that it was the Lord's will and purpose for David to be provoked into numbering Israel. Why else would 2 Sam. 24:1 say the Lord moved David to do it?

JOB'S SATAN

With these facts before us we turn to the satan in the book of Job who encouraged God to put Job through a severe testing of his faith.

There can be no doubt that this satan was an angel, but he certainly wasn't a fallen angel, because he had free access to heaven and was able to come into the presence of God with other angels and talk with God. This for a start is inconsistent with the traditional view which maintains satan was cast out of heaven and "delivered into chains under darkness, reserved for the judgement of the great day."

It is really quite bizarre to believe that an unholy maligning monster such as tradition's fallen angel devil, who has been cast out of heaven for sin and rebellion, would be able to freely go back to heaven with the holy angels and stand before God in his filthy rags of deception and sin, and put propositions to Him and move Him to hurt one of His finest servants. This concept casts a grave reflection on God's wisdom, righteousness and intelligence, and has been a major stumblingblock, preventing many people from becoming believers.

But, as has been pointed out, an angel does not have to be fallen or sinful just because he is called satan. The word simply means adversary and can be applied to a holy angel if he takes an adverse stand against someone. We have seen this in relation to the angel who adversely affected Balam, causing his foot to get crushed against the wall by his donkey.

It needs to be stressed that "satan" is not an angel's name, but simply a title, as in 1 Chr. 21:1 where it should read "the adversary." The angel is given this title because it describes his ministry and mission, which is to take an adverse position in relation to someone. It is possible that a specific angel has been appointed by God to execute affliction, calamity and disaster wherever and whenever God deems it expedient to be executed. "Satan" would certainly be an appropriate title in such a case!

One thing is certain: in the book of Job, satan's power is God's power. He has no power or authority of his own to bring trials upon Job. His power was derived from, and delegated by God. He could only do what God permitted him to do and no more. He was not a law to himself.

He was not free to do as he pleased. In relation to this, see Job 1:12. 2:6.

Satan was governed and directed by God throughout Job's whole ordeal. This being the case, God was responsible for all of Satan's actions, and this presents an entirely different perspective from the traditional view, which maintains that Satan is in opposition to God, trying to frustrate, negate and thwart His purposes on earth.

If Job's Satan was a free agent, why didn't he simply go ahead under his own steam and do his worst to Job without going up to heaven first to get God's permission, and be bound by God's restrictions and restraints?

Throughout the whole book of Job it is recognized and acknowledged that God was responsible for Job's trials. Satan is only referred to in the first two chapters of Job and then disappears. But statement after statement occurs throughout the next 40 chapters, attributing Job's calamities to God. For example see: Job. 2:9-10. 19:21. 23:10. 42:11.

If some find it hard to believe that a holy righteous angel could encourage God to inflict Job with severe trials, it is much harder to believe that an unholy wicked angel could do this!

PAGAN INFLUENCE

In view of these references to holy and righteous angels being called "Satan," due to being used by God to be an adversary and cause affliction, how do we account for the change in concept from Satan being an holy angel to Satan being an unholy fallen angel?

Pear's Encyclopaedia as quoted earlier, makes an interesting observation, and should be quoted again: "The Satan of the Old Testament was first regarded as one of God's servants, but when the Jews returned from their captivity (in Babylon) Satan had become identified with Ahriman. (Ahriman was the Persian's spirit or god of evil, who was supposed to be in continual conflict with Ahura Mazda, the god of good).

Pear's Encyclopaedia goes on to say: "The conception of a supreme source of evil took place among the Jews during their sojourn in Babylon under the influence of Zoroastrianism, a religion in which the struggle between the two spirits, good and evil, reached its height in the imagination of the ancient world." The encyclopaedia then goes on to point out that originally both good and evil were ascribed to one and the same power alone (God), but division into God and the devil developed later.

Zoroastrianism was the religion of the ancient Persians, during the sixth century B.C. He taught that there was a constant conflict between

Ahura Mazda, god of light and good, and Ahrim, god of darkness and evil. Although Zoroaster eliminated the many gods of the pagans, and reduced them to just two major rival deities, it was still polytheism.

Significantly enough, the statement in Isa. 45:7 that God creates both good and evil, forms part of a prophecy in which Cyrus, the Persian king who released Israel from Babylon, is addressed. Being a Persian, he believed that good and evil came from two separate and mutually antagonistic supernatural sources. But God refutes this concept, saying: “I am the Lord and there is none else; there is no God beside Me... I form the light and create darkness; I make peace and create evil; I the Lord do all these things.” In this statement, God indignantly repudiates the idea of a supernatural rival. He alone is responsible for both good and evil. “Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord has not done it?” (Amos 3:6). Because of sin, the Lord said to David: “I will raise up evil against you” (2 Sam. 12:10-11). Because of sin, “an evil spirit from the Lord troubled” king Saul (1 Sam. 16). In Jer. 21:10 we read about God setting His face against the city of Jerusalem “for evil and not for good.” These verses and many others demonstrate the truth of God’s statement in Isa. 45:7 that He creates evil as well as good. In view of His repudiation of a supernatural rival who creates evil, we are in very good company when we reject the doctrine of a supernatural fallen angel devil!



CHAPTER SIX DEMONS

In any discussion on the subject of the devil it is inevitable and unavoidable that the subject of demons will come up. They are referred to frequently in the New Testament and tradition sees in them evidence of fallen angels. There is of course, no foundation in the Bible for the doctrine of a fallen angel devil, and neither are there any verses that identify demons with fallen angels. The belief that demons are fallen angels is based on assumption.

Scripture is actually silent regarding the origin and identity of demons, and this is freely admitted by some writers who believe the devil is a fallen angel. Myer Pearlman, for example, says: “The Scriptures do not describe the origin of demons; that question seems to be part of the mystery surrounding the origin of evil.” Once it is realized that fallen angels do not exist, and that none of the references to demons can be applied to them, a void is created which has to be filled with other facts.

DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN DEVIL AND DEMONS

But before proceeding any further, it should be pointed out that two different Greek words have been translated “devil” in the Authorized Version. The two words are “diabolos” and “daimon.” They are quite distinct from each other and have a different meaning. Unfortunately the King James translation has made no distinction between them, and has indiscriminately translated them both into the same English word “devil” causing unnecessary confusion. It would have been better if they had translated “daimon” by its obvious derivative “demon,” and only used the word “devil” for diabolos. Many modern translations have done this. Diabolos, relates to both the sinful impulses in the flesh as well as the people who are ruled by them e.g. Judas. But demons relate to invisible malignant influences that invade the body and mind, causing both physical and mental illnesses, and there are many references to them in the New Testament. Diabolos, being sin in the flesh, is the cause of pride, envy, jealousy, anger, hatred etc as we read in Gal. 5:19-21. However, the effects of demons is quite different for they have nothing to do with sinful propensities. There are no references to demon possessed people being envious and jealous, denying or defying God or belittling Christ, or trying to set up a false counterfeit religion. Quite the opposite! Jam. 2:19 says demons believe in God and tremble, and during the ministry of Jesus they

confessed him as the son of God. Even Hal Lindsay although a believer in the fallen angel devil, in his book, "Satan Is Alive and Well On Planet Earth," points out that some Christians have a tendency to go overboard about demons, and attribute to demons what is actually the work of the flesh. He says: "I want to be sure no one falls into the trap of attributing to demons what is actually the work of the flesh." He correctly points out that in spite of what people say about a "lust demon" or "envy demon" etc, there is no such thing, and the Bible never talks in such terms. Lust and envy are sins which come from the propensity of sin in the flesh, and we need to be careful about assigning things to their proper source and cause.

DEMONS NOT SUPERNATURAL

Not only does the Bible never identify demons with fallen angels, neither does it teach that they are supernatural. Quite the opposite! On one occasion Jesus eliminated demons by transferring them from a demoniac into a herd of pigs, which stampeded down a hill over a cliff into the sea and drowned. Someone may suggest that the demons vacated the pigs before they hit the water. If this was the case, what was the point in Jesus allowing the pigs to plunge into the sea? Was he tricked and outwitted by the demons, because it was in response to their request that he transferred them into the swine? If the demons were not destroyed, but escaped, then Jesus was deceived by a Brer Rabbit tactic. But if they were destroyed by drowning, then they were not supernatural, which is the point at issue.

There is no doubt that those possessed by demons sometimes manifest abnormal strength, but this is quite different from supernatural strength, and this distinction needs to be made. For example, reference is made in the Gospels to a demoniac who broke a chain by which he was bound. What we are not told is how well the chain was made - how rusty it may have been, or how much of a hammering and tugging it endured before finally breaking loose. In contrast to this, Samson manifested supernatural strength. When the Philistines bound him with two new ropes, the Spirit of God came upon him, and the ropes "became as flax that was burnt with fire and they dropped off his hands" (Judg. 15). Samson also took hold of a city gate and pulled it up - doors, posts, lock and all, and carried it upon his shoulders to the top of a hill many kilometres away (Judg. 16). He also took hold of the two central pillars of a Philistine temple and pulled them over, causing the whole structure to

collapse (Judg. 16). Now that was supernatural!

It is well documented today that anger and fear can set the adrenaline surging, resulting, under certain circumstances, in amazing increases of strength and feats of strength, like a woman lifting the back of her car off the ground to release her child upon whom it rolled. Hypnotism has also revealed the latent powers of the mind and body and some amazing feats of strength have been demonstrated.

Being made in the image of God i.e. inferior replicas of God, we all have the potential for greater strength, but in certain mental conditions, when the mechanism malfunctions, or gets out of control, as in the case of demoniacs, the strength can become dangerous and life-threatening.

In ancient times, when people tended to be very superstitious, there was a tendency to regard anything outside the realm of normal strength as being supernatural. The same applied to magic. For example, we read in Act. 8:9-11 that as a result of magic practised by Simon, the people concluded he had the power of God. Just because he could do things not normally done, his ability was attributed to supernatural power.

It does seem however, that there were some in New Testament times who believed that demons had limited power. This is inferred from Jn. 10:21 which records some of the Jews saying: "Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?" Why not, if they are supernatural?

DEMONS ARE "SPIRITS"

In studying the subject of demons, comparing the various verses where the word occurs, several facts emerge. One of those facts is that demons are sometimes referred to as "spirits" ("evil spirits"). The Greek word is pneuma and, although it is a different word from daimon, the two words are used interchangeably in the New Testament. Sometimes a demon or spirit is referred to as being "unclean," because those who were possessed, especially the mentally deranged, were driven into unclean habits and conditions making them ritually unclean according to the Jewish law. For example, reference is made in the Gospels to demoniacs living naked among tombs and dead bodies, no doubt not observing basic laws of hygiene and sanitation. This is not uncommon with the insane.

DEMONS ALSO CAUSE PHYSICAL DISORDERS

Another fact to be observed in relation to demons is that they are not always and only associated with mental illness. They are also

associated with physical disorders. For example, deafness, epilepsy and convulsions are attributed to demons: (Matt. 4:24. 17:15. Mk. 1:23-26. 9:17-25. Lk. 4:35. 9:37-).

In Matt. 12:22 blindness is attributed to a demon. And in view of the way Jesus “rebuked” a demon in Lk. 4:35, and then “rebuked” a fever in v38-39, suggests demons were regarded as the cause of fever.

In Lk. 13:11 we read about a woman “who had a spirit of infirmity,” i.e. a demon causing infirmity. The infirmity was a physical one. For 18 years she was bent over and couldn’t straighten her back. She suffered from what we would call curvature of the spine or arthritis. It is evident that in New Testament times, anyone who did not speak or act normally, was regarded as being possessed by a demon. For this reason, because John the Baptist’s behaviour pattern was different from normal, in relation to his eating, drinking and clothing, the people said: “He has a demon” (Matt. 11:18).

And, because Jesus’ teaching and ministry was radical, he was also regarded as being mad. He was accused of being possessed by a demon on 4 different occasions (Jn. 7:20. 8:48, 52. 10:20). He was even accused of being in league with Beelzebub the prince of demons (Matt. 10:25. 12:24).

WRONG DIAGNOSIS

It is clear that the ministry-methods and mannerisms of John and Jesus were wrongly diagnosed by the people. How wrong can you be?! What the people attributed to an evil spirit (demon) was in fact the work of the Holy Spirit.

Now, the point that arises out of this is: If what they thought was demon possession in relation to Jesus and John, had nothing to do with demons at all, on how many other occasions was their diagnosis wrong? In how many other instances did they blame demons when it had nothing to do with demons at all. Another point to observe is this: Although it is recorded that Jesus and John were regarded as demon possessed, the New Testament simply tells us what the people thought, and what their diagnosis was, not expecting us to believe the same. This should be kept in mind in other cases where the people blamed demons for certain maladies.

In New Testament times, the disorders attributed to demons were mostly those that could not be related to a simple, obvious condition. Lameness, for instance, was not attributed to demons, because the

abnormal condition of lame people's limbs provided a physical explanation for the way they walked. But mentally deranged people, deaf and dumb people looked like others - there was no simple physiological explanation - no obvious physical manifestation of illness that they knew of. So, not knowing the cause, the disorder was attributed to demons. Demons were a convenient scapegoat to blame for every disorder that could not be medically or scientifically diagnosed. Basically, demons were a cover-up for ignorance.

NO REFERENCE TO DEMONS IN OLD TESTAMENT

In laying a foundation for the subject in hand, it is of particular interest to note that there are no references to demons in the Old Testament. Although the Old Testament covers nearly 4,000 years of history from the creation of man, no illness, mental or physical is ever attributed to demons. Naturally, the Old Testament does not record a single exorcism. This is significant, and provides one of the keys to the understanding of the origin and nature of demons.

But before that line of enquiry be pursued, it should be pointed out that the word "devils" does occur in the King James translation of the Old Testament but it has nothing to do with the devils (demons) in the New Testament. The word "devils" only occurs 4 times in the Old Testament, and has been translated from 2 different Hebrew words. The 4 occasions where the word occurs are in Lev. 17:7. 2 Chr. 11:15. Deu. 32:16-17 and Ps. 106:36-39 and the 2 Hebrew words are "sair" and "shed."

"Sair" is used in the first two in relation to sacrifice and worship being offered to "devils." This Hebrew word "sair" literally means "hairy one" and is translated "goat" 23 times and "kid" 28 times. A careful reading of the context reveals that the "devils" to whom the sacrifices were being offered, were not fallen angels, but idols having the appearance of goats.

Goats and calves were a symbol of fertility and therefore figured prominently in the fertility cults and rituals of the pagan nations, and Israel got caught up in this false worship. From goat to demon in pagan belief was an easy transition, due to ascribing inherent powers to their goat idols. Among the many gods worshipped by the pagans was one regarded as half man and half goat; an hairy creature with horns, tail and goat's legs. In the light of these pagan deities, it is not difficult to see how the idea of an hairy devil, complete with horns, cloven hooves and tail, was adopted by an apostate Christendom which, as Paul predicted,

departed from the faith into myths and fables and pagan doctrines of demons (1 Tim. 4:1. 2 Tim. 4:3-4). The whole concept of such a devil or demons as taught in Christendom, finds its origin in heathen idolatry and was superimposed on the Bible devil.

The other Hebrew word “shed” which is translated “devils” in the Authorized Version in the other 2 verses also relates to false gods (idols). A careful reading of those verses in their context soon reveals that the devils are explained to be idols, the work of men’s hands, the product of human invention.

The passage in Deu. 32:16-17 is particularly instructive. It says: “... they sacrificed unto devils which were no gods...” i.e. not gods. This statement affirms that the “devils” were regarded as gods by those who worshipped them, but then states that they were, in fact, “no gods” i.e. they did not in reality exist as supernatural deities. They were a figment of the imagination. There is only one God - one supernatural power. (Incidentally, when the Old Testament was translated into Greek, about 270 B.C. the Hebrew word “shed” in Deu. 32:17 was exchanged for “daimon.” That is why daimon occurs in 1 Cor. 10:20 where Deu. 32:17 is quoted from the Greek version).

DOES THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT CONTRADICT?

So then, there is no reference to demons in the original Hebrew Old Testament and no ailments are attributed to them there. This is significant. But of particular significance is the fact that certain disorders mentioned in the New Testament as being caused by demons, are mentioned in the Old Testament as being caused by God. God is the one and only supernatural power associated with sickness and disease in the Old Testament.

For example 1 Sam. 16:14 says Saul’s evil spirit came from the Lord, not a demon. Also Dan. 4 refers to a mental illness inflicted on Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, causing him to grovel on the ground and act like an animal, and it is attributed to God - a judgement of God. In New Testament times it would have been attributed to demons. In Ex. 4:11 the Lord says: “Who has made man’s mouth? Or who makes the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? Have not I the Lord?” But in the New Testament in Matt. 12:22. Mk. 9:25 etc. deafness, dumbness and blindness are attributed to demons.

The point was made earlier that the way in which Jesus “rebuked” a fever, suggests it was regarded as being caused by a demon. But in the

Old Testament in Deu. 28:22 fever is listed as being inflicted by God.

Not knowing the cause of leprosy and having no cure for it, those in New Testament times attributed it to demons. But in the Old Testament, cases of leprosy are attributed to God (Ex. 4:6. Num. 12. 2 Kng. 5).

The number of references in the Old Testament to God sending a plague or pestilence upon people are too many to mention. The diseases caused by these plagues would have been attributed to demons in New Testament times, but the Old Testament is emphatic: they were caused by the one and only God, the God of Israel. God made it clear to Israel at Sinai that if they rebelled against Him, He would punish them with “pestilence, wasting disease, fever, madness, blindness, inflammation, boils, ulcers, scurvy, incurable itch...” (Deu. 28:21-29). He then went on to say: “Every sickness (mental and physical) and every plague” not mentioned in the list, will be sent by God. (Not a fallen angel devil).

The question therefore, that must be addressed is: “Why is it that demons are not associated with mental or physical disorders in the Old Testament but they are in the New Testament? Why does the Old Testament attribute sickness and disease to God, but the New Testament to demons? Does the Old and New contradict? What are the demons in the New Testament associated with disorders?”

NOT A NEW REVELATION

The fact that demons are not associated with mental or physical disorders in the Old Testament but are in the New Testament, indicates that this form of diagnosis came into fashion among the Jews during the inter-Testament period i.e. during the period between Malachi (the last book in the Old Testament) and Matthew (the first book in the New Testament). Malachi was written around 400 B.C. which means the inter-Testament period was about 400 years.

The question is therefore, did God give a new special revelation during this period that demons had become the cause? No! there is no record of such a revelation. All the indications are to the contrary. Take for example, the prophecy in Am. 8:11: “Behold, the days come says the Lord, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor of water, but of hearing the words of the Lord. And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north to the east; they shall run to and fro to seek the Word of the Lord (i.e. a prophet who speaks it) and shall not find it.” This was the position during the 400 years between the two testaments. The sun went down on the prophets, resulting in no new revelation from

God. That is one of the reasons why there is a gap in the canon of Scripture between Malachi and Matthew. And the problem was in Israel's history, that when they had no prophets to keep them on the straight and narrow, they became an easy prey to pagan philosophy and practise. They strayed from Old Testament truths, and wandered into superstitious fables and myths. The same also applied even when they had prophets if they refused to listen to them.

INFLUENCE OF THE INTER-TESTAMENT PERIOD

Now, consider this: The 400 year inter-Testament period followed the period of exile in Babylon, during which the Jews came under the influence of the pagan doctrines of Babylon, Persia and Greece. And, as Pear's Encyclopaedia points out: "Satan in the Old Testament (particularly in the book of Job) was first regarded as one of God's servants used to inflict adversity. But as a result of Persian influence, satan came to be identified with Ahrim, the Persian god or spirit of evil and darkness, who was in continual conflict with Ahura Mazda, the god of good and light." Originally both good and evil were ascribed to one and the same power alone (God), but division into God and the devil developed later when the Jews returned from Babylon.

Funk and Wagnall's encyclopaedia says the belief in a supreme spirit of evil in opposition to God "developed gradually in Hebrew theology and was affected by extranational influences" (i.e. the influence of other pagan nations such as Babylon, Persia, Greece). The same encyclopaedia also says that "In the Apocrypha (a collection of uninspired Jewish writings written during the inter-Testament period) which reveals both Babylonian, Persian and Egyptian influences, the older Hebrew doctrine that misfortune comes from the angel of Jehovah, disappears, and demons or evil spirits are for the first time (i.e. in Jewish writings) mentioned as the authors of calamities..."

