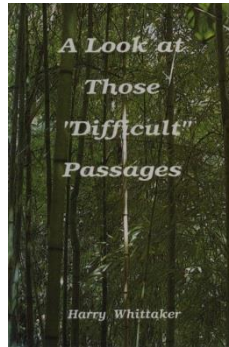


A Look at Those “*Difficult*” Passages



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Hyderabad - 1, India

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1995

This material was first published as a series entitled 'Some Wrested Scriptures' in Vols. 94 & 95 of "The Christadelphian", a monthly magazine published from Birmingham, U.K. by The Christadelphian Magazine and Publishing Association Ltd. to whom grateful acknowledgement is given for permission to reprint the material in book form. The publishers also thank the author's family for their permission to publish this work. The material has been kept in the same order as it was first presented, with Topic and Reference Indexes being added to allow easy reference to the subjects and Bible verses dealt with.

Published and Printed by:

Printland Publishers, G.P.O. Box 159, Hyderabad
500 001, Andhra Pradesh, India.

INTRODUCTION

THERE are very few Christadelphians who have not at some time or another found themselves tangled up in discussion and argument about some principle of the Truth. And there are very few who have not at some time or another been compelled to admit to themselves if not to others that they have been lamentably ill-prepared for such a responsibility.

It is not sufficient, as one finds to one's cost, to be able to quote: "The dead know not anything". It is quite another matter that one should cope convincingly with the thief on the cross, and the spirits of just men made perfect, and Paul's desire to depart and be with Christ, and his manifest preference to be absent from the body and present with the Lord.

It is one thing to know and believe: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord". But to reason cogently concerning Isaiah's Messianic prophecy about a "Mighty God", or with Thomas's confession, or with the copious "pre-existence" passages in John's gospel, is a different proposition altogether.

Nor is it sufficient to fence with these problems of orthodoxy defensively. One must be able to carry the campaign into the home territory of ignorance and error. The chief function of light is that it shall shine in darkness.

It becomes, therefore, the responsibility of all Christadelphians, and not only of those who are speakers or campaigners, to acquaint themselves with the best available means of quenching all the fiery darts of the enemy.

Often all that is needed to expose fully the errors of orthodoxy is a more-careful-than-usual reading of the controverted passage and its context. The rich man in hell is a first-class example of this.

Sometimes the help of a little specialized knowledge can make a world of difference. Again the rich man in hell is a good illustration, for it is certainly very handy to be able to quote Josephus' "Dissertation on Hades" as solid support for the view we usually adopt about that parable.

It is perhaps worthwhile to point out that often our part in these discussions is primarily a negative one. For instance, in dealing with Isaiah 14 the main problem is quite simply this: Does this Scripture refer to a superhuman Devil or does it not? And it is well, in argument, to keep strictly to this issue. We may have very clear ideas as to which King of Babylon is alluded to there. We may feel a certain confidence in being able to explain all the various details in the chapter with reference to him. But it is rarely good tactics to allow oneself to be drawn into a discussion of such points. Let the issue be confined to the point in question.

At the same time there is need of warning against the attitude of mind which regards the "proof-texts" of orthodoxy as so many scriptures to be explained away. Nothing imparts more confidence in controversy than a well grounded knowledge of what the passage in question really does mean.

These brief studies may be regarded as a continuation of the worthy lead given by the late Bro. C.C. Walker in *The Christadelphian Shield*, a little book which should be in every Christadelphian's hands.

For brevity's sake and, it is hoped, for greater lucidity and convenience of reference the passages considered are to be dealt with in note form. Readers are recommended to follow the references in their own Bibles.

There are a few instances where it can hardly be said that there is unanimity among Christadelphians as to what is the precise meaning of a passage, even though there may be complete agreement as to what it does not mean. In such cases an effort will be made to include two or even three different points of view, so that readers may exercise their own judgment.

H.A.W.