Note that point: Demons or evil spirits are first mentioned in Jewish writings in the Apocrypha as a result of the influence of pagan nations. The same encyclopaedia goes on to say: "During the period preceding the birth of Jesus, the Hebrew concept of angels, the devil and demons was modified and influenced by Persian Zoroastrianism." It goes on to confirm that "The idea of spiritual hierarchies and orders and names of specific spirits and demons was drawn from pagan sources." Hastings Bible Dictionary agrees, saying: "The Jewish exile, covering the larger part of the sixth century B.C. and the close of the seventh, wrought a great

change” (i.e. in thinking from the original Old Testament concept of satan). “... the roots of the conception of fallen national deities may be found in the influences of the exile.”

This is basically saying that the concept of satan being a fallen angel has its roots, origin and source in pagan doctrine. The World Book Encyclopaedia puts it in a nutshell: “In the Old Testament (Job) satan is not God’s opponent. Instead, he searches out people’s sins, and accuses humanity before God. In the Apocrypha, satan is the author of evil, and rules over a host of angels.”

So then, the general consensus of opinion of these and other encyclopaedias, is that as a result of pagan influences during and after the exile in Babylon, the Jews abandoned the Biblical teaching on satan and the true cause of adversities such as sickness and disease, and ended up adopting and embracing the pagan doctrines of devils and demons.

It was of course, during the inter-Testament period, that the power of Greece arose under Alexander the Great, and conquered the world. During this period, not only the Greek language, but also Greek philosophy and mythology made a huge impact and had a profound effect on the world, greatly influencing all races, including the Jews.

Rather than be guided by the divine revelation in the Scriptures, they preferred to lean on their own reasonings and imaginations, which are based on human assumption and supposition. God’s Word and ways, especially the cross of Christ and resurrection were foolishness to them. They were of course largely influenced by the heathen philosophies of the pagan empires that preceded them, which had stamped the world with their superstitious myths and legends. They filled the air and the underworld with a whole host of devils and demons, surrounding themselves on every side with them.

Whether we like it or not, we have to face the fact that all references to demons in the New Testament come from a Greek word, not a Hebrew word! Daimon, the Greek word translated “devil” or “demon,” is a word that has no origin or connection with the original Old Testament Hebrew Scriptures. The word traces back, not to the Old Testament but to the inter-Testament period when the Greeks rose to power and stamped their language and philosophies upon the nations.

THE GREEK CONNECTION

The word daimon existed in the Greek language from an early period, and the true original meaning can only be obtained from the writings

of the ancient Greek writers. So the all-important question is: In what sense was the word *daimon* used by the Greeks? What was their concept of evil spirits? The answer to this is important, because it will tell us what those in New Testament times thought demons were.

Volumes of ancient Greek literature is available, making our investigation quite simple and easy. We don't have to assume anything because the Greek view on the subject is well documented. According to most Lexicons, *daimon* means divine, deity, divinity, a god or spirit - a minor deity, being inferior and subordinate to major deities. For this reason the noun *daimonion* is translated "gods" in Act. 17:18 in the Authorised Version and refers to those gods of Greek mythology.

Renowned Greek philosophers and poets such as Plato, Socrates, Homer, Hesiod, Lucian etc all believed and taught that demons are immortal souls i.e. the departed spirits of the dead which live on as gods i.e. minor deities. The encyclopaedia Britannica therefore is quite right when it says demonology finds its basis in the doctrine of the immortality of the soul.

It is evident from the Greek writings that they believed the souls of men were, at death, promoted i.e. canonised (deified) and became "daimon" (demons). They were elevated to the rank of gods i.e. minor deities, and acted as intermediaries or mediators between the major superior gods and men, and were used by them to distribute good and evil. In view of this, it is significant that "demon" is derived from "daio," which means "to distribute."

It was believed that the immortal souls of evil men became evil spirits and the immortal souls of good men became good spirits. Because they believed these spirits were immaterial, they believed they could enter and possess humans, and that the evil ones could inflict evil like physical and mental ailments and disorders.

The Roman Catholics adopted a similar doctrine by canonising the departed spirits of certain people, and elevating them to special ranks of sainthood. These saints (particularly Mary) are regarded as intermediaries between the Supreme God and men, and are prayed to and supplicated for help. They have the power to protect or punish, to do good or evil, as did the pagan demons. For this reason, in the prayer before Mass, Roman Catholics invoke the aid of not only "all angels," but also "all saints."

There is no doubt that the Jews were influenced by the Greek doctrine of demons. It was deeply rooted and ingrained in their minds when Jesus came on the scene. Thayer's Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament says Josephus (first century Jewish historian) makes

mention of demons taking possession of men, but he sees in them not bad sinful angels, but the spirits of wicked men deceased. Josephus clearly believed in the immortality of the soul and asserts that those called daimonia are the “spirits” of wicked men who enter the living, and kill those who receive no help.

Being a Jew, Josephus reflected the current Jewish teaching on demons during the period the New Testament was written. This reveals that the Jewish concept was the same as the Greek. No wonder Jesus said to the leaders and teachers of the day: “How ingeniously you neutralize the Word of God by your traditions.” “In vain do you worship me teaching for doctrine the commandments of man.”

SUPERSTITIOUS NONSENSE

That the doctrine of demons believed by the Jews was superstitious nonsense, is evident in Josephus’ writings and the Apocrypha. References are made in these writings to things relating to demons and exorcisms that are downright ridiculous, and one would have to be naive and gullible to believe it.

For example, Josephus makes reference to releasing a person of a demon by putting the root of a particular plant to the nostrils of the person, and drawing the demon out through the nostrils. Another reference is made to a certain shrub which produces a particular root, which, if either the urine or menstrual blood of a woman is poured on it, and is then carried away hanging in a downward position from the hand, it can then be used successfully to drive out demons.

Reference is also made to setting up a cup of water a little distance from a demoniac, and commanding the demon to overturn it as he went out of the man, and thereby let the spectators know he had left.

The pagan doctrine of demons gave rise to all sorts of extravagant imaginations and claims, and still does in some circles today. It soon becomes obvious why the writings of Josephus and the Apocrypha never found their way into the canon of Scripture.

In the Apocrypha, reference is made to driving out a demon by making smoke from the liver, heart and gall of a fish, and holding it in front of a person possessed. A case is also given of a woman who had 7 husbands, all of whom died. The reason given is because a demon was in love with her, and killed her husbands out of envy. The demon was driven away by making smoke from the organs of a fish in the bride chamber.

Superstitions such as these were typical of those held by the Jews

who had been influenced by the pagan doctrine of demons. It is painfully obvious that if demons are supernatural forces, they would not be frightened away by smoke. But such superstitious methods could be effective in chasing away illnesses and ailments that were imagined or psychological, i.e. ailments that only exist in the mind which are only imagined but not real. This would particularly be the case with hypochondriacs, who have a morbid concern and anxiety about their health, always imagining something is wrong with them. In the event of believing that their problem is caused by a demon, they will immediately feel better if convinced the demon is cast out. The power of the mind over matter is a real phenomenon, and much has been observed and written about the effects that positive and negative suggestions can have on people.

The ease with which man believes in invisible unearthly powers working against him has been well documented throughout history. And both history and experience have shown that, once people become convinced that their troubles are due to a demon, it is very difficult to reason with them and convince them otherwise. Often, those who try to help them, even when it is known that their problem has nothing to do with a demon, have to “go along” with them in their delusion, initially at least, to make any headway.

When a person firmly believes he is possessed by a demon, and that a particular kind of ritual exorcism is the only way he can be delivered, then such a method has to be adopted. Some missionaries working among primitive tribes have found this out and have resorted to ritual exorcism, even though they knew what the medical problem was, and had the medicine to cure it. As could be expected, such missionaries perform the exorcism in the name of Jesus, and attribute the cure to the power of God and give Him the glory.

THE LAW OF ACCOMMODATION

The main point of what has been said so far, is that those living in New Testament times, contemporary with Christ and the apostles, believed demons were departed spirits of the dead, elevated to the rank of gods. They did not believe they were fallen angels but elevated men! This means therefore, that not only does Christendom’s view that demons are fallen angels have no foundation in Scripture, but is also different from, and contrary to what was believed and taught by the Jews in the first century.

This puts tradition in an awkward position, because it has no foundation for its present view, and would be against adopting the other view that demons are the departed spirits of the dead. Even though tradition believes in the immortality of the soul, it does not believe that the human spirit can return after death to possess another body and communicate with it or through it. Spiritualism believes this and is condemned in the Bible. Gal. 5:19-20 says it is a work of the flesh i.e. it is the product of human deception.

Tradition is therefore forced to conclude that although Jesus used the Greek word *daimon*, he did not sanction or endorse the pagan concept behind it. Jesus accommodated himself to the language and terminology of the time, without necessarily believing or supporting the false concepts behind it. This would mean that when people talked to Jesus about demons, they had departed human spirits in mind, but he had something quite different in mind.

It is significant to note that, although Jesus ministered on many occasions to people possessed with demons, he never identified the demons with departed spirits of the dead or fallen angels. As stated earlier: The New Testament never explains the origin, nature or identity of demons.

At this point it is inevitable that the question will be asked: "Would it be right for Jesus to use the word "demon," which had a false pagan concept behind it, if he didn't believe it?" Well, it has always been a common practise to use a word or expression which has a false theory behind it, without actually endorsing the concept. And when this is done, very few would be so legalistic to say it is dishonest, deceitful and hypocritical to do so. We all do it all the time, sometimes without realizing it! It is one of those inevitable and unavoidable facts of life, and Jesus was not the first or last to do it.

EXAMPLES OF ACCOMMODATION

For example, we, like those in New Testament times refer to a mentally deranged person as being a "lunatic" (Matt. 4:24. 17:15). The word literally means "moon struck" and originated in the superstition that madness is caused by the moon's influence. But how many today when using the word, are endorsing such a myth? And who would be so unreasonable to say the Bible must believe this myth because it uses the word?

The same applies to the word "bewitched" which was used by Paul in

Gal. 3:1 and which is still used today. But such use doesn't mean we subscribe to the pagan belief of a witch having someone under her spell.

When we use the word "demonstrators" (demon-strators), we don't mean that all who are involved are demon possessed. And when we use the word "pandemonium," derived from pan-demon, we don't believe that all the demons have been let loose, causing uproar and confusion.

Consider also Beelzebub. According to Jewish belief, Beelzebub was the prince of the demons, and the Jewish leaders claimed that it was through being in league with him that Jesus was able to do his miracles and healings. But in reality, Beelzebub was one of the imaginary gods of the Philistines, as we read in 2 Kng. 1. Yet, in spite of this, Jesus replied to the accusation of being in league with him, by saying: "If I by Beelzebub cast out demons, by whom do your disciples cast them out." But the word "if" indicates that Jesus' statement is hypothetical. It could be paraphrased: "If, as you say, I by Beelzebub..." It is not a statement of fact, affirming personal belief in Beelzebub. Jesus would not have believed in, or endorsed such a pagan belief, but it didn't stop him using the terminology.

The words of Professor Rendle Short are worth quoting, taken from his book: "The Bible and Medicine": "The Bible describes people as they were, without glossing over their irrational beliefs and shortcomings. Even when it does not state that the beliefs were irrational, it by no means follows that it asks us to accept them."

Failure to realize this has led many astray. It is truly amazing how many read the utterances of demon possessed people in the New Testament (especially the Gadarene maniac) and take these utterances as being true and rational, and build a doctrine of demons on such a basis. Building a doctrine of demons on the irrational utterances of the insane, is irrational in itself and can only result in insane doctrines. Paul may have had this sort of thing in mind when he warned that some would depart from the faith, giving heed to "doctrines of demons" (1 Tim. 4:1).

So many examples could be given of words and expressions which we use denominatively, which have a pagan or superstitious origin, without believing the fictions originally represented by them. Many of the names used to label the months and days of each week, were originally borrowed from pagan sources and relate to pagan gods or rulers. "January" for example, was named after Janus, a Roman god, and "Sunday" literally means "day of the sun" - a day which pagan sun worshippers held sacred to the sun. Today these are contemporary colloquial expressions and we use them freely, but we do not have in

mind, and do not endorse their pagan origins.

The ancients believed the earth was flat and had 4 corners. We now know that this idea was incorrect and unscientific. Scripture however, in spite of knowing the earth was round (Isa. 40:22), accommodated the terminology of the pagan concept, and referred to “the 4 corners of the earth” Rev. 7:1. But using such words which had a colloquial significance, did not mean an endorsement of the false unscientific view which originated it.

The Bible likewise accommodated the expression of the sun rising and setting, but this did not endorse the false theory that the earth was stationary and the sun travelled around it. We still use the expression today, but do not sanction unscientific notions about the solar system.

The fact of the matter is that man had to wait for the science of astronomy to advance and for knowledge of outer space to increase, before he could arrive at the truth of the solar system, not to mention many other sciences. The invention of the telescope was the key to this, and revolutionized man’s knowledge of outer space.

And, as we shall see, the same applies to the “inner space” of man’s mind and body where the demons operate. The invention of the microscope has proved to be the key to this and has revolutionized man’s knowledge of sickness and disease and the real causes of it.

But, unfortunately, many prefer the old wine and think it is better. Many minds are like concrete: all mixed up and permanently set! Traditions are so important to some that even when science proves beyond all doubt they are wrong, people still cling tenaciously to them. Doctrinal pride and prejudice prevents them from moving on to higher ground. When Galileo and other astronomers, as a result of the telescope, could prove that the earth was not the centre of the universe; that it revolved on its axis, and that it travelled around the sun instead of vice versa, the church (Roman Catholics) branded them as heretics and threatened to burn them at the stake unless they repudiated such notions which contradicted long held traditional teaching which was believed to be based on the Bible!

Had that church had its way, we would still be living in the dark ages today, holding to all manner of superstitious unscientific beliefs that originated in paganism.

There are some today who still believe the earth is flat. They are known as “The Flat Earth Society.” Talk about none being as blind as those who say they can see! But, as we shall see, current traditional thinking on demons is just as outdated, unscientific and unbiblical, and is

not far removed from the superstitious beliefs of the pagans.

SCIENCE FILLS THE VOID

When it is realized that demons are neither fallen angels nor departed spirits from the dead, a void is created which has to be filled with some other information. In finding that information, it is important to remember that although demons in the New Testament are mostly associated with mental disorders, they are also associated with physical disorders such as deafness, dumbness, blindness, fever, curvature of the spine. It is also important to remember that for the most part, disorders which cannot be related to a simple obvious condition, were attributed to demons. Unless there was a physiological explanation that they knew of, demons were blamed. Demons were a convenient scapegoat for all disorders that could not be medically or scientifically diagnosed.

It hardly needs to be pointed out that medical science 2,000 years ago in New Testament times, was very backward and primitive compared with today. Men were extremely limited in their understanding of the causes and effects of disease, and therefore very limited in their ability to properly diagnose.

In view of this therefore, it goes without saying, that it would not be surprising if certain mental and physical conditions which they did not understand, and therefore attributed to demons, are now understood in quite a different light i.e. what used to be attributed to demons still have the same symptoms today, but are diagnosed in different terminology.

The fact must also be taken into account that certain mental and physical disorders which used to be attributed to demons, can now be cured or controlled by drugs, antibiotics, immunization, surgery, physiotherapy, chemo-therapy, laser, psychiatric treatment etc. And one thing is certain: disorders caused by supernatural powers would not be able to be controlled or cured by such human methods.

Take for example, epilepsy, which is attributed to an evil spirit in Mk. 9:22. The father of an epileptic son said to Jesus: "Many times the evil spirit has tried to kill him by throwing him in the fire and into water." This is how epileptic fits and convulsions were interpreted in those times. If an epileptic had a fit near fire or water and ended up falling in, this was interpreted to mean the demon was trying to kill him.

But it is now known that epileptic fits are caused by a short circuiting of, or surge of energy in the brain, and can now be monitored and controlled by drugs. The fact of the matter is that our body is controlled

by the mind, and the thought processes of the mind are electrical impulses. As in any electrical circuit, wires can get crossed, touched or damaged, causing a short circuiting and malfunction of the system, resulting in sparks flying and a blackout.

Cases can be cited of people undergoing a brain probe or surgery; whose arm or leg would jerk or convulse when a particular part of the brain was touched, or hear voices or music. This helps us to understand how pressure in the brain through a tumour or blood clot, can result in unusual and irregular actions and manifestations of the body, and sounds in the brain. In New Testament times it would be attributed to demons, but today we are more enlightened.

COMPLEX CHEMICAL CONSTITUTION

Certain cases of delusion and hallucination, which used to be attributed to demons, can now be treated by anti-psychotic drugs, which affect the chemicals in the brain, which those in New Testament times knew nothing about. A doctor in an interview once referred to demons in terms of “unseen complex chemicals which, in a state of imbalance, cause mania.”

There is no doubt about it: the human body is one vast complex chemical factory, and if the chemical combinations get out of balance, an imbalance in mind and body functions can result. This is evident in the effect of hallucinogenic drugs, which distort a person’s understanding of himself and his surroundings, causing things to be seen and heard which in reality do not exist, except in his own distorted brain.

Some hallucinogenic drugs come from plants and have long been used by primitive peoples. In ancient times, the effects would have been attributed to demons. In view of this, it is significant that demons in Rev. 9:20 are linked with “sorceries” v21. The Greek word for sorceries is pharmakeia from which our English word “pharmacy” is derived and relates to drugs. Sorcerers used drugs to induce hallucination and psychic reactions. In sorcery, the use of drugs was generally accompanied by an appeal to occult powers. But Gal. 5:19-20 says it was all a work of the flesh. It certainly had nothing to do with fallen angels or departed spirits of the dead.

In ancient times, men of unusually tall stature (giants) were regarded as the offspring of demons. But it is now known that size and height is controlled by a chemical from the pituitary gland. Specialists are now able to inject the chemical into children stunted in growth, with positive

effects. In the early stages of experimentation, before the right dosage was known, overdose resulted in some children growing to abnormal height.

VIRUS-RELATED DISORDERS

Up until our present end time knowledge explosion era, prophesied in Dan. 12:4, men knew next to nothing about the chemical balance, genetic make-up etc involved in human beings, not to mention bacteria, viruses, cells in the blood and tissue, hormones, atoms, electrons, protons etc. In the past, men were ignorant of simple basic facts such as too little sugar in the blood can affect the way the mind functions. In our modern times of increased knowledge, man is discovering that his theories regarding the inner space of the human mind and body were as unscientific, primitive and naive, as his knowledge of outer space.

Consider Parkinson's disease which causes those inflicted, to shake and tremble. It was once called "the shaking palsy," and was attributed to demons, because no medical explanation could be given for the shaking. But it is now known it is caused by a virus, which attacks and damages a particular internal region of the brain, resulting in a disorder of the central nervous system. Drugs have been developed which have helped those suffering with the disease.

Herpes is caused by a virus which can get into the brain and affect the memory and learning.

Multiple sclerosis, legionnaires disease etc are also caused by viruses, but in ancient times were attributed to demons.

As mentioned before: blindness, in certain instances, was attributed to demons in New Testament times. We now know that there can be many causes of blindness, such as diabetes, glaucoma, cataract. Tropical germs can cause inflammation of the eye, and result in blindness due to lack of proper attention. And there are certain cancers that cause blindness. Those in ancient times knew nothing about any of these, so they blamed demons.

Dumbness, of course, was also attributed to demons in the past. But many cases of dumbness (i.e. inability to speak) was simply due to being born deaf, and not being able to hear words and learn to speak. Because the person had ears and a tongue and looked normal, there seemed to be no physical reason why he couldn't hear and speak, so demon possession was postulated as the cause. Significantly enough, in some places in the New Testament demon possession involving dumbness, is linked with deafness (Mk. 9:25. 7:37).

Dumbness or mental retardation can also be caused by a malfunction

of the brain cell development of a baby in the womb, or brain damage at birth, or a knock on the head, or blood clot in the brain. A blood clot in the brain can cause a stroke, affecting people in different ways. Some become speechless (dumb) and paralysed down one side of the body. In the past people were ignorant of this and would have claimed that a demon had invaded the brain or body when it was, in fact, a blood clot that invaded.

Even severe emotional traumas can cause temporary paralysis. Sometimes a mental shock can leave a person with a stammer, making it difficult to get the words out. Fear can paralyse and even kill. But the ancients did not have knowledge of such things so demons were the stock and trade answer.

Demons were blamed for fever in New Testament times but it is now known that fever is usually caused by an anti-body such as a bacterium or virus. It was in fact, as a result of bacteria and viruses being discovered, that the major breakthrough was achieved concerning the cause of many sicknesses and diseases, both mental and physical.

A DEMON-VIRUS CONNECTION

An honest and impartial consideration of all these facts, indicates that there is some connection in some instances between demons and viruses. Viruses and bacteria are malignant forces, invisible to the naked eye, which invade and possess the body and brain, inflicting physical and mental diseases and disorders. Healing requires expulsion - expelling them - casting them out, and Jesus achieved this by the power of God.

The proposition is therefore, that many of the “demons” expelled by Jesus were what are now called viruses and bacteria. It is clear that the language used in the New Testament in relation to demons, presents them as malignant influences, invisible to the naked eye, which invade and possess people, inflicting them with various disorders. This precisely, is what germs do, and “evil spirits” would be quite an apt description of them, in view of the fact that the word “spirit” signified something invisible that could pass into, and possess humans. The Greeks were on the right track in principle, but went wrong by philosophising about it.

In modern medical circles today, the language relating to bacteria and viruses is not far removed from the ancient description of demons. Such antibodies have to be attacked, and the person “possessed” has to be dispossessed. The bacteria or virus has to be “driven out.”

Viewed in this light, the supposed pagan demon, though a myth theologically, was a reality physiologically. The disorder in each case of

demon possession was caused by a real disturbing presence, and the popular name for it was “demon.” Therefore, when referring to this and removing it, Jesus called it “demon” - the name by which it was universally known. Jesus came to deal with facts, not their names. He did not come to attempt to teach science to an unscientific and primitive world, but to teach the Gospel and manifest the power of God. He left the scientific explanations for the scientific age, when knowledge on such matters increased and the evidence was made available to the people.

Jesus no doubt knew more about the true origin and nature of disease than what he let on, but concealed it due to the inability of the people to comprehend. As Pr. 12:23 says: “A prudent man conceals knowledge.” Facts can be quite confusing to those who are not ready for them and not capable of comprehending. It would have been a hopeless task for Jesus to try and explain viruses to the people in his day. There were no words available in the vocabulary of those times to describe such micro-organisms, and no microscopes to prove that they existed. Had Jesus attempted to teach the people about them, he would probably have been regarded as more “possessed” (mad) than ever.

After all, many centuries later, in 1687, when the microscope was first invented, and germs (bacteria) could actually be seen, they were not connected with disease, and when it was first suggested there was a connection, the response was ridicule from both the public and the medical profession. It was not until the nineteenth century that man started to suspect that they were the cause of many sicknesses.

Viruses, of course, could not be seen until the electron microscope was invented, which is hundreds of times more powerful than an optical microscope

EXORCISMS INVOLVED “HEALING”

In reaching a satisfactory conclusion regarding the nature of demons, it is helpful to note that the word “healing” is used synonymously with “casting out” i.e. sometimes reference is made to a person having a demon “cast out,” and sometimes that person is simply referred to as being “healed” or “cured” (Matt. 4:24. 12:22. Lk. 7:21).

The Greek word for “healed” and “cured” is “therapeuo” from which our English word “therapy” is derived. It is used many times in the New Testament primarily in relation to curing physical disorders resulting from physical causes. Damage to the cells of both body and brain, by virus attack, fit into this category. Such a disorder in the brain is just as much a

physical disorder as any disorder in any other part of the body. For this reason the words ‘healed’ and ‘cured’ are equally applied to both physical and mental sickness in the New Testament and not just to physical. And it should also be pointed out that in the New Testament both physical and mental sicknesses are “rebuked” “cast out” and caused to “depart.” This language is not restricted to just mental disorders (Lk. 4:39. Act. 19:12).

THE DEVIL-DEMONS CONNECTION

Most accept that there are connections in Scripture between sickness and sin. For this reason, those who are healed of a sickness caused by a demon, are sometimes told to sin no more. This connection between sin and demons is interesting in view of the connection made in some Scriptures between satan i.e. the devil and demons. For example: one possessed by demons can be referred to as being bound by satan. It is apparent that although devil (diabolos) and demons (daimon) are quite different words, and relate to different things, there is nevertheless a connection, and it is not difficult to discern the nature of the relationship. As has been demonstrated, the devil relates to the propensity of sin in the flesh which is the cause of all acts of sin, resulting in God sometimes inflicting sickness as a punishment. And demons relate to malignant forces, such as viruses and bacteria, which cause sickness and disorders. In this sense, demons are the devil’s ministers (servants) or, putting it another way: satan’s messengers (angels).

This ties in perfectly with the Scriptures which teach that God creates evil, such as sickness and disease, as a punishment for sin. But because sin is the fact or principle that moves God to inflict disorders, sin i.e. the devil or satan, is referred to as the first cause in the matter. For this reason some Scriptures refer to the devil or satan being responsible for afflicting people with disorders. In reality, it is God who afflicts on the basis of sin becoming enthroned in people’s lives.

Therefore, as far as sickness and disease are concerned, God is the One who inflicts; sin (the devil and satan) is the principle that moves God to inflict, and demons (viruses etc) are the method or process by which God’s affliction takes place. After all, who made the viruses and bacteria? The answer is: the same person who made the thistles and thorns, mosquitoes snakes and scorpions - God, not a fallen angel.

TRADITION IN NO POSITION TO THROW STONES

The suggestion that demons can relate to viruses etc, and that Jesus simply accommodated himself to the language of the day, has been rejected by some traditionalists on the grounds that it makes Jesus a deceiver, encouraging error instead of truth. It is argued that if Jesus did not have the same view on demons as his contemporaries, he should not have used the word.

However, tradition is in no position to argue this way because it is forced to adopt the same approach. In view of the fact that demons were believed to be departed spirits from the dead in New Testament times, and tradition does not accept that view, but believes they are fallen angels, it also, in order to uphold conviction, has to fall back on the principle that Jesus simply accommodated the word demon without endorsing the pagan concept behind it. If not, tradition would be compelled to believe that demons are departed spirits of the dead, not fallen angels.

WOULD JESUS SPEAK TO VIRUSES?

If Demons relate to viruses etc, the question will naturally be asked: “How could they speak and be spoken to by Jesus as is recorded in the Gospels? How could they be rebuked, cast out and caused to depart?” “Surely” it will be argued: “demons must be personal intelligent entities, not impersonal unintelligent forces like viruses etc.”

In answer to this, it is firstly significant to note that there are examples of Jesus using the same kind of language, action and procedure when dealing with disorders caused by a virus or bacteria, not to mention other things in the natural world which do not have personal intelligent existence.

For example, as we have seen, in Lk. 4:39, Jesus “rebuked” a fever, which we now know is caused by bacteria or virus. Reference is also made in Matt. 8:26 to Jesus “rebuking” the wind and sea. But who today, on that basis, would argue that the wind and sea must be personal intelligent forces?

Regarding the references to demons “departing” from people: the same language is also used elsewhere in relation to diseases caused by bacteria and viruses. For example, we read in Mk. 1:42 that when Jesus gave the word for a leper to be healed, and touched him, “immediately the leprosy departed from him.” We now know that leprosy is caused by a germ (bacterium), and so when it says: “the leprosy departed from him,” it

means the germ was driven out of his body. It is well known today that many germs are contagious and can travel from one person to another by coughing, sneezing, kissing. In 2 Kng. 5:27 we read that God caused leprosy to depart from one man to another: from Naaman to Gehazi.

Act. 19:12 also refers to diseases “departing” from the sick during Paul’s ministry - the same word used elsewhere in relation to demons.

The expression “cast out” is also used in Scripture not only in connection with demons, but also in relation to abstract things such as sins and sorrows. See Job 39:3. Mic. 7:19.

There are in fact, many examples in both the Old and New Testaments of impersonal unintelligent things being addressed and spoken to, prior to the power of God being brought to bear upon them. For example: Moses spoke to a rock (Num. 20:8). Joshua addressed the sun and moon (Josh. 10:12). Ezekiel spoke to dry bones in a valley, and to mountains, hills, rivers, valleys (6:1-3. Ch. 37). Jesus spoke to a fig tree and cursed it (Matt. 21:19. Mk. 11:21).

Speaking to demons therefore, in view of these examples, does not necessarily have to mean they were personal entities.

COULD VIRUSES SPEAK TO JESUS?

“Yes, but” someone will reply, “demons were not only spoken to, but unlike rocks, trees, and bones, they also spoke. How do you explain that if they were not personal entities?” Well, for a start, it is important to understand that sometimes references to demons actually refer to the people themselves who were possessed. Much in the same way that those who are full of sin (devil) and become the embodiment and manifestation of it, become a devil and are called “a devil” as Judas was. He was “a devil” because “the devil” (sin) was in his heart and in control of his speech and actions. In this light, it is not difficult to understand how the devil or demons can speak.

A similar principle can be seen in Pr. 20:1: “Wine is a mocker.” But this reference to drink speaking doesn’t mean it is a separate personality from the person it possesses and influences.

Even though we might say: “It is the drink speaking,” in reality drink by itself could never speak or mock; it needs a human brain, tongue and voice to do that. Alcohol affects the brain cells and can change a personality and cause a person to be irrational (insane). Demons by themselves cannot speak either, but when these malignant influences affect the brain as some of them can and do, and cause irrational speech,

they can, as in the case of alcohol, be referred to as speaking themselves.

An example of the people themselves who were possessed being referred to as demons can be seen in Mk. 3:11 where reference is made to demons falling down before Jesus and crying out. The demons clearly refer to the people who were possessed. How else could it be explained that they “fell down.”

Another example can be seen in Jam. 2:19 where it is said that demons believe and tremble. The word “tremble” means to quiver or shake. It is a physical action and requires a body. If demons are disembodied, immaterial and invisible entities that have no body and cannot be seen, then how can they tremble and be seen to be trembling? James is obviously referring to the people themselves who were possessed by demons, who fell down at the feet of Jesus, crying out to him, imploring him not to torment them, trembling as they spoke. (Demonic in those days were subjected to all sorts of tortures in attempts to drive out their demons, and they were afraid of being hurt).

The close association between a demoniac and demon can also be seen in the revised translations of Matt. 17:18 which, instead of saying Jesus rebuked a demon, says he rebuked the demoniac.

DUMB DEMONS

Also consider references to a “dumb demon” (Mk. 9:17. Lk. 11:14). The record in Lk. 11:14 goes on to say: “And it came to pass, when the demon had gone out, the dumb man spoke.” In these verses both the demoniac and demon are referred to as being dumb i.e. unable to speak, usually due to being born deaf. (Those in New Testament times believed that people who were dumb were possessed by the spirit of those who were once dumb). How do those who believe that demons are fallen angels interpret these references to dumb demons? Do they believe these fallen angels are dumb? How could supernatural angels be dumb? If supernatural, they could heal themselves.

At this point I think tradition would gladly accept that it was the demoniac himself who was dumb, and that the principle of metonymy is involved in the reference to a dumb demon.

In relation to demons speaking, it is evident from a careful reading of some of the passages concerned, by the shift of pronouns from the demon to the demoniac, that it was the person possessed who was speaking and being spoken to. This is particularly evident in the episode of the Gadarene maniac, who had a multiple personality disorder. Being

mentally deranged he was irrational and under the delusion that he was someone else, and spoke as if he was that someone else. This is not uncommon in some forms of insanity.

He said his name was “Legion” because “many” demons had entered him. A legion was a division of 6,000 men in the Roman army. So the question that must seriously be asked is: Was this man possessed by 6,000 fallen angels? No! But he could have had thousands of viruses in his brain from diseased pig meat! Being possessed by 6,000 demons (departed spirits of the dead) was the delusion or hallucination of the madman’s deranged mind.

Common sense dictates that when a mentally deranged person is convinced he is someone else, you cannot come straight out into the open and frankly tell him that it is all a delusion - imagination - just in his own mind, and tell him to pull himself together and stop being an idiot. You cannot rationalize with an irrational person, especially if brain cells are damaged. For this reason, when the man told Jesus that his name was Legion, Jesus did not deny it or tell him he was deluded. He initially went along with him in his delusion, drew it out and delivered him from it. He did this in a very dramatic way, by transferring the madness to a herd of 3,000 pigs nearby, which, according to Jewish law, were illegal and not allowed to be reared and eaten. They could have very well been the source of the demoniac’s disorder, and for that reason were made to rush headlong over the cliff into the sea. This gave the demoniac visible physical proof that the demons were gone and he was delivered. The demons were drowned in the sea! So much for them being supernatural fallen angels!

The effect on the onlookers would also have been very dramatic. They could not deny that an outstanding miracle had taken place. Nothing therefore could stand in the way of receiving the man back into society and treating him as a normal person. So much good was accomplished by this event. Sin was judged and condemned; God’s law was justified and vindicated; the madman was healed and restored; future source of disease was eliminated, and the name of Jesus was held in awe and glorified. Truly, he did all things well through the power and wisdom given by the Father.



CHAPTER SEVEN HELL - PURGATORY - LIMBO

7. HELL.

If man possesses an immortal soul, a place must obviously be found for it after the death of the body. Roman Catholic theology has provided heaven for the righteous souls, and considering it would be incompatible to consign the souls of the wicked to the same place, another less congenial abode must be found. That place they say, is hell, which is believed to be a place of fiery torment deep beneath the surface of the earth where the wicked souls suffer eternal torment, pain and misery.

In its summary of the popular view of hell, the Encyclopaedia America points out that “the main features of hell as conceived by the Hindu, Persian, Egyptian and Christian theologians are essentially the same.” In other words: the concept originated in paganism, and is the product of the pagan doctrine of the immortality of the soul.

“Hell” is without a doubt a Biblical word, but has, like the word “soul,” been given an unbiblical application. Two things are therefore essential in order to reach a correct understanding of the subject. The first is to study the word “hell” and ascertain its original and true meaning. The second is to carefully consider what the Bible teaches concerning the destiny of the wicked.

Many Scriptures speak about the punishment of the wicked, but not one teaches that the punishment starts when they die. The punishment takes place after the resurrection when Jesus comes to judge the world, and the punishment is received “in the body,” not in a disembodied state (2 Cor. 5:10).

According to Lk. 12:47-48, the wicked will be beaten with many stripes, and “stripes” necessitate a body.

Even Lk. 16:23-24 which is regarded by many as relating to the traditional doctrine of hell, refers to body parts such as eyes, finger and tongue. This is quite incompatible with the concept of disembodied souls.

Many Scriptures teach that judgement and retribution of the wicked takes place after resurrection when Christ has returned, not when they die. See Jn. 5:28-29. Matt. 13:41. 25:46. Lk. 12:47. Rom. 2:12-16. 2 Thes. 1:8-9. 2 Pet. 2:9. Jude v13.

To experience torture and pain, a person must be alive as a physical bodily being. If a dead person were placed in a burning hell, he would not know anything about it, because Scripture clearly testifies that “the dead

know not anything” (Ecc. 9:5). A living man can only experience pain through the function of his nervous system which only operates while the brain is alive. The nervous system along with identity does not survive brain destruction. The dead cannot feel anything, pain or pleasure (Ecc. 9:6).

EXTINCTION IS THE DESTINY OF THE WICKED

Contrary to the teaching of endless torture of the wicked, the Bible teaches that they will be completely destroyed. Extinction is their final destiny at the second death. The following Scriptures, which deal specifically with the final fate of the wicked, teach this: Job 20:4-8. 21:13. Ps. 1:4-6. 21:9. 37:20. Ps. 49. 68:1-2. 73:18. 88:10-12. 92:7. 104:35. 145:20. Pr. 2:21-22. 10:25-29. Isa. 1:28. 26:14. 51:57. Ob. v15-16. Mal. 4:1-3. Matt. 3:12. 7:13-20. Jn. 3:16. Plp. 3:19. 2 Thes. 1:9.

These verses teach that the wicked shall perish like their own dung forever - disappear like a dream - blow away like chaff before the wind - perish - be swallowed up and devoured in the fire of God’s wrath - consumed like the fat of lambs in the fire - not abide but die and see corruption - perish like the beasts - be driven away like smoke - melt away like wax in the fire - go into destruction, into a land of forgetfulness and oblivion - be rooted out of the earth - “shall not live” - sleep a perpetual sleep - be as though they never existed - be punished with everlasting destruction - be ground to powder - be blown away like chaff - burnt up like chaff - consumed in fire like an unfruitful tree - burnt up like tares.

The various similes and metaphors used in relation to the destiny of the wicked, speak of utter destruction and total extinction. The concept of the wicked living on endlessly suffering pain and torment is totally foreign to these Scriptures. Does dung, dreams, chaff, dead beasts, smoke and powder exist eternally? By no means! They are among the most transitory and impermanent things that pertain to this life. The Word of God would not use such examples to demonstrate the destiny of the wicked if they survived throughout eternity.

Is chaff, the fat of lambs, wax, tares and branches put into the fire to survive? Or are they put in to be burned, consumed and reduced to ashes? This, precisely, according to Mal. 4:3 is the destiny of the wicked.

THE ORIGIN AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE WORD HELL

Regarding the word “hell”: it is an English word that has been chosen by the translators as the English equivalent for the original Hebrew and Greek words. It is derived from an old Anglo-Saxon word “hel-an” which simply means to cover or hide out of sight. For example, the word “helmet” describes a head cover. In 1611 when the King James Version of the Bible was produced, the Englishman spoke of putting his potatoes in “hell” for the winter, i.e. in a “hole” in the ground.

Had this simple, primitive meaning of the word been retained, all may have been well. However, as on so many occasions the church has twisted and changed the true original meaning to something quite foreign to the Word of God. Even some of the churches’ own theologians have criticized her for doing this.

“Sheol” is the Hebrew word translated “hell” in the Old Testament. Unfortunately, as far as the New Testament is concerned, 3 different Greek words, each of which have different meanings, have been translated into the same word “hell” in the King James Version.

Those 3 different Greek words are: 1. hades. 2. tartaros. 3. gehenna.

The indiscriminate translation of these different words into one and the same English word hell is unjustified and has caused considerable confusion.

SHEOL

Let us consider what the original words mean, starting with the Hebrew word sheol. According to Gesenius, this word is derived from the verb “shaal” which means to dig, excavate, hollow out. Sheol occurs 65 times in the Old Testament and has been translated “hell” 31 times, “grave” 31 times and “pit” 3 times. A careful examination of the 65 places where sheol occurs, reveals that it refers to the grave, which of course, is a “covered place.”

It should be evident from the fact that sheol has been translated “grave” the same number of times that it has been translated “hell,” that the grave and hell are synonymous terms, referring to one and the same place.

It could therefore be said that all men go to hell, because all go to the grave. The doctrine of the Roman Catholic church which says only the wicked go to hell is incorrect.

Hell is the resting place of both the righteous and wicked, where they

“sleep” in the unconscious state of death, awaiting the resurrection and judgement. References to righteous men such as Job, Jacob, David, Hezekiah and even Jesus going to sheol i.e. “hell” (the grave) can be seen in: Gen. 37:35. Job 14:13. 17:13. Ps. 49:15. 88:3. Isa. 38:10. Ps. 16:10.

References to wicked men going to sheol can be seen in: Num. 16:30, 33. 1 Kng. 2:6, 9. Job 21:13. 24:19. Ps. 9:17. 31:17. Isa. 14:9, 11, 15.

Ps. 49:14-15 makes it clear that both the righteous and wicked go to sheol. Verse 14 says the wicked are laid in sheol like sheep, and verse 15 speaks about God redeeming the soul of the righteous from sheol at resurrection.

Ezk. 31:15-18 confirms that the words grave, hell and pit are used synonymously. Verse 15 refers to men going down to the grave (sheol); verse 16 says they go down to hell (sheol), which is defined in the same verse as descending into the pit.

Ecc. 9:10 says all men go to sheol, and Ps. 6:5 implies there is no consciousness there by saying there is no remembrance or giving of thanks to God there. Ps. 31:17 is explicit, stating that the wicked are silent in sheol. They are clearly not crying out in pain and agony!

Reference in Isa. 14:11. Job 24:20 and 21:13-26 to sheol being a place where worms cover the dead and feed on the dead certainly confirms that sheol is the grave.

Ps. 16:10. 30:3. 49:15. 86:13 all refer to the resurrection of the righteous from sheol. Considering it is the body that will be resurrected, it is obvious that sheol is the place where dead bodies are deposited.

HADES

The Greek word hades occurs 11 times in the New Testament and signifies an unseen or concealed place. In the King James Version it has been translated “hell” 10 times and “grave” once.

Hades is the Greek equivalent for the Hebrew sheol. This is evident from the fact that the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures (the LXX) uses hades as the equivalent for sheol. The New Testament writers also use hades when they quote verses from the Old Testament where sheol occurs. This can be seen by comparing Act. 2:27-31 with Ps. 16:10. Sheol and hades are also made equal in 1 Cor. 15:55 and Hos. 13:14.