Genesis 6:12 - The Sons of God

"The sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose." This is often quoted in connection with the conventional doctrine of the Devil. These "Sons of God", it is claimed, were angels who had sinned, and in this way evil was spread in the earth. But see Matt. 22:30. Angels neither marry nor are given in marriage. This is conclusive.

The "Sons of God" were probably the members of the righteous line of Seth, now intermarrying with the evil Cainites. Compare Deut. 14:1; 1 John 3:1.

The R.V. Margin: "my spirit shall not always abide in man" (the Septuagint reading, which is also supported by 1 Peter 3:19,20) makes this likely.

The alternative is that they were the sons of "the mighty, the rulers". Compare the use of Elohim in Exod. 21:6 and 22:8, 28; Psa. 138:1.

Genesis 3:1- The Serpent

Was the serpent a superhuman Devil who had been ejected from heaven, and who now appeared in Eden in disguise?

- a) The narrative insists that this was a *serpent*, "more subtil than any beast of the field": verse 14. "thou art cursed *above all cattle and above every beast of the field*." What can be the point of these expressions if the serpent was a rebellious angel?
- b) Paul believed the serpent to be a serpent! "I fear lest as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted..." (2 Cor. 11:3).
- c) Then why or whence the serpent's subtilty and power of speech? Is this a difficulty? Parrots and budgerigars talk. And did not God give speech to Balaam's ass?

Further suggestion: that the serpent's subtilty came from partaking of the fruit of the tree of *knowledge*. How did Eve know that the tree was "good for food" (verse 6), unless she saw someone eating of it? And the curse on the serpent: "upon thy belly shalt thou go, and *dust* shalt thou eat..." - why this except it be as appropriate punishment for an act that had led to so much evil? The idea is attractive but tentative.

Isa.14:12-15 - “Lucifer, son of the morning”

- a) The passage is about “the king of Babylon” (verse 4). The Devil is nowhere mentioned. (Note that, whilst the language is not inappropriate to describe Nebuchadnezzar, the true application is to Sennacherib or one of his Assyrian predecessors in Isaiah’s own time: see verse 25. The Assyrian kings were specially proud of their additional title: King of Babylon).
- b) Verse 16: “Is this the *man* that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms?” Therefore no superhuman Devil! And note verse 22.
- c) If the Devil, why should he be specially anxious for a place of honour “in the sides of the north”? (Verse 13).
- d) But why “Lucifer”? There is no earthly or unearthly reason why this word should describe the Devil. As a personal name of the Devil it seems to have been introduced by Jerome near the end of the Fourth Century. It became very popular in the Middle Ages and was “immortalized” by Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, a fiction which Milton himself can hardly have taken seriously. It means “morning star”: R.V. “Day star” - hence “Son of the dawn”. The figure is that of the brilliant planet Venus which appears low in the sky just before dawn to climb higher and higher until lost in daylight (verse 13,14). The same bright planet is also an evening star seen at sunset and then going lower and lower until lost beneath the horizon - “brought down to hell”.
- e) This passage only becomes a difficulty when the more astute adversary seeks to combine it with Luke 10:18 “I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven”. There you are, says the cunning one, Jesus himself applies the passage to Satan! This can be trouble-some, especially since any insistence in reply on the past tense “I beheld” is liable to land one in an unedifying wrangle about the “pre-existence” of Christ. So, instead, this approach might be used:
- f) fit the words of Luke 10:18 into their context. The disciples return triumphant that their mission has been such a success. There is especial glee over the working of sensational miracles (verse 17). Jesus warns them “Beware of pride and self-exaltation. Remember the judgment pride brought on the King of Babylon.”
- g) There is a further reason why Jesus should at this point refer back to Isaiah 14 - he had just been using it in his teaching to point another lesson. Verse 15 is also a quote of Isaiah 14:13 but the words are now addressed to Capernaum! “And thou, Capernaum, shalt thou be exalted unto heaven? Thou shalt be brought down unto Hades.” Thus Jesus allows of another application of Isaiah 14, but to the people of another Godless city, not to a personal Devil.