The one occasion in the New Testament where hades has been translated “grave” is in 1 Cor. 15:55. It reads: “O death, where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory?” This passage is speaking about resurrection of the body, making it clear that hades is the place in which

the bodies of the saints, not disembodied souls, are deposited at death, and from which they rise at the resurrection. This is why, as Jesus said, the gates of hell (hades) shall not prevail against his church (Matt. 16:18). He has the key to death and hell (Rev. 1:18) inasmuch as he has the power to unlock the “gate” and release the dead from the grip of the grave.

In Act. 2:25-28 we read that Peter quoted David’s prophecy of Christ’s resurrection in Ps. 16:8-11: “ ... my flesh shall rest in hope, because you (God) will not leave my soul in hell, neither will you allow your holy one to see corruption.” Verse 31 clearly states that these words relate to “the resurrection of Christ.” The subject of Peter’s preaching is the resurrection of the body from the grave, making it evident that “soul” refers to the body and “hell” refers to the grave.

A careful reading of Act. 2:26-27 reveals that “my flesh” (body) in v26 runs parallel with “my soul” in v27, and refers to “the holy one” (Jesus), whom God would not allow “to see corruption” (v27). The “soul” has nothing to do with an immortal, immaterial, disembodied spirit. It refers to a flesh and blood body which was very physical and capable of corruption.

A careful reading of verses 25-29 also reveals that “sepulchre” is used synonymously with “hell.” This is also evident in view of the fact that reference is made in Act. 13:29 and Mk. 15:46 etc to the dead body of Jesus being placed in a sepulchre, whereas Act. 2:27 says he was in hell.

The word sepulchre is also used synonymously with sheol in the Old Testament. For example, Ps. 49:15 refers to sheol as the place to which David expected to go at death, whereas Neh. 3:16 refers to the same place as “the sepulchres of David.”

Consistent with the word “hell” meaning a covered place, Jewish sepulchres were usually graves or tombs in caves sealed with a stone.

TARTAROS

The second Greek word “tartaros,” which is also translated “hell,” only occurs once in the Bible in 2 Pet. 2:4: where reference is made to certain priestly messengers of God that sinned and were cast down to hell.

As pointed out earlier (Page 119-120), this refers to God opening the earth to swallow up those who rebelled against Him, as recorded in Num. 16. The chasm into which the rebels plunged would be deeper than a grave so the word tartaros is used instead of hades. In Greek it means “deep abyss.”

GEHENNA

The third Greek word translated hell is gehenna. It occurs 12 times in the New Testament, and is used 11 times by Jesus and once by James.

This word is a proper noun, and like all other proper nouns or names, should have been transliterated. This is actually done in most modern translations. Instead of giving us “hell,” they give us “gehenna.” As we shall see, hades and gehenna involve two quite different concepts and should never have been translated into the same word hell. Making these 2 different words appear to be synonymous in the King James translation, has created much confusion and misunderstanding.

Gehenna is a Greek compound signifying “valley of hinnom;” “ge” means valley, and “henna” is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word hinnom. “Gehenna” is clearly derived from the Hebrew “ge” (valley) “hinnom.”

We learn from Josh. 15:8 that hinnom was a Jebusite who originally lived in Jerusalem and owned a valley outside the walls of the city on the south west side. He had a son who inherited the valley and it was called “the valley of the son of hinnom” (Josh. 15:8). At a particular place in the valley called “topheth,” which signifies “fire place,” terrible heathen practices were committed by Israel involving children being passed through fire as a sacrifice to the heathen god Molech (2 Kng. 23:10).

Severe indictments were levelled against Israel by God through the prophet Jeremiah for committing such terrible acts (Jer. 7:30-34. 19:1-7). The burning alive of human beings was repugnant to God and He said it was something that “I commanded not, nor spake it, neither came it into my mind” (Jer. 19:5). His abhorrence towards the burning of humans alive in fire makes it difficult to believe that He would consign men to endless torment in fire.

Eventually, king Josiah defiled the shrine of Molech and put an end to sacrifices there. He gave the valley over to pollution, and appointed it as a repository of the filth and garbage of the city (2 Kng. 23:10-14). The valley of Hinnom became the receptacle of rubbish in general and received the carcasses of men (criminals) and beasts. To consume the rubbish and prevent pestilence, fires were kept perpetually burning in it. In the days of Jesus it was the highest mark of ignominy that the Jewish council could inflict, to order a man’s body to be cast into the fire of gehenna. Reference is made in Jer. 31:40 to this valley as “the whole valley of the dead bodies and of the ashes ...”

So then, the valley of hinnom was used as a garbage incinerator. The fire continued to burn as long as there was material for it to consume. The rubbish cast into it was consumed of course, but the fire continued to burn as it was fed with additional rubbish. Due to being continually fed, the fire never went out. It was an “everlasting” fire.

When Jesus referred to the wicked being cast into gehenna, he was simply saying that such people are garbage and will be treated as such!

There is no fire in the valley of hinnom today. It was extinguished centuries ago. The valley is no longer used as an incinerator. In connection with this, the following item which appeared in the Wanganui Chronicle on the fifteenth of May 1970 is interesting:

HELL - NOW IT'S A PARK

Jerusalem (P.A. Reuter). Hell became a national park in Israel yesterday. Hell, or “gai-hinnom” in Hebrew, is a narrow valley at the foot of Mt. Zion, along the former no-man’s land between Arab and Israeli Jerusalem. The 20 acre area was officially dedicated as Wolfson park, in honour of British philanthropist sir Isaac Wolfson.

THE LAKE OF FIRE

The “gehenna” into which the wicked will be cast at Christ’s return is referred to in the book of Revelation as “the lake of fire” and represents the second and final death. The distinction between this gehenna and hades can be seen in Rev. 20:14 where reference is made to hades being thrown into the lake of fire. This signifies that death will ultimately be swallowed up, resulting in no more death (1 Cor. 15:26).

Hades represents the first temporary death which men die as a result of the original sin of Adam. But gehenna, the lake of fire, is the second permanent death in which the wicked will die for their own sins after the judgement. Those who go to hades can be resurrected, but those who are cast into gehenna will perish forever.

There are reasons for believing that the lake of fire will be created by volcanic activity triggered off by the great earthquake at Christ’s return. The armies involved in the battle of Armageddon will meet their doom in this fire, and those rejected by Christ at the judgement will also be cast into it. Tremendous torment of mind will be experienced by those who are confronted with the flames prior to being cast in, and the smoke that rises from the fire will be a continual testimony to their fate and torment.

Rev. 19:19-20 refers to the beast and false prophet gathered together

to make war with Christ at the battle of Armageddon, resulting in them being “cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.” Ultimately, at the end of the millennium, the dragon will be cast there too (Rev. 20:10). According to Rev. 21:8, the lake burning with fire and brimstone, “is the second death.”

Scripture makes it abundantly clear that the return of Christ will be accompanied by a great conflagration of fire. For example, we read in 2 Thes. 1:7-8 that Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not obey the gospel. They shall be punished with everlasting destruction and exclusion from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power. The heavens will be on fire and the elements shall melt with fervent heat (2 Pet. 3).

Ezk. 38:22 makes reference to God entering into judgement with the invader of Israel with “fire and brimstone,” and Dan. 7:11 says: “The beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame.”

Isa. 30:27-33 is interesting in relation to the subject. Verse 27 refers to the coming of Christ: “Behold, the name of the Lord comes from far, burning with his anger ...” The following verses relate to Christ doing battle with the invader of Israel and destroying him. The invader is referred to as “the Assyrian,” firstly because the ancient Assyrians were a type of the end time invader, and secondly because Iraq, who now occupies the territory of ancient Assyria, will be part of the end time army that invades Israel (Mic. 5:5).

Isa. 30:30-31 says: “And the Lord shall cause His glorious voice to be heard, and shall show the descending blow of His arm, with the fury of His anger, and with the flame of a devouring fire, a cloudburst, thunder and hailstones. The Assyrian will be terror-stricken at the voice of the Lord when He smites with His rod.” Verse 33 then refers to “Topheth” and says that it was ordained by God long ago for the cremation of the king of the north. It is likened to a fire-pit which God has made deep and wide, and piled high with wood, and “the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, will set fire to it.” This “fire-pit” is referred to as a “lake of fire” in Revelation.

“Topheth,” as has been pointed out, was a place in the valley of Hinnom which ran along the south west of Jerusalem, where rubbish from the city was burned, resulting in fire continually burning and smoke rising there. Jesus used it as an example of the ultimate destiny of the wicked. The beast will ultimately be consigned to the fire as a worthless piece of garbage, and God has ordained a “fire-pit” or “lake of fire” for him, where

smoke will ascend forever (Rev. 14:11).

The references to “fire and brimstone” in the prophecies relating to the beast’s destruction, may also be an allusion to the holocaust suffered by Sodom and Gomorrah. “The Lord rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone (sulphur) and fire ... and the smoke went up like the smoke of a furnace” (Gen. 19:24, 28).

It is generally believed that the Lord caused a volcanic explosion, resulting in fire, red hot coals, streams of lava and sulphur spewing out of the mountain. The area around the Dead Sea where Sodom and Gomorrah used to be, certainly bears witness to volcanic convulsion. Because the fire and smoke continued in the area after the eruption, Sodom and Gomorrah are referred to in Jude v7 as suffering “the vengeance of eternal fire.” The original inhabitants of Sodom are obviously not still alive suffering torment in the fire! However, the fire and smoke that would have caused suffering and torment of mind as it engulfed, scorched and suffocated them; continued for ages afterwards as is often the case with a volcanic eruption. It could therefore be fittingly and graphically expressed as “the smoke of their torment.”

In view of all this, it is not impossible that the references to the lake burning with fire and brimstone; the fire pit, and the fire and brimstone raining down from heaven, by which the beast will be destroyed, could all refer to a volcanic explosion and a lake of lava. It could happen near the city of Jerusalem itself where the beast and his army will be gathered for the battle of Armageddon, or it could happen in the Dead Sea area where the invading forces will be driven. One thing is certain: huge convulsions will take place in the land of Israel that could easily trigger off volcanic activity.

Joel 2:20 says that God will remove the northern army from Jerusalem and drive him into a land barren and desolate, his front facing the Dead Sea and his rear to the Mediterranean Sea, and his foul smell shall ascend, because he has done evil things. If the army is facing the Dead Sea and is driven by the Lord, it would head east in the direction of the Dead Sea area. Reference to the stench of dead bodies in that area is interesting in the light of Ezk. 39:11, 15 which refers to a place of graves east of the Dead Sea for those of the northern army who die there.

In conjunction with this, Isa. 34:8-10 could be relevant. It refers to “the day of the Lord’s vengeance, and the year of revenge for the controversy of Zion. The streams (of Edom, east of the Dead Sea) shall be turned into tar, and her soil into brimstone, and the land shall become burning pitch. It shall not be quenched night nor day; the smoke from it

shall go up for ever: from generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it for ever and ever.” This certainly sounds like the effect of volcanic upheaval, and it is generally believed and accepted that the reference in Rev. 14:10-11 to the fire and brimstone and smoke ascending up for ever and ever is taken from the passage in Isa. 34:8-10.

If so, it would seem that when Jesus returns in flaming fire and unleashes his fury on the invading forces of the beast gathered around Jerusalem; violently shaking the land, raining down fire, great hailstones and deafening peals of thunder that cause tremendous vibrations; the armies will panic and flee in the night in an easterly direction toward the Dead Sea, trying to escape what they will then know is divine intervention. Many will die along the way. Mutual slaughter caused by the panic will be one of the causes of this (Ezk. 38:21).

As the army reaches the “fire pit” or “lake of fire” area, - their “Gehenna” or “hellfire,” ordained long ago for the beast; the whole of hell will be let loose by God as morning breaks, in a mighty volcanic explosion. Tremendous torment of mind will take place as fire and brimstone rains down upon them and as the suffocating “smoke” smothers them, as it did to the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah. As the beast inflicts Rome with fire causing the smoke of her burning to rise up forever and ever, (Rev. 17:16. 18:8-9, 18. 19:3) so shall it be done to him!

As is often the case with volcanic eruptions, the smoke will continue to go up after the eruption, “for ever” (Isa. 34:10). (According to Rev. 20:7-10 the lake of fire is still burning 1,000 years later). Because of the torment it caused to those who were overtaken by it, it is referred to as “the smoke of their torment” in Rev. 14:11, “which ascends up for ever and ever.” It does not say “the cry of their torment” ascends for ever.

The smoke rising from that area will be seen from the top of Mt. Zion and will be an everlasting memorial to the fact that the beast, who caused so much torment and death among God’s people, was himself tormented and killed by God in a spectacular fiery judgement. “The wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the Lord shall be as the fat of lambs; they shall consume; they will vanish in smoke” (Ps. 37:20). “Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered: let those who hate Him flee before him. As smoke is driven away, so drive them away: as wax melts before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God” (Ps. 68:1-2).

BODY AND SOUL DESTROYED IN THE FIRE

It is significant to note that in all the verses where reference is made to gehenna, it is not referred to as a place to which disembodied spirits are sent to suffer endless pain and torment. Quite the opposite is taught. Matt. 5:29-30 says the “whole body” shall be cast in. Matt. 10:28 says both body and soul (life) shall be destroyed in gehenna. It does not say that only the body is destroyed and the soul survives. Both body and soul are destroyed. Other verses refer to eyes, hands and feet being cast in (Matt. 18:9. Mk. 9:43, 45, 47).

As stated earlier, Scripture plainly teaches that destruction is the ultimate destiny of the wicked. For this reason the casting of the wicked into gehenna is likened to casting wood, chaff and tares into the fire. Such flammable materials are not cast into the fire to be singed and tormented, but to be burned up and destroyed forever. Such will be the fate of the wicked.

It is true, as we read in the gospels, that there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth by those who are rejected by Jesus at the judgement. But none of those statements teach that they are in the fire weeping and gnashing their teeth as disembodied souls. How could a disembodied soul have teeth?

In the same way that a criminal condemned at court and sentenced to years in prison or death, weeps or gnashes his teeth at the prospect, so also those who are rejected and sentenced by Christ will do the same at the prospect of their fate.

IMMORTAL WORMS?

Mk. 9:43-48 refers to the wicked being cast into gehenna, “into the fire that never shall be quenched: where their worm dieth not ...”

It is important to note that it is the fire and not those cast into it, that shall never be quenched. Likewise, it does not say that the wicked “dieth not,” but that “their worm dieth not.”

These words of Jesus are taken from Isa. 66:24. Starting at v23 we read: “And it shall come to pass that month by month at the new moon, and week by week on the Sabbath, all flesh shall come to worship before me (i.e. at Jerusalem v20) says the Lord. On their way out they shall see the carcasses of the men who have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched and they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh” (i.e. a continual warning of the outcome of

transgression).

Notice what this passage teaches:

A. “Undying worms” and “fire unquenched” are referred to in connection with “the carcasses of men.” The verse is not speaking about living disembodied spirits, but the carcasses of dead people! The language is similar to Jer. 7:33: “For they shall bury in Tophet (Hinnom) till there be no place. And the carcasses of this people shall be meat for the birds ...” (and worms)! This particular verse refers to the fate of the wicked Jews who died at Jerusalem as a result of the Babylonian invasion.

B. It is plainly stated in Isa. 66:24 that people are going to be able to “see” i.e. look upon those who have transgressed whose worms never die and whose fire is never quenched. How would this be possible if they are invisible disembodied spirits in the deep unseen regions of the earth?

C. The locality of the unquenchable fire (gehenna) into which the transgressors are cast, is clearly in some area that people pass after they leave Jerusalem. The context of Isa. 66 demands this. Gehenna is not some mysterious place deep under the crust of the earth where a devil with horns and pitchfork torments wicked souls for eternity. It is a lake of fire on the surface of the earth.

Regarding the reference to “worms”: The Hebrew and Greek words mean maggot. Christ’s reference to maggots in connection with bodies thrown into gehenna, would not have surprised his Jewish contemporaries to whom he was speaking. Trash, filth, dead animals and the bodies of despised criminals thrown into the valley of Hinnom, which landed on or rolled on to one of the rocky ledges or on the fringe of the fire, would soon be infested by maggots. Maggot-ridden carcasses would be a familiar sight to any traveller who passed by. Flies breed rapidly and constantly in masses of refuse which become seething heaps of corruption as the worms eat their way through the dead carcasses. These were the worms to which Jesus referred when he said: “Their worm dieth not.” But Jesus did not mean that each individual worm lived forever! He was not propounding some new doctrine on immortal worms!

Maggots are the larvae which develop from eggs deposited by flies. They hatch from the eggs, eat the flesh, continue in the larval form only a few days, then go through pupation or metamorphosis and finally emerge as flies. The worms don’t die; they become flies! Later, the flies die. These worms therefore “die not” but continue to develop into flies just as any normal, healthy worm! The flies continue to deposit their eggs as long as there are dead bodies or other matter for the larvae to feed on.

UNQUENCHABLE AND EVERLASTING FIRE

Reference to gehenna fire being “unquenchable” does not necessarily mean it will never cease burning. In Scripture it is quite common for this seemingly absolute expression to have a limited meaning. For example, there are a number of Scriptures in which God promises to send fire upon the city of Jerusalem along with its trees and people - an unquenchable fire - a fire that “shall burn, and shall not be quenched” (Jer. 4:4. 7:20. 17:4, 27. Isa. 1:28-31. Ezk. 20:45-49).

Most of these references relate to the destruction by fire caused by the Babylonians. They besieged the city of Jerusalem and burned it to the ground (Jer. 51:13). However, the fire did not continue to burn throughout eternity. The references to the fire being unquenchable do not mean it would never go out. Unquenchable means it would not be quenched until it had completed its destructive work. No man or body of men would be able to extinguish it and prevent it from completing its work of total consumption.

The same applies to the references which refer to gehenna as “everlasting fire.” Jer. 17:4 for example records God as saying that a fire had been kindled in His anger “which shall burn forever” against the Jews. This did not mean that His anger would continue throughout eternity, forcing the Jews to remain captive in Babylon, never allowing them to return to their land. After 70 years captivity, God’s mercy rejoiced against judgement and he allowed them to return and rebuild their nation. Reference in Jer. 17:4 to the Lord causing His anger to burn “for ever” meant that His judgement would continue for a particular age (a long period from a human standpoint) that was required to fulfil its purpose.

In Scripture, “for ever” and “everlasting” do not always mean unending. These terms according to Parkhurst, “denote duration or continuance of time, but with great variety.” In its original form “forever” literally means for an age, and “everlasting” means age lasting, without fixing duration. The duration is determined by the scope of that of which it is affirmed. If it is affirmed of God, it is obviously to be understood in the sense of being unending, but if it is affirmed of fire burning a city or human bodies it is obviously of restricted duration.

When we read that God instituted circumcision as an “everlasting covenant” (Gen. 17:13) it is evident, in view of the fact that it has been superseded by the new covenant in Christ, that “everlasting” meant an age that would last for considerable time, but which would ultimately end. The same applies to the Levitical priesthood which was also referred to as

an “everlasting priesthood” (Ex. 40:15. Num. 25:13). Since the advent of Jesus Christ, who is a priest “after the order of Melchizedec,” the old Levitical priesthood has been “changed” (Heb. 7:12) and superseded.

In Ex. 21:6 reference is made to a master boring his servant’s ear with an aul resulting in service “forever.” Philemon was told by Paul to receive his servant Onesimus back “forever” (Phm. v15). Daniel said to king Darius: “O king, live forever” (Dan. 6:21). The Israelites who came out of Egypt under Moses were told to obey the law “forevermore” (2 Kng. 17:37). Failure to be obedient would result in the nation being oppressed and spoiled “evermore” (Deu. 28:29). And Jer. 23:40 refers to this as “an everlasting reproach unto you, and a perpetual shame which shall not be forgotten.”

In all of these cases it is evident that the terms “for ever” and “everlasting” do not mean unlimited and endless duration. They simply mean age-lasting, involving a long but indefinite period, and the same applies to the references to everlasting and unquenchable fire.

This is particularly evident in the reference in Jude v7 to Sodom and Gomorrah suffering the vengeance of “eternal fire.” These cities are not still burning today. They were overthrown “in a moment” (Lam. 4:6) by a massive volcanic eruption, and were reduced to ashes (2 Pet. 2:6. Deu. 29:23). “Eternal fire” in this case signifies a fire whose results are permanent, and not a fire that burns on endlessly.

The fire that consumed Sodom and Gomorrah may have burned for considerable time, and the smoke from it which “went up as the smoke of a furnace” (Gen. 19:28) may have continued to ascend for a long period of time. As suggested earlier, there may have even been a lake of fire caused by rivers of lava, which engulfed the wicked inhabitants of the cities, causing great panic and torment of mind.

In relation to this, it should be noted that Jude says the eternal fire suffered by Sodom and Gomorrah is set forth as “an example” of the fate awaiting the wicked on judgement day. It is therefore testified by Mal. 4:3 that on that day the wicked will become ashes.