Gen. 1:3,14 - Light before the Sun?

How could there be light on the earth before the formation of the heavenly bodies, since all the earth’s light comes from them?

It is futile here to attempt to argue that science may be wrong in asserting that the sun is not younger than the earth. The evidence is too strong the other way. Instead, accept it as a fact that the sun is older than the earth. Then what?

Suggestion: that Gen. 1 gives the story of creation not necessarily as it took place, but as it was revealed to Moses (perhaps, according to Wiseman, to Adam and Eve) and probably in the order in which it would have appeared to an earthly onlooker.

First, chaos on a globe wrapped in thick cloud. The vapour thins out, and light (from the sun) percolates through. As this process continues the separation between earth and sky takes place, followed by another separation - sea and land. Forthwith vegetable growth appears. The enveloping mist gradually dissipates, and the heavenly bodies are revealed in all their grandeur.

In discussion of this passage, emphasis needs to be put on the fact that this is the order of the divine revelation.

Exod. 20:8 - The Sabbath

It is argued: the Ten Commandments are not part of the ritual Law of Moses, but express the eternal principles of the moral law, binding, on all men at all times.

- a) Where is the justification for this claim? The Law itself makes no distinction whatever between the Ten Commandments and all the rest.
- b) Of all the Ten Commandments, the law of the sabbath is the only one that is not expressly re-affirmed in the N.T.
- c) 2 Cor. 3:7,9 speaks of that which was “written and engraven in stones” as a “ministration of death, of condemnation”.
- d) Col. 2:16: “Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holi(y)day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days”. In reply to the evasion that this refers to special Sabbaths associated with the Feasts of Passover, etc., it is sufficient to say: “Evidence, please?” And here note especially the verse that follows: “Which are a shadow of things to come: but the body is of Christ”.
- e) Rom. 14:5,6 is conclusive: “One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day. regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks, and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks”.

Lev. 11- The Dietary Laws

Seventh Day Adventists (and some others) maintain that the food prohibitions of the Law have a binding force today. Answer by Rom. 14:6,14,15,17-23; 1 Tim 4:4,5; Mark 7:19, *R.V.*; Col. 2:16; 1 Cor 8:8.

In reply to this formidable list of passages, Seventh Day Adventists put reliance on Matt. 5:18,19. But note verse 17 here, and also Col. 2:17.

2 Kings 2:11 - Elijah Taken To Heaven

- a) Even when coupled with Matt. 17:3 this is pathetic as support for conventional ideas. For here it was the living body of Elijah which went to heaven. So what can this prove about the immortality of the soul?

- b) Elijah is not still alive: “as in Adam all die”

Compare Hebrews 11:39,40 (this includes Elijah, verse 35).

- c) Years after this incident Elijah was still alive.

2 Chron. 21:12 establishes that Elijah was still alive on the earth in the reign of Jehoram, whereas in the reign of Jehoshaphat, Jehoram’s father, Elisha had already succeeded to Elijah’s office, 2 Kings 3:11,12,14.

- d) Consequently Elijah’s removal, and the simultaneous appearance of the cherubim chariot, intimated the termination of his prophetic office. Elijah was taken away into a retirement broken only by this solitary intervention by letter, in the later reign of Jehoram. Note that “went up into heaven” (2 Kings 2:11) need mean no more than that Elijah disappeared into the sky, to be transported to some other place. Compare Acts 8:39; 1 Thess. 4:17. Indeed, it must mean this, “No man hath ascended up to heaven” (John 3:13).

1 Samuel 28 - The Witch of Endor

Difficulties in the way of a literal interpretation:

1. Would God answer Saul by a means which His own commandment given through Moses, had already outlawed? (Deut. 18:10-12).
2. Saul is condemned for this very action (1 Chron 10:13).
3. Samuel is described as “coming up... out of the earth”. Is that where the souls of the departed go?