To offset this, those who insist that the wicked will suffer eternal torment in hell, quote the statement of Jesus in Matt. 25:46 that “these shall go away into everlasting punishment.”

Several points should be noted:

A. The punishment is inflicted by Christ after he has returned to earth and established his throne (v31), not at death prior to his return.

B. “Everlasting punishment” does not define the nature of the punishment. It certainly does not define it as everlasting pain and misery.

Punishment may take a variety of forms. Paul defines it in 2 Thes. 1:9 where he refers to the wicked being “punished with everlasting destruction” i.e.annihilation, or “perish” (Jn. 3:16).

C. Jesus said the fate of the wicked is “everlasting punishment not everlasting punishing and there is a difference. The former speaks of a final decisive act, and the latter speaks of a never ending process.

8. PURGATORY.

Because the Roman Catholics adopted the philosophy that of all who die, many are too good for hell but not good enough for heaven, they invented a “half-way house to heaven,” and called it “purgatory.” It is called purgatory because it is believed to be a place of spiritual purging. They claim that it is a place in which souls can be cleansed and purified by suffering, from the not so serious and pardonable sins that prevented them from getting to heaven. They also claim that the sufferings of those in purgatory can be relieved or shortened by the granting of indulgences, or by the saying of masses for their souls. Generally, the masses must be paid for, and bequests have been encouraged and received so that they might be said. It is one of the greatest sources for money ever invented!

The twenty second article of religion of the church of England truly describes the doctrine of purgatory as a “fond thing vainly invented.” There is no hint whatever in Scripture about an intermediate state between death and judgement, or of the opportunity to be purged of sins after death before meeting Christ. This teaching is a classical example of the indictment levelled by Jesus against the church in his day: “In vain do you worship me, teaching for doctrine the traditions of men.”

Heb. 9:27 plainly teaches that “it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgement,” and it is declared in Isa. 38:18 that those who go down into the pit cannot hope for God’s truth. There is no provision in these statements, or any others in Scripture, for an intermediate state in which spiritual development and progress can be made after death. (For comments on the reference to preaching to spirits in prison in 1 Pet. 3:19-20 see pages 102-105).

The doctrine of purgatory is one of many examples of extremes and expedients that have eventuated as a result of the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. It is a serious error because it implies that men can be redeemed, not because Christ suffered to destroy sin, but because they suffer pain in purgatory themselves. Having failed, or not attempted during this life on earth to crucify the sins of the flesh, they are to be

roasted out of them under the earth!

Even if there were such a place as purgatory, no one in the Catholic church or any other church would have the right or authority to judge or decide who went there. Christ alone is judge. Only he knows the hearts and motives of men. For man to exercise that kind of judgement would be to usurp Christ's office. The apostle Paul gives very sound and serious advice in this respect in 1 Cor. 4:5: "Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who will bring to light the things hidden by darkness, and will make manifest the inner motives and secret intentions of the heart. Then shall every man have his due approval from God." Paul wouldn't even judge himself, let alone others (v3).

Imagining that money paid for masses or bequeathing things of monetary value could relieve or shorten the time of suffering in purgatory and get a person into heaven, is a particularly immoral, unethical and despicable doctrine. It implies that salvation can be procured by money and the works and effort of man, not by the sacrifice of Christ. But the apostle Peter plainly declares that we cannot be redeemed with corruptible things such as silver and gold, but only by the precious blood of Christ (1 Pet. 1:18). Salvation is a free gift of God as a result of His grace, and once money is paid out in an attempt to secure salvation, God's grace is nullified and violated. When Simon the sorcerer attempted to purchase the gift of God with money, Peter said to him: "Thy money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money ..." (Act. 8:20). It is offensive to God to try and pay for what He has given as a free gift.

Ps. 49:7-8 is adamant that no one can redeem anyone else by paying ransom money to God, because the redemption of their soul is too precious and costly. The price they can pay can never suffice, no matter how much it is, because redemption can only come through the precious blood of Christ. If men die without their sins being atoned for by the blood of Christ, all the money in the world paid out afterwards will be of no avail.

How convenient it would be if a person could fail to do God's will during this life and be given a second chance after death! If such a doctrine were true, people would be encouraged to pursue their own pleasures during their life in the flesh, without a serious commitment to God and His ways, believing that opportunity would be provided later to get to heaven. Enjoying the best of both worlds - having your cake and eating it too is a very attractive and appealing doctrine and not surprisingly a very popular one. It is clearly a flesh-inspired doctrine

based on the carnal reasoning of man. Without the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, this doctrine would never have eventuated. As in so many cases of false doctrine, the immortality of the soul is the root cause.

The story of the interplay of hell and penance, and purgatory and indulgences in the Roman Catholic church is a very long one. Suffice it to say, that in an age when all education was controlled by the church; when the printing press had not been invented; the church kept its masses in ignorance, and showed considerable psychological insight by playing on the fear of hell. Once that fear was offered a refuge in the shape of purgatory, through the channel of indulgences, considerable revenues were assured to the church. Hell and purgatory were both the means by which the church maintained its influence, and the cause of its wealth and prosperity.

LIMBO

In addition to purgatory, Roman Catholic teaching has also included another “half-way house to heaven,” which they call limbo. This idea appears to have grown up during the middle ages.

Limbo was believed to be a place on the border or fringe of hell, where neither the joy of heaven nor the misery of hell and purgatory prevailed.

Traditionally two kinds of limbo have been spoken about. There is the “father’s limbo” (*limbus patrum*), where the souls of good people were kept, who died in Old Testament times before Christ. It is believed that they were released by Christ after his resurrection to join him in heaven. The other limbo is the “children’s limbo” (*limbus infantum*), where “unbaptized” infants are supposed to be kept.

This teaching received strong endorsement as late as 1905 when Pope Pius X declared: “Children who die without being baptized go to limbo, where they don’t enjoy God, but don’t suffer either, because whilst carrying the original sin... They don’t deserve paradise, but neither do they deserve hell or purgatory.”

One of the current members of the International Theological Commission made this comment: “The limbo hypothesis was the common teaching of the church until the 1950s. In the past 50 years it was just quietly dropped.” (*Catholic Online*, Dec. 2, 2005). The present Pope stated as long ago as 1985 that “he would abandon it, since it was only a theological hypothesis.” To affirm that the teaching on limbo is “only a

theological hypothesis” is quite an admission. But why just pick on limbo? The teaching on purgatory is equally a theological hypothesis, or, more to the point: theological fiction. In fact, as we have seen, most of Roman Catholic teaching fits into this category.

Pope John Paul II was known to be unhappy about the teaching on limbo; he had it removed from the church’s new catechism in 1992, and later asked the International Theological Commission of the Roman Catholic Church (an advisory body of 30 members) to look into it and produce “a more coherent and enlightened” explanation. The present Pope, Benedict XVI, while still a cardinal, led this group of theologians.

At the end of November 2005 the Commission met to complete its work examining “the fate of babies who have died without baptism.” It is widely expected that the Commission will recommend the abandoning of the church’s concept of limbo, and that the Pope will approve of this.

Another reason for the Church’s need to reconsider this matter was indicated recently by the Theologian of the Pontifical Household, Cardinal Georges Cottier, who remarked: “We need to consider it and take into account the fact that many children die victims of modern evils - hunger in the world, for example, and many ills coming from huge social disorder and misery ...” It has been suggested that the concept of limbo may deter possible converts, particularly “in underdeveloped countries where the Church is keen to see its support continue to grow” (*The Daily Telegraph*, November 30, 2005).

Whether or not the Roman Catholic Church finally abandons “the limbo hypothesis,” this whole debate is a timely reminder to us of the false system of belief that gave rise to such a concept in the first place. The existence of limbo could only be postulated on the basis of belief in the immortality of the soul, the doctrine of “original sin,” infant sprinkling in place of true baptism, heaven as the destination for the souls of the righteous and a fiery hell to punish the souls of the wicked. Not one of these doctrines is taught in Scripture and, limbo apart, they seem set to remain the doctrines of the Church. As Isaiah says, “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isaiah 8:20).

As far as the Word of God is concerned, babies that die, end up in the same place as their parents, namely, the grave. This is evident in 2 Sam. 12:23 which refers to the death of David’s new-born child. David said: “I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.” Where did David go when he died? In his own words recorded in 1 Kng. 2:2: “I go the way of all the earth.” 1 Kng. 2:10 says “David slept with his fathers, and was buried in

the city of David.” Act. 2:29 puts it like this: “David is dead and buried and his sepulchre is with us to this day.” Verse 34 clearly states that “David is not ascended into the heavens.” He is, as we read in v31: “in hell” i.e. hades - the grave. And that is obviously where his child went seeing David joined him at death!

The same applies to a still-born child. Job 3 says that such a child goes to the same place as the wicked (i.e. the grave) and sleeps there. This is confirmed in Job 10:18-19 where we read that a still-born child goes directly from the womb to the grave and is as if he never existed.



CHAPTER EIGHT THE SECOND COMING - MILLENNIUM - INFANT SPRINKLING

9. THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST.

The second coming of Christ is a major Bible doctrine. 318 verses in the New Testament refer to it (i.e. one verse in every 25). And there are 1527 direct and indirect references to it in the Old Testament.

According to Scripture, Christ's return to earth will be literal, personal and visible - the most dramatic event in world history. We read in Act. 1:11 that the very same Jesus who was seen literally and physically ascending to heaven will be seen descending in the same literal physical manner. Rev. 1:7: "Behold, he comes with clouds, and every eye shall see him." Zech. 14: "His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives which is by Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives shall split in two..." v5: "And the Lord shall come accompanied by his holy ones." Verse 9: "And the Lord shall become king over all the earth: in that day there shall be one Lord and his name one" i.e. Yahweh not Allah! Verse 10: "All the land from Geba to Rimmon (an 80k stretch of Judean hill country) shall be turned into a plain and the site of Jerusalem shall be heaved up." Prophecies such as this indicate how literal and physical the second coming and its effects will be.

Titus 2:3 refers to the second coming as "the blessed hope" of the Christian faith. It is the only hope because there is only "one hope" according to Eph. 4:4. The reason why the second coming is the only hope is because it will not be until Jesus returns and raises the dead, that immortality will be bestowed and his kingdom on earth established i.e. paradise restored. Without the second coming and resurrection, there can be no immortality.

As pointed out previously, the Roman Catholic hope in an immortal soul that leaves the body at death to ascend to heaven, is a vain and futile hope. The doctrine of the immortality of the soul, as we have seen, is one of the many vain human philosophies originated by pagans which has been superimposed upon and negates the Word of God, for it eliminates the need for Christ's return, the resurrection and judgement. For this reason the doctrine of the second coming takes a back seat in Roman Catholic teaching. It is commonly believed that the coming of Christ is a spiritual, not a literal event, and was fulfilled at the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D.70, or is fulfilled in conversion or in death.

Many minds have been closed by tradition to the teaching of Scripture, that the second coming is a definite future event; literal, personal and visible - a direct and manifest divine intervention into human affairs on earth, resulting in the battle of Armageddon, the destruction of all of God's enemies, and the establishment of God's kingdom upon earth with the new Jerusalem at the centre. Many prophecies in the Bible relate to this and predict events that will occur as signs beforehand in the end time era. We are clearly living in that era now.

10. THE MILLENNIUM.

The Bible teaches that at the return of Christ, he will establish God's kingdom on earth and reign from Jerusalem for a thousand years (Rev. 20). Roman Catholicism however, believes that their church is the kingdom of God and that the rule of their church over the nations will be the millennial reign. This teaching rules out the need for Christ to return to reign for one thousand years upon the earth, and for that reason most Roman Catholics do not expect it or talk about it.

Gibbon, in his history of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire, states: "The assurance of a millennium was carefully inculcated by a succession of fathers, from Justin Martyr and Irenaeus, who conversed with the immediate disciples of the apostles, down to Lactantius, who was preceptor to the son of Constantine... However, the doctrine of Christ's reign upon earth was at length rejected as the absurd invention of heresy and fanaticism." In the past, people were actually put to death for believing and teaching the literal second coming of Christ and his millennial reign on earth.

So then, originally, the millennial reign of Christ was enthusiastically believed and anticipated, but the time came when it was rejected due to being negated by other false doctrines, and replaced by other vain hopes. This was in fulfilment of the apostle Paul's warning recorded in 2 Tim. 4:3-4: "The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine... they will turn their ears away from the truth and shall turn to fables."

11. INFANT SPRINKLING (CHRISTENING).

The Roman Catholics regard their practise of sprinkling babies with water as baptism, but in actual fact it negates baptism.

The Greek word translated baptism is "baptizo," and it means to dip, plunge, immerse, submerge. Scripture makes it clear that those who were

baptised in New Testament times, were completely immersed in water, not sprinkled with water. See Matt. 3:16. Jn. 3:23. Act. 8:36-39.

According to Rom. 6:3-6, baptism is symbolic of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. Going down into the water symbolizes death and burial, and emerging from the water symbolizes resurrection. Verse 4 clearly states that baptism is a burial.

Would a dead body sprinkled with a handful or two of dirt be regarded as being buried? Did not Christ's burial involve the complete covering and encasement of his body in a sealed tomb? Burial in baptism likewise requires being completely covered by water.

Sprinkling infants with water therefore nullifies the symbolism of baptism. Worse still: it nullifies the repentance and faith that was required as a condition for baptism. It is stated many times in Scripture that in order to qualify for baptism, each candidate must firstly repent of their sins and believe the gospel. See Act. 2:37-38. 8:12-13, 35-38. Mk. 16:15-16.

It is not surprising therefore that there is not one example in the Bible of a baby being baptized!

Sprinkling babies who are too young to believe and understand, and who can never remember or recall what took place, is a vain and meaningless ritual to them. It nullifies the vital prerequisite of faith and renders their "baptism" invalid. The false doctrine of infant sprinkling has therefore resulted in millions of people thinking they have been baptised when in actual fact they have not been obedient to this command at all.

It is clearly taught in the Bible that baptism is a personal commitment that can only be made by the person being baptised, and no one else, not even parents on behalf of the child. There is not one example in Scripture of someone deciding for someone else to be baptized.

The false practise of infant sprinkling has also given rise to the false appointments and titles of "god-father" and "god-mother." Such titles are totally foreign to the Bible and contrary to its teaching. They are both unbiblical and anti-biblical. Jesus clearly warned us not to call any man on earth "father" in a spiritual sense (Matt. 23:9). "God-father" therefore adds insult to injury. As for "god-mother": it is not surprising that such a title originated in a church where Mary is called the mother of God!



CHAPTER NINE
CLERGY-LAITY DISTINCTION - CONFESSION -
LONG ROBES - THE MASS IN LATIN - THE EUCHARIST -
TRANSUBSTANTIATION - CANONISATION - CELIBACY -
RULES ABOUT FOODS AND HOLY DAYS - SHORT HAIR ON
NUNS - PRIESTS ADDRESSED AS “FATHER”

12. CLERGY-LAITY DISTINCTION.

The Roman Catholic practise of making a distinction between clergy and laity, and only regarding the clergy as priests is unscriptural, and negates the priesthood of believers.

The New Testament does not confine “priests” to an elite group within Christ’s church, but teaches that all believers are priests. See Rev. 1:6. 5:10. 20:6.

Under the old covenant in Old Testament times, the tribe of Levi was separated from the other tribes of Israel in order to provide priests. But that old order which involved animal sacrifices and other rituals, prefigured the atoning work of Christ and has been fulfilled and superseded by his sacrifice. He is now the high priest and all of his true followers are priests. Each and every believer has the divinely given right to approach the throne of God in prayer and praise through the mediatorship of Christ!

There is no authority given in the New Testament for a distinctive, exclusive, elite group of priests. The establishment of such a group amounts to reverting to the outdated, inferior system of priesthood of the old covenant.

In taking this course, the Roman Catholic church has demonstrated its profound ignorance of the Word of God.

13. CONFESSION.

Making a distinction between clergy and laity, resulting in an exclusive priesthood, has led to men and women in the Roman Catholic church having to go to the priests to confess their sins and to procure forgiveness. It is believed that forgiveness of sins is procured for the people by the priests.

Now, the Bible certainly encourages us to confess our sins to one another (Jam. 5:16), but it is clear from the context of the statement that it relates to one Christian confessing to a fellow Christian. Because each

Christian is a priest, it is a case of one priest confessing to a fellow priest! There is nothing in this statement or any other in the New Testament, that implies there was an elite group of priests to whom people must go to confess their sins.

Jesus made it clear in his teaching that if someone offends another, the proper course of action is for that person to go to the person offended, and make confession to him (Matt. 18). Going to a so-called priest instead, short circuits this procedure.

It is also made clear in Scripture that if anyone sins against God and offends Him, they can confess their sins personally and directly through Jesus Christ. There is no other mediator besides Christ and the intrusion of a so-called “father confessor” is an impertinence. Such a person is a usurper, usurping the exclusive status of Christ.

14. LONG ROBES.

The custom of Roman Catholic priests wearing long black robes as a distinctive attire is also unbiblical. Such a custom reverts to the Levitical priests under the old covenant who wore robes. They were commanded to do this but there is no such commandment given to the priests of the new covenant. One will search the New Testament in vain to find such a commandment. Quite the opposite in fact, is the case. Jesus warned his followers to beware of those who love and desire to walk in long robes (Mk. 12:38. Lk. 20:46).

It is significant that the robes of Roman Catholic priests are black, considering that God never commanded the priests under the old covenant to wear black. Black is a dark and sometimes dismal colour - the funeral colour - the colour of mourning. Because famines cause dark and dismal times during which death can take place, the colour black sometimes signifies famine in Scripture (Lam. 4:8-9. 5:10. Rev. 6:5-6). In view of the famine of the true teaching of the Word of God in the Roman Catholic church, it is appropriate that the priests wear black robes! Cp. Am. 8:11 where the lack of true teaching of God’s Word is called a “famine.”

In contrast to the black worn by Roman Catholic priests, Jesus and his true priests are depicted in Scripture wearing white, which symbolizes righteousness (Rev. 3:4-5, 18. 6:11. 7:9, 13. 19:8, 14). There is as much contrast between black and white robes as there is between Roman Catholic teaching and true Biblical teaching.

15. THE MASS IN THE LATIN LANGUAGE.

For centuries it was the custom in the Roman Catholic church throughout the world, for the mass to be spoken in Latin, and it is still done in some churches. The result was that those who could not speak Latin (which represented the majority of Roman Catholics) could not understand what was being said.

Three things should be pointed out in relation to this:

A. There is no record in the New Testament of Jesus or the apostles ever speaking, preaching, teaching or praying in Latin.

B. Neither Jesus nor the apostles ever commanded that the Latin language should be spoken.

C. The apostle Paul said he would rather speak 5 words in the church that could be understood, than 10,000 that could not be understood (1 Cor. 14:19). In his view, it was madness to speak words in the church that people could not understand (1 Cor. 14:23). While it is true that Paul is relating to the gift of tongues, the principle equally applies here.

16. THE EUCHARIST.

The Roman Catholics permit the clergy, who they call priests, to partake of both the bread and the wine, but they only allow the people (laity) to partake of the bread, not the wine. They justify this with the argument that seeing the blood is in the body, and the bread represents the body, the bread is sufficient to represent both the body and blood.

If this is the case, why didn't Jesus just give the bread and say: "This is my body and blood." And why do Roman Catholic priests have both the bread and wine if the bread alone is sufficient? It is clearly taught in Matt. 26:26-28 that Jesus took both the bread and the cup of wine and gave them both to his disciples to eat and drink in remembrance of him.

Roman Catholic practice in relation to the Eucharist, not only negates the wine but also nullifies the priesthood of believers by only allowing the clergy, who alone are regarded as priests, to partake of the wine.

There are no grounds for the view that only the 12 apostles at the last supper when the Eucharist was instituted, were priests, and therefore all the other believers were excluded from participation.

If it were true that only the apostles were priests, and therefore the other people cannot partake, why do the Roman Catholics allow them to partake of the bread? Why are they not excluded from partaking of both the bread and wine?

This is a very inconsistent doctrine and practise. Where in Scripture does it ever refer to some members of the church only being allowed to have the bread but not the wine, and others who can have both?

That the words spoken by Jesus to the apostles when he instituted the Eucharist equally applied to the whole church, is evident in 1 Cor. 11:23-29, for those same words spoken by him are quoted here and applied to all the members of the church at Corinth. It is evident from this that all the members of the church were partaking of both the bread and wine.

As for the custom of vicars in the church of England drinking all the wine that is left in the chalice after the people have had their sip: The words of Jesus: “drink ye all of it” (Matt. 26:27 A.V.) are not a command to do this. The words mean: “drink of it all of you” or “each of you drink of it.”

17. TRANSUBSTANTIATION.

Transubstantiation means to change from one substance into another and defines the doctrine of the Roman Catholic church which teaches that the bread and wine are literally changed by divine power into the actual flesh of Christ, although there is no outward change. The council of Trent condemned anyone who said the bread and wine were only symbolic.

The Roman Catholics therefore virtually worship the bread and wine, ascribing to them a presence and power not ascribed to normal bread and wine. Believing that the substance of the bread or wafer has been changed into the being of Christ, it is offered as a propitiatory sacrifice.

No such vain ritual is recorded in the Bible. The words: “This is my body ...” means “this represents my body,” as in the case of the words: “the seed is the Word of God” (Lk. 8:11) which mean the seed represents the Word of God. Many other examples could be given such as: “The 7 stars are (represent) the angels of the 7 churches, and the 7 lampstands are (represent) the 7 churches” (Rev. 1:20).

Jesus’ words: “this is my body ...” were spoken before his sacrifice took place, before his blood was shed, so it is evident that his words could not be interpreted to mean that the wine was his literal blood. At the time his blood was still in his body. The same words now spoken after his sacrifice have not changed in meaning.

The Lord’s supper is a commemoration of his sacrifice, not a repetition of it. The sacrifice of Jesus has been offered once and for all and needs no repetition. To imagine that his sacrifice is repeated at every

Eucharist, implies that his one grand offering at Calvary was not sufficient. This is a fundamental doctrinal error that undermines the complete and total efficacy of his sacrifice. It comes dangerously close in principle to reducing it to the same level as the animal sacrifices under the old covenant. Due to their inadequacies and inability to deal with sin once and for all, they were continually repeated (Heb. 9:24-. 10:14).

Even if the flesh and blood of Jesus could be literally transferred to the bread and wine, of what profit could this possibly be? According to Heb. 2:14 the flesh and blood of Jesus was the same as ours, i.e. mortal and corruptible, containing the propensity of sin. For this reason, when speaking about his own flesh, he said: “The flesh profits nothing” (Jn. 6:63). The reason for him saying this is because the Jews, who so often misinterpreted his teaching, took him literally when he said: “Except you eat the flesh of the son of man, and drink his blood, you have no life in you” (v53-56). They were offended by the statement and virtually said: “How can we possibly eat your flesh and drink your blood?” In answer to that the Roman Catholics say: “No problem; we have found a way of doing it in the doctrine of substantiation.”

When the Jews said: “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” in response to the statement of Jesus that eternal life necessitated the eating of his flesh, he did not reply by telling them there would be a transubstantiation. He said: “It is the Spirit that gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I speak to you, they are spirit and they are life” (Jn. 6:62-63).

It is clear from this that the words “except you eat the flesh of the son of man and drink his blood you have no life in you” are metaphorical for the words which proceeded from the flesh and blood person of Jesus. The words “flesh and blood” are put by metonymy for the person who spoke the words (compare the same expression in Matthew 16:17). Peter understood this for he said: “You have the words of eternal life” (Jn.6:68).

There is a further reason for denying the doctrine of substantiation. The bread not eaten at masses becomes mouldy like any other bread, but the literal body of Jesus was preserved from corruption at death (Act. 2:31). It is not now corruptible. There has not been any validated evidence that bread “consecrated” by a Roman Catholic priest becomes anything other than what it is - natural bread!

18. CANONISATION OF DEAD SAINTS.

Canonisation describes the Roman Catholic practise of formally and officially acknowledging a person as a saint, and enrolling that person in their list of saints.

To qualify to be a saint in the Roman Catholic church, a person usually has to have a reputation for performing miracles or exceptionally good works and noble deeds. There is generally a period of at least 50 years between death and canonisation, and it is only as a result of canonising, that a person is called a “saint” or “blessed.” It is not easy to be a saint in the Roman Catholic church! It is believed that such saints act as intermediaries between God and man, and that prayers can be offered to them.

In the same way that Roman Catholic doctrine negates the priesthood of believers by making a distinction between the priests and the people, so it has also done to the sainthood of believers by making saints an elite group separate from, and superior to the people.

The Bible teaching that Christ alone is mediator between God and man is also nullified by the teaching that saints are intermediaries.

As far as Scripture is concerned, all believers are saints. There are many verses in the New Testament which teach and demonstrate this and it is unbelievable ignorance on the part of the Roman Catholic church to not understand and teach this. For example see: Rom. 1:7. 1 Cor. 1:2. Eph. 1:1 etc. etc.

The word “saints” has been translated from the Greek word *hagios* which means holy, sacred, consecrated. The word “sanctified” is derived from it. All believers are sanctified in Christ and are called to be saints and are therefore holy to God (1 Cor. 1:2).

There is no justification whatever for only giving an elite and exclusive group of people the title “saint.” To make such a distinction, elevating some above others, is to go completely against the spirit of Christ which does not allow disciples to make distinctions among themselves. Only Christ, has the authority to elevate men and make them distinct. It is a clear case of usurping his authority for anyone to attempt to do this, and can only be regarded as arrogance and presumption.

19. CELIBACY.

According to Roman Catholic dogma, enforced in 1139A.D. priests are not allowed to marry and must remain celibate. In view of the

fact that all believers are priests, this doctrine, if true, would nullify the matrimonial rights of all believers!

It is true that the apostle Paul commended those who refrained from marriage in order that they might be able to exercise their ministry more single-mindedly and with less distraction, but he never commanded it. In fact, he said that he had the right to take a Christian wife on his missionary journeys as in the case of other apostles like Peter (1 Cor. 9:5). It is evident from this that Peter was married. This is confirmed by the reference to Peter's wife in Matt. 8:14. Mk. 1:30.

Bishops were also married (1 Tim. 3:2. Titus 1:6).

If Paul's advice in 1 Cor. 7:9 that "it is better to marry than burn with sexual desire" had been accepted by the Roman Catholic church as applying to all men, the occurrence of immorality among the priests involving fornication, adultery, homosexuality, and child abuse, which has surfaced in recent years (and is only the tip of the iceberg), would have been far less of a problem.

In New Testament times, Christians were free to decide for themselves whether they would marry or remain celibate (1 Cor. 7). Making laws and rules forbidding marriage is actually referred to in 1 Tim. 4:3 as one of the signs of an apostate Christianity. The Roman Catholic church clearly and distinctly fits into that category! It is the only church among all the sects and denominations in Christendom which forbids its priests to marry, not to mention nuns.

20. COMMANDING TO ABSTAIN FROM MEATS.

Not only does Paul say in 1 Tim. 4:3 that forbidding to marry would be a sign of departure from the faith, but also "commanding to abstain from meats."

The Roman Catholic church for centuries required her people to not eat meat on Fridays, but fish instead, confirming that she fitted into the category described by Paul. There is of course, no commandment in the New Testament to not eat meat on Fridays. It is a commandment of man, not God. In Col. 2:19-23 Paul says that rules commanding Christians to not taste or eat certain things are "commandments and doctrines of men," and come about as a result of "not holding fast to the head" i.e. not being led by Christ's teaching and commandments.

Again, in Rom. 14:17 Paul says the kingdom of God is not about eating this and not eating that, but righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. And it is declared in Heb. 13:9 that "it is a good thing for the

heart to be established and strengthened by grace, not with meats (i.e. food regulations) which have not profited those who have been preoccupied with, and governed by them”. (Like those under the old covenant Heb. 9:9-10).

21. HOLY DAYS.

Various “holy days” have been appointed and observed by the Roman Catholics that are not mentioned in the New Testament and were not observed until some centuries later. The apostle Paul’s verdict on this is stated in Col. 2:16-17 where he says: “Don’t let anyone exercise judgement or control over you in relation to what you should eat or drink or in respect to keeping holy days.”

Paul is actually referring to holy days appointed by God under the old covenant which had become obsolete. They were merely a shadow of things to come, but the solid reality is Christ (Col. 2:17). If Paul could speak the way he did about holy days that were originally appointed by God, what would he say about those appointed by man, such as the ones observed by the Roman Catholic church?

To the Christians who reverted to the observance of special holy days and months, seasons and years that were observed under the old covenant, Paul said: “ ... how can you turn to the weak and beggarly elements ... I am afraid for you ...” (Gal. 4:9-11).

22. SHORT HAIR ON NUNS.

In 1 Cor. 11:6-16 the apostle Paul relates to the subject of hair length on male and female members of the church. He says that long hair on a man is a shameful thing, but it is a glory to a woman to have long hair. It is reasonable to infer from this that it is according to divine order that man has short hair and a female long hair, and that they were originally created like this.

If both sexes are wearing the same or similar attire (a robe or trousers), and neither are wearing make-up, the main external distinguishing mark between masculinity and femininity would be the hair length, and this is probably one of the reasons why God created woman with long hair and man with short hair.

If so, it would be a violation of divine order for a man to let his hair grow long like a woman, and for a woman to cut her hair short like a man. From a divine point of view, it would amount to a man trying to be or look

like a woman, and a woman trying to be or look like a man. In other words: mixing and confusing the sexes; blurring the boundaries between masculinity and femininity.

According to Deu. 22:5, God did not permit women to wear men's clothing, or men to wear women's clothing. Those who did so were an "abomination" to Him. It is not surprising therefore that God would show displeasure towards men who wore hair like a woman and women who wore hair like a man. As Paul says: "It is a shameful thing for a man to have long hair."

He also says in 1 Cor. 11:5 that if a woman's head is not covered (i.e. by long hair v15) she dishonours her head (i.e. man v3). Why? Because in having short hair she is trying to look like man - attempting to be equal with man in appearance. Such an attempt, in view of man being the head of woman (1 Cor. 11:3), would be an act of insubordination. Long hair on a woman was therefore an external sign that she accepted the headship of man and was under the power or authority of her husband, and the angels are ever watchful in relation to this matter (v10).

In view of this, it is not surprising that Paul implies in 1 Cor. 11:5-6 that a woman who cuts her hair short like a man might just as well have all her hair shaven off. It would of course be a shameful and humiliating thing, especially in New Testament times, for a woman to have all her hair shaven off and become bald. It was as shameful to God for a woman to cut her hair short as it was to shave it all off. Paul therefore says that a woman who cuts her hair short might just as well shave it all off because God is equally offended either way.

It is clear from what Paul says, that it is a shameful thing for a woman to have short hair. It is a violation of God's appointment and order for women. It would therefore be manifest ignorance of the Word of God for a church to require women who dedicate their lives in service to God, to have short hair. And yet this is precisely what the Roman Catholic church required of nuns especially in convents during centuries of her history. They cut off their hair which was a God-given "covering" for their head, and put a black hood over their head as a covering instead!

23. PRIESTS ADDRESSED AS "FATHER"

"Papa" is the Latin word for Pope and means father, and the Roman Catholic church teaches its people to address not only Him, but also the priests by this title. This is in direct opposition to the instruction of Jesus who said: "Call no man on earth your father, for one is your

father who is in heaven” (Matt. 23:9).

When Jesus says “father” he obviously means it in a spiritual sense.

The New Testament acknowledges the Fatherhood of God and the headship of Christ, but does not allow any pre-eminence amongst the disciples. Christ himself sternly rebuked his disciples more than once for giving way to this human weakness (Mk. 9:33-37).

Roman Catholicism, which has a man at the head called “holy father” is well astray from the spirit of New Testament teaching in this respect.



CHAPTER TEN
PREFERENCE FOR PETER - PAPAL INFALLIBILITY -
MARIOLATRY - PERPETUAL VIRGINITY -MONASTICISM
AND ASCETICISM - INDULGENCES - RELICS - IMAGES

THE RISE OF THE POPE

When the apostles established churches throughout the world, a bishop (pastor) was appointed in each church to preside over its affairs and care for its spiritual welfare. All bishops were equal, irrespective of the locality and size of their church. But when the Roman emperor Constantine came on the scene and championed the cause of Christianity, the power of the bishop of Rome was inevitably enhanced and started to increase. Eventually, the bishop of Rome became dominant over other church bishops. Under Constantine, Christianity was tolerated and supported throughout the Roman world, but it was not until A.D. 391, in the reign of Theodosius 1, that it became the official state religion.

Siricius (A.D. 384-399) was the first bishop of Rome to use the title “Pope,” and he claimed that “care of all the churches was committed to him.” A later Pope, Leo 1 (A.D. 440-461), appropriated the old heathen title, Pontifex Maximus (supreme pontiff) which the emperors had discarded. He regarded the church “as a monarchy ruled by the Pope acting on Peter’s behalf.”

Under Justinian, the bishop of Rome gained control over municipal and provincial government in Italy, and Boniface 111 obtained from the emperor Phocas (A.D. 602-610) the decree that the “apostolic church of Rome was head of all the churches.” (Taken from the Medieval Papacy by Geoffrey Barraclough page 26).

The position of Rome and the Pope as head of all the churches was appointed by man, not God! It is a human institution, not divine. This is particularly evident in all the human errors seen in the false doctrines taught by the Roman Catholic church, and crimes committed by Popes.

24. PREFERENCE FOR PETER.

The Roman Catholic church claims that Peter was the rock on which Christ’s church was built, and that the Popes are Peter’s direct successors as supreme pontiffs, and derive apostolic authority through them from Christ.

There is no evidence in the New Testament that the apostle Peter ever

went to Rome. His sphere of activity centred on Jerusalem. After the martyrdom of Stephen, we read in Act 8:1 that “there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria except the apostles.”

Peter’s main work was amongst his fellow Jews, while the apostle Paul was specially commissioned by Jesus to go to the Gentiles (Act. 9:15). Thus, in his letter to the Galatians, Paul wrote: “When James, Cephas (Peter) and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given to me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship, that we should go to the heathen (Gentiles), and they to the circumcision” (Jews. Gal. 2:9).

The word “Rome” only occurs 8 times in the whole Bible and not once is the apostle Peter mentioned in connection with that city. There is no reference in either of his epistles to Rome, whereas Paul’s journey to that city is recorded in detail (Acts 27 and 28). When Paul wrote from Rome or to the church at Rome, he made no reference to Peter, although he refers specifically not only to the Christian brethren, but to the sisters in that city.

THE PAPAL CLAIM

The late cardinal Gibbons, a former Roman Catholic archbishop of Baltimore, in his book, “Faith Of Our Fathers” sets out the Catholic claim in these words:

“The Catholic church teaches that our Lord conferred on St. Peter the first place of honour and jurisdiction in the government of his whole church, and that the same spiritual supremacy has always resided in the Popes, or bishops of Rome, as being the successors of St. Peter. Consequently, to be true followers of Christ, all Christians, both among the clergy and laity, must be in communion with the See of Rome, where Peter rules in the person of his successor.”

This presumptuous claim is based on Christ’s words to Peter recorded in Matt. 16:18-19. After Peter declared to Jesus: “Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God,” Jesus said: “ ... And I say also unto you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give to you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” On the basis of this statement, the Roman Catholic church

claims that Christ appointed Peter as the first Pope and so established the Papacy. But a careful examination of the facts reveals that this is not the case.

Christ sometimes emphasized his teaching by a play on words, and such is the case when, in response to Peter's declaration, he said: "...You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church." The Greek word for Peter is "petros" (a diminutive form of "petra") and means a piece of rock, i.e. a detached rock or stone that might be thrown or easily moved (Jn. 1:42). However, the Greek word for "rock" used by Jesus is "petra" and means a mass of solid rock that is immovable. See Matt. 7:24-25. 27:60. 1 Cor. 10:4.

So then, the words of Jesus to Peter could be paraphrased like this: "You are a stone that can be moved but upon this immovable rock I will build my church." Now Jesus was hardly referring to Peter as both a moveable stone and an immovable rock. He clearly had two different thoughts in mind. According to the context, those two thoughts were Peter and his confession which affirmed that Jesus was the Christ, the son of the living God. It was this confession that was the rock upon which Jesus would build his church!

Peter, like all believers was a "living stone," but Christ is the rock upon which the church is built. In 1 Pet. 2:5 Peter says to the Christians: "Like living stones you are built up into a spiritual house." Then in v8 he refers to Christ as a rock.

Peter certainly proved to be a stone that can be moved, because, as we shall see, under pressure he denied Jesus 3 times, and on a later occasion he acted hypocritically to avoid criticism. Jesus, however, proved himself to be an immovable rock. Under pressure he never moved or faltered. His faith was as solid as a rock! He is the rock upon which the house of God is built (Matt. 7:24-25).

Scripture never teaches that Peter is the foundation upon which the church is built. Christ alone is the foundation. The apostle Paul was adamant about this. He said: "There is no other foundation that a man can lay than the one that is laid which is Christ Jesus" (1 Cor. 3:11).

In 1 Cor. 3:10 Paul says: "I have laid the foundation." He does not mean that he is the foundation, because as we have seen, he goes on to say that Christ alone is the foundation. What Paul means when he says "I have laid the foundation" is that he has preached Christ and presented him as the foundation of the church.

The same applies to his statement in Eph. 2:20 where he says the church is "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets ..." The

word “of” is not subjective in the Greek and therefore the statement does not mean that the foundation consists of the apostles and prophets. It is objective and therefore means that the foundation is laid by the apostles and prophets i.e. by preaching and teaching Christ.

Even if it were subjective, it would not teach that Peter was the foundation. His name is not mentioned. It refers to “apostles,” and includes all apostles as well as prophets.

In this connection it is important to note that the authority to “bind and loose” was not given exclusively to Peter. We read in Matt. 18:18 that Jesus gave this same authority to all the apostles.

It is evident from Paul’s epistle to the Corinthians that there was a partisan spirit in the church. Members were elevating some apostles above others. Some were elevating Peter above Paul and Apollos etc. Paul’s verdict was that such comparisons were carnal and divisive and a sign of lack of spiritual maturity. He insisted that all apostles were equal (See 1 Cor. 1:10-14. 3:1-11, 22-23). And in 1 Cor. 4:6 Paul concludes with a warning that no one should be puffed up in favour for one apostle against another.

During the ministry of Jesus, when the apostles had a dispute among themselves as to who should be the greatest, Jesus certainly didn’t single Peter out and say it would be him. He made it clear that such thoughts were motivated by pride and they were in need of humbling themselves and thinking less of themselves (Mk. 9:33-37).

Further on in Mk. 10:35-45 Jesus made it clear that he would not permit one apostle to exercise lordship and authority over others, or to be the chiefest, because this is how the Gentiles act and operate, not Christians. The elevation of Peter by the Roman Catholic church is carnal and contrary to these commandments of Christ and the instruction of the apostle Paul.

The apostle Peter himself would have been the last of the apostles to have laid claim to any distinction or exclusivity. It is significant to note that after Christ’s death and resurrection it was not Peter, but James, who presided over the council at Jerusalem (Act. 15:13-21). In his own writings Peter simply referred to himself as an “apostle” and a “fellow elder,” not chief apostle or chief elder, and he taught that leaders should not be as lords over the church.(1 Pet. 1:1. 5:1-3).

When the Roman centurion Cornelius fell down in respect at Peter’s feet, Peter protested and said: “Stand up; I myself also am a man” (Act. 10:25-26). In contrast to this, Popes expect and accept such homage, even from the highest cardinals of their hierarchy, who are required once a year

to prostrate themselves upon the floor before the reigning Pope. The arrogance of this is particularly apparent considering that even angels refused to allow men to prostrate themselves before them, saying: “Don’t do it” (Rev. 19:10. 22:9).

Being a true apostle of Jesus Christ, Peter, like the other apostles, possessed the Holy Spirit and performed healings, signs, miracles and wonders, and they are recorded in the book of Acts. In 1 Cor. 12:12 the apostle Paul says: “Truly the signs of an apostle were performed among you in all patience, signs, wonders and mighty deeds.” We learn from this that signs, wonders and mighty deeds are one of the signs or evidence of a true apostle. This certainly was the case concerning the apostle Paul. In this respect all Popes are as far removed as men could possibly be from being in the same league, and are decisively disqualified from being apostles or successors of the apostles. They are, in the words of 2 Cor. 11:13 “false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising and masquerading themselves as the apostles of Christ.”

In Rev. 2:2 Jesus commends those in his true church who “tested those who say they are apostles, and are not, and found them to be liars.” No one is expected to blindly accept a man’s claim to be an apostle. It is a huge and serious claim and must be put to the test. “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are of God: because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 Jn. 4:1).

The Vatican Council of 1870 made the following declaration: “If anyone says that the blessed apostle Peter was not constituted, by Christ our Lord, prince of all apostles and visible head of all the church militant (i.e. church on earth); or that he (Peter) directly and immediately received from our Lord Jesus Christ a primacy of honour only and not one of true and proper jurisdiction, let him be anathema.”

This statement reveals how seriously the Roman Catholic church regards the doctrine of “the primacy of Peter.” “Anathema” means “accursed” and only occurs once in the Bible in 1 Cor. 16:22 where Paul says “If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema.” In view of this, the Roman Catholics must believe it is as important to believe in the primacy of Peter as it is to believe in, and love the Lord Jesus Christ. Failure to do so would therefore bring condemnation, resulting in exclusion from the kingdom of God.

For some time the Roman Catholic church has been relatively low key and quiet about the primacy of the Pope, and it is significant that the new Pope is now beginning to speak out strongly about his unique authority to set doctrine and to impose his decisions upon millions of

people.

Speaking of Jesus' statement about Peter in Matt. 16:18-19 and that "upon this rock I will build my church," Pope Benedict XVI said: "The three metaphors Jesus uses are themselves very clear: Peter will be the rock foundation upon which the building of the church rests; he will hold the keys of the kingdom of heaven to open and close to whom he will; and finally, he can bind and loosen in the sense that he can impose or prohibit whatever he considers necessary for the life of the church." In closing, Benedict said: "Let us pray that the primacy of Peter, entrusted to weak human beings, may always be exercised in this original sense that the Lord intended; and that it be ever more recognized in its true significance by the brethren not yet in full communion with us." (Catholic News Agency, June 7 2006).

The last sentence in this pronouncement is particularly significant. It is an expression of the Pope's hope that other churches in Christendom, not yet in full communion with the Roman Catholics, will accept the Pope's primacy. Though there are more than one billion Roman Catholics throughout the world that look to the Pope as the supreme pontiff and earthly head of their church, his hope and goal is to bring other orthodox churches back into the fold under his leadership and authority. If his hope is realized, he would gain hundreds of millions of additional members for the so-called "mother church."

It is not a question of "if" but "when," for Rev. 17 clearly teaches that this church will be very numerous and powerful in the end time, and will become "drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus." As in the past, this ecclesiastical system will have great political power, and will put to death those with the truth who testify against her and refuse to submit to her authority.

Within the next several years of our life, we are going to read and hear of a "revival" of Catholicism in Europe and elsewhere. This will greatly affect our life and the entire society around us. Millions of protestants and others will be enthralled with the idea of ecumenism. They will be slowly won over to "mother" Rome, giving up in the process many of their own doctrines and traditions.

The time is coming when we will have to make a choice between rejecting this powerful system with its colourful pageantry, ancient traditions and millions of followers, or accepting the system and following friends, family, relatives, neighbours and colleagues down the wide and broad way that leads to destruction. Those who know the truth and love the truth will be strong and take a stand without fear of the consequences,

following the example of the Lord Jesus.

25. PAPAL INFALLIBILITY.

The “bull unam sanctam”, issued by Pope Boniface VIII reads as follows: “The Roman Pontiff judges all men, but is judged by no one. We declare, assert, define and pronounce: to be subject to the Roman Pontiff is to every human creature altogether necessary for salvation ... that which was spoken of Christ: ‘Thou hast subdued all things under his feet,’ may well seem verified in me ... I have the authority of the king of kings. I am all in all and above all, so that God and I, the vicar of God, have but one consistory, and I am able to do all that God can do. What therefore can you make of me but God?”

Since 1870, and to the dismay of even many of its then prominent members, the Roman Catholic church has officially claimed that the Pope is, in certain circumstances, infallible, when speaking *ex cathedra*, (literally, “from the chair” - speaking in an official capacity) for the guidance of the church, on matters of faith and morals.

The Bible supports no such claims for any man, except the “son of man,” the Lord Jesus Christ.

The apostle Peter was certainly not infallible. He denied Jesus 3 times (Matt. 16:21-), and had to be publicly rebuked by the apostle Paul for displaying double standards and acting hypocritically (Ga. 2:11-21).

It is evident from Gal. 2:9 that the apostle Peter, along with James and John, were “pillars” in the church, but they were not venerated and treated as gods like Popes have been during the history of the Roman Catholic church.

The apostle Paul said this about Peter, James and John: “As for the men of reputation, (not that their importance matters to me, because God does not recognize these personal distinctions); those, I say, who were of repute, added nothing to me” (Gal. 2:6).

We also read in Act. 11:1-3 that some Jewish Christians at Jerusalem contended with the apostle Peter because he entered the houses of uncircumcised Gentiles and ate with them. Such contention, questioning and challenging Peter’s actions, would surely have never occurred if Peter had been regarded as infallible!

A HISTORY OF INFALLIBILITY

While claiming to be the “true successors” to the apostles and the bastions against immorality and wickedness, the lives of many Popes have been wicked.

Pope Vagilius waded to the pontifical throne through the blood of his predecessor.

Pope Joan - the Roman Catholic writers tell us - a female in disguise, was elected and confirmed Pope, as John V11. Platina says that “she became with child by some of those that were round about her; that she miscarried, and died on her way from the lateran to the temple.”

Pope Marcellinus sacrificed to idols.

Concerning Pope Honorius, the council of Constantinople decreed: “We have caused Honorius, the late Pope of old Rome, to be accursed, for that in all things he followed the mind of Sergius the heretic, and confirmed his wicked doctrines.”

Pope Eugenius was condemned by the council of Basil which said: “We condemn and depose Pope Eugenius, a despiser of the holy canons; a disturber of the peace and unity of the church of God; a notorious offender of the whole universal church; a simonist (a sorcerer); a perjurer; a man incorrigible; a schismatic; a man fallen from the faith, and a wilful heretic.”

Pope John 11 was publicly charged at Rome with incest.

Pope John X111 usurped the pontificate, spent his time in hunting, lasciviousness, and monstrous forms of vice. He fled from the trial to which he was summoned, and was stabbed, being caught in the act of adultery.

Pope Sixtus 1V licensed brothels at Rome.

Pope Alexander VI was, as a Roman Catholic historian says: “One of the greatest and most horrible monsters in nature that could scandalize the holy chair. His beastly morals, his immense ambition, his insatiable avarice, his detestable cruelty, his furious lusts, and monstrous incest with his daughter Lucretia, are, at large, described by Guicciardini Ciaconius, and other authentic Papal historians.”

Concerning the Popes, a Roman Catholic by the name of Platina, says this: “The chair of saint Peter was usurped, rather than possessed, by monsters of wickedness, ambition and bribery. They left no wickedness unpractised.” (Quoted from “Notes on the New Testament” by Albert Barnes page 1113).

In spite of her protestations that she is the only divinely founded

church and is holy, the Roman Catholic church has failed in the past to hold aloft the banner of morality. Ex-priest Emmett McLoughlin put it this way:

“I have been shocked at the revelation of its real history, written not by scandalmongers and anti-Catholics, but by sound, careful, erudite, accepted scholars. All favourable features of the church are grossly exaggerated. All facts that might discredit the church are suppressed as much as possible. This is the reason for its vast system of censorship.” (Taken from “Crime and Immorality in the Catholic church” by Emmett McLoughlin, p.31).

Ex-priest McLoughlin also wrote: “Just as the church’s grasping for power begot confession, and confession begot purgatory, so purgatory begot indulgences, and indulgences begot a priestly traffic in souls for ready money - and this begot the revolt of Protestantism.”

26. MARIOLATRY.

In the Catholic enquiry centre publication: “The blessed Virgin Mary” (P.139) we read: “In 1950, Pope Pius XI made the final, precise and infallible definition of what the church has always believed, namely, that at the end of her life Mary was taken up into heaven and there reigns with her son as queen of the angels and saints. It is right that the sinless body of the mother of God should not have corrupted in the grave.”

In 1954 Mary was proclaimed to be queen of heaven by the Roman Catholic church and worshipped as such.

The following extracts are taken from “The Glories of Mary” by bishop Alphonse De Ligouri (canonised in 1859), and they are so pro-Mary, they amount to anti-Christ:

A. “ ... She is truly a mediatrix of peace between sinners and God. Sinners receive pardon by Mary alone.”

Such a statement makes Mary a usurper of Christ’s unique and exclusive office of mediator. It nullifies and contradicts statements in the Bible such as: “There is one God and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5). “Jesus said: I am the way, the truth and the life: no man comes to the Father except by me” (Jn. 14:6). “The son of man has power upon earth to forgive (pardon) sins” (Lk. 5:24). “If we confess our sins, he (Jesus) is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 Jn. 1:9. also 1 Jn. 2:1-2). “In him (Christ) we have redemption, the forgiveness of

sins” (Col. 1:14).

There is not a single Scripture - not even the slightest hint in the Bible, that Mary is alive in heaven as a mediator, and that people must say “hail Mary” when seeking forgiveness for sin. Such doctrines are man made additions, and the fate of those who add to the Word of God is made clear in Rev. 22:18.

B. “Mary is the peacemaker between sinners and God. We often more quickly obtain what we ask by calling on the name of Mary than by invoking the name of Christ. She is our salvation, our life, our hope, our counsel, our refuge, our help.”

As usual, not a single quote is given from the Bible to support these statements. They are just empty philosophical twaddle pouring off the top of a head that is empty and devoid of Biblical knowledge, and totally blinded and prejudiced by vain church tradition.

Mary, like all the saints, is dead, awaiting the return of Christ and resurrection. She cannot save anyone. She needs salvation herself! As far as the Word of God is concerned, Jesus alone is the peace maker and way of salvation. See Eph. 2:13-14. Jn. 16:23-24.

C. “Mary is called the gate of heaven because no one can enter that blessed kingdom without passing through her. The way of salvation is open to none otherwise than through Mary ... our salvation is in the hands of Mary ... He who is protected by Mary will be saved; he who is not will be lost.”

Contrast these blind assertions with the affirmations in the Bible: “I (Jesus) am the door (gate): by me if any man enter in he shall be saved... Verily, verily, I say to you: he who enters not by the door but climbs in some other way (including Mary), is a thief and a robber” (Jn. 10). “There is no salvation in any other name (than Jesus): for there is no other name under heaven given among men, by which we must be saved” (Act. 4:12).

D. “God has placed the whole church under the domination of Mary ... She is the advocate of the whole human race for she can do what she will with God.”

Contrast Plp. 2:9-11: “God has highly exalted him (Jesus) and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow ...” Christ, not Mary, is “the head of the church” (Eph. 5:23. Col. 1:18). During his earthly ministry, Mary said to the servants: “Whatever he says to you, do it” (Jn. 2:5).

E. “The whole Trinity gave thee a name, O Mary, above every other name, that at thy name every knee should bow, of things in heaven, on earth and under the earth.”

This is a particularly unbelievable statement because it has taken hold of the words of the apostle Paul in Plp. 2:9-11 which apply to Christ, and applied them to Mary! Such mishandling and misapplication of the Word of God is outrageous, and were it not for the widespread ignorance of the Word of God among the laity of the Roman Catholic church, there would be an outcry from among their ranks.

With this invented “mother of God” status, which clearly is contrived to predominate over that of Christ, it was inevitable that the Papal pronouncement was made in 1950, proclaiming that the immaculate Mary ascended to heaven. This official declaration of this doctrine of the Roman Catholic church was made after a petition signed by 8 million Catholics. It is claimed that Mary ascended to heaven bodily after the manner of Jesus, after a short period in the grave in which her body did not experience corruption, because she had only fallen into a literal sleep and did not really die. There were no witnesses of course to this supposed event, and certainly no references to it in the Bible!

The Roman Catholics base their teaching on the reference to the woman in heaven in Rev. 12 who gave birth to a man child. But the reference to the woman having a crown of 12 stars identifies her with Israel. It is prophetic of events that would take place after the revelation was given. Mary gave birth to Jesus long before!

How would the Roman Catholics interpret the reference in v6 to the woman fleeing into the wilderness after being in heaven? And who was the dragon in heaven who was angry with the woman, causing her to flee?

The extent to which Roman Catholics are devoted to Mary was revealed at the funeral of Pope John Paul II. The coffin of cypress wood used at the funeral had a cross painted on it. One of the cross pieces was longer than the other in order to accommodate a large letter “M” that was written below it. (It is also on the Pope’s coat of arms). The “M” stood for Mary, whom the Catholics regard as the “mother of God.” This was seen in the homily delivered at the funeral by Cardinal Ratzinger.

In speaking of the Pope, he said: “The holy father found the purest of God’s mercy in the mother of God.” Towards the end of his homily he said: “We can be sure our beloved Pope is standing today at the window of the Father’s house, that he sees us and blesses us. Yes, bless us, holy father. We entrust your dear soul to the mother of God, your mother, who guided you each day.”

At the heart of this blasphemy is of course the perverted logic of the doctrine of the Trinity which claims Christ is God. As Mary was the mother of Christ, it is reasoned that Mary must be the Mother of God!

There is no indication in Scripture that Mary held a place of special prominence or that the apostles ever supplicated her. Peter, John, James and Paul do not mention her once in their epistles to the churches. She was committed to John's care by Jesus, but he does not mention her at all in his three epistles, or in the book of Revelation. These omissions alone demonstrate the folly of building a system of salvation around Mary as the Roman Catholic church has done.

In May 2005 a new report was issued by the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) concerning Mary in the life and teaching of the church. Entitled "Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ," it argued that differences in the understanding of the virgin Mary should not divide the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches. It found that doctrines that have been controversial in the past, such as the immaculate conception and the assumption, can be seen as "consonant with Scripture." It also set out how the invocation of Mary in prayer should not be seen as "communion dividing."

The commission which produced this report consisted of nine Anglicans and nine Roman Catholics. It was not an authoritative declaration by either church, but was offered for discussion and study, and is certainly another step on the ecumenical trail. The authors admit openly to the hope that the Roman Catholic church and the Anglican communion will recognise a "common faith" concerning Mary as outlined in the paper. If this hope is realized, the Anglican side will have conceded a great deal and this may well prove to be another significant step towards a latter day united and apostate Christendom that will persecute those who hold to the truth.

The reverence given by the Catholic church to Mary is extreme to the point of making it difficult to write with restraint about the terrible perversions of truth it involves. This is particularly apparent in their teaching that sometimes only the gentle intercession of "our lady" can turn away the destroying wrath of Christ.

The plain truth of the Bible requires Mary to be dead, like all other saints, awaiting resurrection. In the meantime, Jesus, who is the very epitome of love and grace, looks upon all his faithful followers with mercy, and is "touched by the feelings of our infirmities," having been "tempted in all points like us" (Heb. 4:15).

We can therefore approach the throne of grace to obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need, for he is able to save for all time those who come to God through him, seeing he always lives to make intercession for them (Heb. 4:16. 7:25).

That Jesus should entertain vengeful feelings against penitent sinners, and need Mary in heaven to turn away such feelings, is a shameful doctrine and will no doubt incur his vengeance on the day of judgement.

MOTHER GODDESS

From the earliest times, pagan religion has involved the worship of a great mother goddess. We come across her in the Bible many times as part of the false worship of the nations around Israel. Unfortunately the Israelites, who were the church in Old testament times, often ended up worshipping them to their condemnation.

The mother goddess appears in the Old Testament in the designations of Ashtaroth, Ashtoreth, Astaroth, Asherah, queen of heaven (Jer. 7:18. 44:17-19, 25). "Ishtar" was one of the titles of the Babylonian queen of heaven, whose worship by the children of Israel was an abomination to God. In the New Testament we have Diana of the Ephesians ("Artemis" in the Greek. "Diana" was the Roman equivalent). She was the goddess of hunting and was depicted as a virgin.

As was pointed out earlier; after Constantine adopted Christianity in the fourth century A.D. many pagan ideas and customs were adopted by the already doctrinally corrupt church. Among them was the worship of the virgin Mary, who became acknowledged by many as Theotokos, which means "mother of God" or "God-bearer." Although this is a blasphemous title for a woman, it would not have been strange to those who came from a pagan background, where the idea of deities emerging from human mothers was not unusual.

The mother goddess of the pagans is effectively worshipped today in the guise of the virgin Mary. This is one of the reasons why the apostate church that does this is called "Babylon" in Rev. 17.

27. PERPETUAL VIRGINITY.

In 451 A.D. the council of Chalcedony declared that Mary remained a virgin, and for this reason still refer to her as the virgin Mary to this day.

The Roman Catholics hold to a tradition that Mary married Joseph when he was an elderly man with a family by a previous marriage - or alternatively that those referred to as the "brothers" and "sisters" of Jesus were really cousins - and that Mary remained a virgin all her life. The Roman Catholics have therefore denied Mary of her own children and negated her motherhood due to denying that she was the mother.

The Scriptures give no support for these ideas. The record in Matt. 1 tells us that Joseph did not have sexual relations with Mary “till” she had given birth to Jesus. The word “till” clearly implies that after Jesus was born, Mary and Joseph had a normal marital relationship.

The Old Testament had previously prophesied that the Messiah would have brothers and refers to them as his “mother’s children.” Ps. 69:8: “I am become a stranger to my brethren, and an alien to my mother’s children.” Significantly enough, although Joseph was the father of these children, it does not say “my father’s children” because Joseph was not Jesus’ father. Mary, however, was his mother, as well as the mother of the other children. This is clearly taught in the reference to “my mother’s children.”

The Jews believed and accepted this and referred to Mary as his mother, and James, Joses, Simon and Judas as “his brethren.” They also made reference to “his sisters” (Matt. 13:55-56).

28. MONASTICISM AND ASCETICISM.

Monasticism has to do with monks and nuns who lived secluded lives in monasteries under religious vows which involved strict self denials. This environment led to many different extreme forms of self-affliction in order to try and atone for sin and earn salvation or feel worthy of salvation.

A lengthy list of the types of self-affliction that were inflicted could be given. For example: doing penance kneeling on peach stones until prayer became an agony; removing the coverings and mattress from the bed night after night, to lie down on the cold metal springs until they bit into the flesh making sleep impossible; taking dirt from a sacred grave to mix with tea and water; wearing a garment of rough material, formed of little wire hooks around the waist and loins, so that at every movement the flesh was torn, causing much pain and many wounds and sores; whipping or beating oneself with a strap or stick.

According to the apostle Paul, such self mortification and severe treatment of the body, has no real value in controlling and combating the sins of the flesh. Instead, it indulges the flesh, doing honour, not to God, but to man’s own pride (Col. 2:23).

Any form of self-affliction in order to atone for sin and gain salvation and approval, cuts at the root of the afflictions of Christ which alone are sufficient to atone for sin and bring salvation. Christ’s afflictions alone were more than enough to atone for the sins of the world, and do not need

adding to by others. All who live godly lives in Christ will suffer affliction at the hands of others (2 Tim. 3:12), but deliberate self affliction is pointless and futile.

That men can earn their own salvation; pay for it, or do something to deserve or merit it, is the universal heresy - the perennial error which permeates almost all non-Christian religions in the world.

The good news of the gospel declared by Paul is: “By grace you are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man boast” (Eph. 2:8-9).

However, while works are not a means of salvation, good works are the inevitable result of salvation, for Eph. 2:10 goes on to say that we are “created in Christ Jesus for good works.”

Good works that please God show that we appreciate the free gift of salvation He has given us in Christ. Good works are a sign of gratitude. Failure to show appreciation and gratitude for the gift of salvation by good works, results in salvation being denied, much in the same way that parents, whose children abuse and misuse gifts given to them and show no gratitude or appreciation, will take the gifts off them.

So then: grace is the source of salvation; faith is the channel of salvation, and works are the fruit of salvation. We cannot be saved by works, but neither can we be saved without works! However, the works do not involve self-affliction in the seclusion of a monastery. They involve doing good to others, both inside and outside the church.

29. INDULGENCES.

Martin Luther was an ardent and resolute priest of the Roman Catholic church, and his strict performance of a monastic life caused him later to say: “I was a good monk, and I kept to the rule of my order so strictly that I may say that if ever a monk got to heaven by his monkery, it was I.”

Luther tried by monastic self-denials, to satisfy what he considered was his Creator’s lust for justice, hoping he would be accounted worthy. Failing to find satisfaction here, he sought to have worthiness credited to his account by seeing and touching the “relics” of the “saints.” He also turned to indulgences and penance, especially confession, but this also failed to satisfy him because he could never be sure that he remembered all the sins that should be confessed

No matter what he did, he still felt he was incompatible with God, and failed to find satisfaction and peace of mind. So, confused and in

despair, he slumped into extreme despondency.

To divert attention he was sent back to study and teach at the university at Wittenburg. It was in his study of the books of Psalms and Romans that he found his answer: that man is not justified by his own works and efforts, but by faith in the atoning work of Jesus Christ. By his stripes we are healed, not by our own self-inflicted stripes.

On all saints day, Oct. 31, 1517, Luther nailed his document called the ninety-five theses on the church door at Wittenburg, Germany, in which he went to considerable and sometimes involved lengths to make his point clear.

The message of these theses was mainly concerning the sale of indulgences. These were promissory notes, sold by the Pope, that assured freedom from God's punishment, and even the salvation of souls who were trapped in purgatory. By paying money, or bequeathing possessions or property to the church, sinners could shorten their time or cut out time altogether in purgatory.

An illustration of the ridiculous nature of such things can be seen in an account from 1370 which records that 59,000 years of remission could be purchased in any one day among churches in Rome in the month of August. It was this sort of practise, among others, that led Martin Luther to rebel against the corrupt activities which were netting the church a vast fortune.

Indulgences could and still can be "gained" by any means specified by the Pope - certain prayers, good works, pilgrimages, the veneration of relics of the saints; the use of blessed objects, or especially in the middle ages by giving money to the Pope or the church.

From the Vatican's viewpoint, the principal purpose of indulgences was to raise money. The medieval records are filled with ingenious devices with accompanying fees of granting indulgences for every conceivable "charitable and worthy cause" - promoting the crusades; building St Peter's in Rome (which deeply influenced Luther and the Reformation); building bridges, or getting the Papal tiara out of hock, which actually happened when Pope Innocent V111 mortgaged his Papal head-dress for 100,000 ducats in 1487.

Intolerable burdens were imposed on men and women that were not made binding by God, reminding us of the indictment levelled by Jesus against the money-motivated and unscrupulous religious leaders in his day: "They make up heavy burdens hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders, but they themselves will not lift the load with one of their fingers" (Matt. 23:4).

Any attempt to be redeemed by money is a fundamental and serious violation of the Word of God. “No one can redeem another or give to God the price of his life, for the redemption of their life is precious and the price is beyond him” (Ps. 49:8). 1 Pet. 1:18-19 declares that redemption is only possible through the precious blood of Christ, not through corruptible things like silver and gold. And we learn from Act. 8:18-23 that anyone who attempts to buy the gift of God with money will perish with their money.

It is emphasized 5 times in the New Testament that Christ’s ministers must not be greedy for money. Their pastoral and teaching ministry must not be done with a motive to make money (1 Tim. 3:3, 8. Titus 1:7, 11. 1 Pet. 5:2).

On the basis of their false teaching, the Roman Catholic church has extracted untold sums of money from the people for saying masses for the dead etc. The references in Rev. 17 and 18 to being decked with gold, precious stones and pearls, and living in luxury, relate to this.

The Roman Catholic church has a long and dark history of exploiting the poor as well as the rich. An uncle of mine who visited Ireland during the earlier part of the 20th century was appalled at the exploitation of the poor and widows. Fat, well fed priests were devouring the last penny of those who were struggling to find enough money to survive.

Similar stories can be told about priests in other Catholic countries who come knocking on the door to take away money from the poor who are struggling to make ends meet, in order to pay for some grease candle to burn on a million dollar gold altar for his sins!

Many Catholic countries have not been able to support themselves because the church took everything and bled them dry. That is one of the reasons why communism in Russia clamped down on them.

Luther correctly pointed out that the Pope had no authority to free a man from the punishments of God; only God Himself could do that. He also came to see that the trials and tribulations that come in this life which were originally thought to be God’s punishments, were not to be avoided by obtaining indulgences, but were sent by God to help man. They were gentle reminders that we are dependant on God for life, health and protection. Pain and trouble were therefore a benefit to all men, for they encouraged humility and patience. These were the factors that prompted the ninety-five theses which ultimately led to the Reformation and restoration of true Bible teaching.

30. RELICS.

As mentioned before, one of the methods by which Luther tried to feel worthy before God was by seeing and touching what were regarded by the church as “relics” of the “saints.” This was a widespread custom in the Roman Catholic church by which huge sums of money were netted.

Relics were body parts or items which the church claimed once belonged to holy people. It was believed and taught by the church that to see or touch such items transmitted holiness, and in some cases miraculous power to heal was imparted.

The rigmarole regarding relics was a clever con committed by the church for pecuniary gain and involved a lot of deceit and skulduggery. This is evident from the results of an investigation by an Italian newspaper into the “relics” held by the Roman Catholic church. It revealed that: “There are 10 skulls of St John the Baptist around the globe. And the apostle Jacob left 9 heads and 18 arms by far-strewn disciples. But the patron saint, St George, easily tops the list with enough bones to make up 30 skeletons.”

Jesus wore a seamless robe, but today there are 3 robes claimed by the Roman Catholics to have belonged to him.

If all the wood was gathered up throughout the Roman Catholic world which is supposed to have come from the cross of Christ, it would weigh many tons, and the money paid by those who procured the pieces would weigh as much.

Romanists have claimed to possess the following:

Relics of the crib; thorns from the crown; the board on which the superscription was written; the head of the soldier’s spear that thrust into Jesus; 4 different spears; 14 nails from which Jesus hung; the soldier’s sop; tears from Jesus; the blood of Jesus; parts from the table in the upper room; skulls of the 3 wise men; parings from the toenails of Peter; feathers from the wings of angels; dirt left over from the creating of Adam; milk from the virgin Mary.

It is on record that Pope Gregory (590-604) sent a cross to a nobleman by the name of Dynamius, containing metal filings which he claimed were from the chain that had bound Peter in prison. The Pope told him to wear the cross at his throat as if he were wearing the chain of St Peter himself, claiming that “these chains which have lain across and around the neck of the most blessed apostle Peter, shall unloose thee forever from thy sins.”

The gift of course was not a free one. It cost a lot of money and gold!

Not content with this, Pope Gregory then began to send out keys of St Peter which were supposed to contain the precious metal filings, and which by the same token also remitted sins, provided the recipients paid in cash with costly presents.

Volumes could be filled with stories like these which reveal how deceitful, corrupt and money motivated the apostate church became. Instead of it being the case of finding treasures of wisdom and knowledge in Christ, as we read in Col. 2:3, it was a case of using Christ to find treasures of silver and gold!

31. IMAGES.

Not only do relics of the saints abound among Roman Catholics, but also statues or images of the saints, particularly Mary, not to mention Christ. These images of all different sizes are on display in Roman Catholic churches and houses, and are carried in procession for public reverence.

Roman Catholics claim that this is not idolatry because the images are not made to be worshipped but merely to serve as reminders or memorials of the persons represented by them.

This might sound good in theory but it doesn't work in practice. Millions of Catholics have ended up attributing power to their images, treating them as divine. This is evident from the claims that some of these images have shed tears, dripped blood, blinked an eye, physically moved and even spoken. Only God knows how many Roman Catholics have spoken to their images and kneeled before them with requests and supplications.

Because images inevitably lead to doing this, which is idolatry, God strictly forbade them saying: "You shall not make yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them ..." (Ex. 20:4).

It is made clear in the New Testament that God wants His people to come to Him directly through Jesus Christ. True faith doesn't need the sight of images. Images are a distraction to man and an offence to God; they give Roman Catholicism a common denominator with the many non-Christian religions in the world.



CHAPTER ELEVEN

PERSECUTOR - ANTI-SEMITIC - WAR - POLITICS

32. PERSECUTOR.

We read in Rev. 17:6 that John saw the apostate church drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. This is prophetic of the future and will be a repetition of the past.

History testifies to the persecutions promoted by Popes against so-called “heretics”; the establishment of the inquisition; crusades against the Albigenses; cruel attempts to exterminate the Waldenses; the extirpation of the Vaudois; the martyrdom of the Lollards; the burning of numerous individuals who had doctrinal disagreements; the extinction by fire and sword of the attempted reformations of Spain and Italy; the massacre of St Bartholomew’s day, 24 August 1572, followed by the persecutions of the Huguenots; to say little of the slow, tortuous and secret murders that were known to have been practised by the holy tribunal of the inquisition!

The perpetration of such persecutions is not characteristic of those who are the friends of Christ, but enemies. Christ’s true friends, like Christ himself, do not persecute - not even their enemies! (Matt. 5:43-48).

It is a striking condemnation of the Roman Catholic church that the period of its greatest power, when it had the world prostrate at its feet, has been labelled by historians as “the dark ages.”

33. ANTI-SEMITIC.

As soon as the church obtained power under Constantine it persecuted the Jews. For many centuries the persecution of the Jews was justified on the grounds that they were “Christ-killers.” But due to pressure, Vatican 11 absolved the Jews of today of any participation in the death of Jesus, saying they have no responsibility for what happened. After punishing them for centuries, Rome finally felt compelled to pardon them!

However, the fact remains that it was the Roman Catholic church which took a leading part in persecuting Jews in Europe in the the middle ages. Nor did their encouragement of anti-Semitism cease then, according to an article entitled: “Vatican’s Shameful Secret” published in January 2002, based on a book entitled: “Unholy War,” by David Kertzer, a history professor at Brown’s university in America (Published by Macmillan).

The book is based on research carried out in the Vatican’s archives,

which were opened up to scholars in 1998. Why they chose to do this, knowing that there were unpleasant facts waiting to be revealed, is something of a mystery. Kertzer thinks there is a faction in the Vatican that wants the true facts to be revealed, without the church doing it itself.

Whatever the true position, Kertzer's book is a devastating indictment of relatively recent Catholic anti-Semitism, which the church itself has alleged was largely rooted out by 1800. He brings out the following facts:

Prior to 1870, the church directly ruled parts of Italy (known as the Papal states). Here they confined Jews to overcrowded ghettos, forced them to wear yellow identity badges, forbade them to associate with Christians in business and forcibly indoctrinated them in Catholic doctrines in an attempt to convert them.

After the church lost its political power, its priests spread allegations and rumours about Jewish plots to take over the world, using the infamous forgery, "Protocols of the Elders of Zion," and alleging that the Jews were a danger to society everywhere.

The church sometimes encouraged "blood libel" trials of Jews, the persistent false allegation that Jews carried out ritual murders of young children and used their blood in baking their unleavened bread for Passover.

Pius XI, who was Pope when Hitler rose to power, was Papal envoy in Poland, from which he reported: "One of the most evil and strongest influences here is that of the Jews."

The significance of all this according to Kertzer, who is himself a Jew, is that the Roman Catholic church played a big part in creating the anti-Semitic feeling which allowed Hitler to come to power and flourish. Indeed, it was a Roman Catholic cleric, Jozef Kruszyński of Poland, who wrote in 1920: "If the world is to be rid of the Jewish scourge, it will be necessary to exterminate them, down to the last one." (Taken from "The Testimony" July 2002 page 263).

34.WAR.

It is to be expected and not surprising at all that a church which is prepared to engage in physical persecution and even torture such as was inflicted during the inquisition, would also be prepared to take up the sword and become engaged in war.

St Augustine taught that it was legitimate to use physical military force to establish the Roman Catholic church which was regarded as the

kingdom of God on earth. The crusades and inquisition etc. were the inevitable outcome of this false doctrine.

Many historians have testified to the wars perpetrated, promoted and supported by various Popes in order to fulfil their lust for power and possession. To the present day, Roman Catholics conform to conscription in the event of their country going to war. Many nations have suffered as a result of the church meddling in secular affairs.

For example: In fascist Italy, on February 11, 1929, the Lateran treaty was signed by Mussolini and Cardinal Gasparri, making Vatican city a sovereign state. Pope Pius XI claimed that he had “given Italy back to God and God back to Italy.” Was that the truth? Consider what happened 6 years later. On October 3, 1935, Italy invaded Abyssinia, claiming that it was “a barbarous land which still practices slavery.” Who really, was being barbarous? Did the Catholic church condemn Mussolini’s barbarity? While the Pope issued ambiguous statements, his bishops were quite vocal in blessing the armed forces of their Italian “fatherland.” In the book: “The Vatican in the Age of the Dictators,” Anthony Rhodes reports:

“In his pastoral letter of the 19th October (1935), the bishop of Udine (Italy) wrote: ‘It is neither timely nor fitting for us to pronounce on the rights and wrongs of the case. Our duty as Italians, and still more as Christians is to contribute to the success of our arms.’ The bishop of Padua wrote on the 21st October: ‘In the difficult hours through which we are passing, we ask you to have faith in our statesmen and armed forces.’ On the 24th October, the bishop of Cremona consecrated a number of regimental flags and said: ‘The blessing of God be upon these soldiers who, on African soil, will conquer new and fertile lands for the Italian genius, thereby bringing to them the Roman and Christian culture. May Italy stand once again as the Christian mentor to the whole world.’”

Abyssinia was raped, with the blessing of the Roman Catholic clergy! Could any of these claim, in any sense, that they were like the apostle Paul in being “clean from the blood of all men”? (Act. 20:26).

In the matter of war, the Roman Catholic church has demonstrated throughout history that it is anti-Christ, because Christ was against his followers taking up the sword and becoming involved in carnal warfare (Matt. 5:38-39. 26:51-52. Rev. 13:10. 2 Cor. 10:4. Eph. 6:11-17). The spirit of Christ requires Christians to be kind and gentle to all men, responding to all opposition with meekness (2 Tim. 2:24-25. Titus 3:1-2).

Under the old covenant when God’s people Israel were a nation and all other nations were pagan, God allowed Israel as a military unit to engage in war against them. However, such engagement could only take

place at the command of God.

But when the Israel of God took on a wider meaning under the new covenant, and involved believers in all nations who shared the faith of Abraham, it was not possible for them to be involved in war without running the risk of killing one another. For example, if German Christians allowed themselves to be enlisted in Hitler's army, and British Christians joined the army that engaged in battle with them, Christians could have ended up killing one another!

The wisdom of God therefore disallows Christians to be engaged in war, but this wisdom is only justified by her children!

Ultimately, when Jesus returns to earth to establish his kingdom, and gathers all of his friends out of the nations into one unit, then they will fight with a two-edged sword in their hand, to bring all nations into subjection to Christ's rule (Jn. 18:36. Ps. 149. Dan. 2:44. Rev. 2:26-27).

35. POLITICS.

It is a common saying that politics and war go together like hand in glove, and where there is politics, political intrigue is often involved. This is certainly true in relation to the Roman Catholic church. Not only does she have a history of war, but also political involvement and intrigue in the politics of the world.

The Vatican is a government with its own flag, money, Secretary of State and ambassadors. It is a recognized nation like France and Germany etc. The Pope therefore has two powers: he is the chief of a political state and a religious leader.

This also is contrary to the spirit of Christ, who said: "My kingdom is not of this world," causing Paul to say: "Be not conformed to the world." The true church does not get involved in politics. Jesus didn't and neither did any of his apostles. All the records reveal that the original first century church avoided political involvement. The church waits for Christ's return to rule.

In Rev. 17 the apostate church is depicted sitting on a beast, signifying power exercised by that church over nations and governments of the world. This cannot happen without involvement in the politics of the world.

Through her meddling in politics, the Roman Catholic church has brought untold sorrow to mankind. Consider, for example, the facts behind Hitler's rise to power in Germany - ugly facts that some would like to expunge from the history books. In May 1924, the Nazi party held 32

seats in the German Reichstag. By May 1928 these had dwindled to 12 seats. However, the great depression engulfed the world in 1930; riding in its wake, the Nazis made a remarkable recovery, gaining 230 out of 608 seats in the German elections of July 1932. Soon after, former chancellor Franz von Papen, a Papal Knight, came to the Nazis' aid. According to historians, von Papen envisioned a new holy Roman empire. His own short tenure as chancellor had been a failure, so now he hoped to gain power through the Nazis. By January 1933, he had mustered support for Hitler from the industrial barons, and through wily intrigues he ensured that Hitler became Germany's chancellor on January 30, 1933. He himself was made vice-chancellor and was used by Hitler to win the support of Catholic sections of Germany. Within 2 months of gaining power, Hitler dissolved parliament, dispatched thousands of opposition leaders to concentration camps, and began an open campaign of oppressing the Jews.

On July 20, 1933, the Vatican's interest in the rising power of Nazism was displayed when cardinal Pacelli (who later became Pope Pius XI), signed a concordat in Rome between the Vatican and Nazi Germany. Von Papen signed the document as Hitler's representative, and Pacelli there conferred on Von Papen the high Papal decoration of the Grand Cross of the order of Pius. In his book 'Satan in Top Hat,' Tibor Koeves writes of this, stating: "The concordat was a great victory for Hitler. It gave him the first moral support he had received from the outer world, and this from the most exalted source." The concordat required the Vatican to withdraw its support from Germany's Catholic centre party, thus sanctioning Hitler's one party: "Total State." Further, its article 14 stated: "The appointments for archbishops, bishops, and the like will be issued only after the governor, installed by the Reich, has duly ascertained that no doubts exist with respect to general political considerations." By the end of 1933 (proclaimed a Holy Year by Pope Pius XI), Vatican support had become a major factor in Hitler's push for world domination.

Though a handful of priests and nuns protested Hitler's atrocities - and suffered for it - the Vatican as well as the Catholic church and its army of clergy gave either active or tacit support to the Nazi tyranny, which they regarded as a bulwark against the advance of world communism. Sitting pretty in the Vatican, Pope Pius XI let the holocaust on the Jews and the cruel persecutions of the true Christian witnesses proceed uncriticized.

It is ironical that Pope John Paul II, on visiting Germany in May 1987, should glorify the anti-Nazi stand of one sincere priest. What were

the other thousands of the German clergy doing during Hitler's reign of terror? A pastoral letter issued by the German Catholic bishops in September 1939 at the outbreak of World War II provides enlightenment of this point. It reads in part: "In this decisive hour we admonish our Catholic soldiers to do their duty in obedience to the Fuehrer and to be ready to sacrifice their whole individuality. We appeal to the faithful to join in ardent prayers that divine providence may lead this war to blessed success."

Such Catholic diplomacy illustrates the kind of "harlotry" that false religion has engaged in over the past centuries in wooing the political state in order to gain power and advantage. Such religio-political relationships have fostered warfare, persecutions, and human misery on a vast scale.

In addressing the college of Mondragone on May 14, 1929, Pope Pius XI said he would negotiate with the devil himself if the good of souls required it.

In his book: "The Gathering Storm" (1948), Winston Churchill reports that Hitler appointed Franz Von Papen as German minister to Vienna for "the undermining or winning over of leading personalities in Austrian politics." Churchill quotes the U.S. minister in Vienna as saying of Von Papen: "In the boldest and most cynical manner ... Papen proceeded to tell me that ... he intended to use his reputation as a good Catholic to gain influence with Austrians like Cardinal Innitzer."

After Austria had capitulated and Hitler's storm troopers had goose-stepped into Vienna, Catholic Cardinal Innitzer ordered that all Austrian churches fly the swastika flag, ring their bells, and pray for Adolf Hitler in honour of his birthday.

Guenter Lewy writes in his book: "The Catholic Church and Nazi Germany": "Had German Catholicism from the start adhered to a policy of resolute opposition to the Nazi regime, world history might well have taken a different course. Even if this struggle had ultimately failed to defeat Hitler and prevent all of his many crimes, it would in this writer's view have raised the moral prestige of the church immeasurably. The human cost of such resistance would undeniably have been great, but these sacrifices would have been made for the greatest of all causes. With the home front unreliable, Hitler might not have dared going to war and literally millions of lives would have been saved ... When thousands of German anti-Nazis were tortured to death in Hitler's concentration camps; when the Polish intelligentsia was slaughtered; when hundreds of thousands of Russians died as a result of being treated as Slavic

Untermenschen (subhumans), and when 6,000,000 human beings were murdered for being “non-Aryan,” Catholic church officials in Germany bolstered the regime that was perpetrating these crimes. The Pope in Rome, the spiritual head and supreme moral teacher of the Roman Catholic church, remained silent.” (Pages 320, 341).

The Roman Catholic church is guilty of sins of the most serious and grossest kind: war, murder, oppression, persecution, torture, greed, exploitation, gross materialism, robbery, immorality involving fornication, adultery, homosexuality and child abuse; injustice, idolatry and perversion of fundamental doctrines of God’s Word.

Roman Catholic theology has, in the words of one writer: “eaten out the marrow and fatness, the flesh and sinew, of the doctrine of Christ; and has left behind only an ill-conditioned and ulcerated skeleton of Christianity, whose dry bones rattle in the winds of doctrine that are blowing around us, chopping and changing to every point of the compass.”

No wonder Rev. 18:5 says her sins are piled up to heaven and plagues from God will fall upon her. A voice from heaven in v14 calls out imploring people to come out of her in order to avoid the judgement that is going to be poured out.

Unfortunately, years of brainwashing and indoctrination has so corrupted and prejudiced the minds of Roman Catholics (the majority of whom never independently read or study the Bible themselves), that very few ever see the system for what it is and therefore remain eternally shackled to it.