Explanation on the lines of a fake spiritualistic seance is easy.

- a) Saul would be recognized at once in spite of an attempt at disguise. He stood a good head above all the rest of the nation (1 Sam. 9:2). The woman’s words in verse 9 imply recognition.
- b) Verse 10: “As the Lord liveth, there shall no punishment happen to thee”. Saul thus revealed his identity.
- c) Saul saw nothing (note verses 12,13, 14).

- d) He showed all the credulity that people frequenting séances usually show. “An old man cometh up: and he is covered with a mantle. And Saul perceived that it was Samuel.” Was Samuel the only old man ever to wear a mantle?
- e) The narrative has strong echoes of chapter 15 Verses. 14, 16-18 here should be compared with chapter 15:22, 27,28. And all this was known to all the nation at large; see 15:30.
- f) What of the “prophecy” of Saul’s death (chapter 28:19)? This would be an easy inference from the familiar earlier prophecy of Samuel’s (chapter 15) and from the evident collapse of Saul’s morale in face of the inevitable encounter with the Philistines.

Joshua 10:13 - Joshua’s Long Day

It is urged that if the earth had indeed stopped its axial rotation, which is the cause of day and night, all kinds of fantastic consequences would have followed - huge tides would have swamped the land, people and everything not fixed would have been rushed off into space, and so on.

- a) These words (verses 12-15) are an extract from the lost Book of Jasher, only one other known quotation from it is extant: 2 Sam. 1:18-27, printed as poetry in the R.V. So these words in Joshua 10 are also poetry. Whenever did anyone take Bible poetry literally? e.g. Isa. 55:12; Psa. 98:8 and 114:4, 6.
- b) Note that what Joshua wanted was sufficient time for his army to vanquish their enemies completely. If the confederacy were allowed to re-form, the victory would have to be won all over again. Now observe what Joshua’s army accomplished in less than 24 hours: they marched about 20 miles through the night, including a climb of about 3,000 feet, they fought a battle all through the early part of the day; and they pursued their enemies another 30 miles or more. Did any army ever pack so much into a single day? The miracle lay not in the physical arresting of the motion of earth or sun but in the strengthening of Joshua’s men for a gruelling ordeal. It was in this way that the leader’s prayer was answered.
- c) “The sun stood still... About a whole day.” How could anyone tell by how much the day had been lengthened? Had Joshua a wrist-watch? Or did he carry a water- clock?

A portable sundial, even if he had one, would have been useless for this purpose! Clearly the lengthening of the day could only be estimated by what Israel were able to accomplish in it. And they so surprised themselves by what they achieved (in the strength that comes from God) that it seemed as though the sun had been standing still.

Psa. 16:10 - “Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell”

This commonly - used Christadelphian proof text is not without its own difficulties. “Hell” equals “the grave”, clearly. Peter’s argument in Acts 2 requires this. But the word “soul” can be troublesome. So use Psa. 59:3 and 35:13 and Jer. 18:20 to show that here “my soul” equals “me”; or, use Num. 9:6,7, where the same word is applied to a dead body.

Psa. 49:15 - “God will redeem my soul...”

One would think this Psalm to be explicit enough (verses 7-14, 20): nevertheless in discussion the force of these words is liable to become clouded by an orthodox misuse of this verse 15.

Explain “soul” as in Psa. 16:10. Emphasize also the force of the word “redeem” and back it up with Psa. 17:15 as an explanation of “he shall receive me”.

2 Kings 17:6 - The Captivity of the Northern Kingdom

This verse reads: “In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes”.

The entire British-Israel case rests on the assumption that when this captivity took place, two tribes only were left behind in the southern kingdom, and that the ten tribes never returned but have preserved their identity in Western Europe and elsewhere.

- a) The Ten Tribes were never lost. From the time of Jeroboam I until Shalmaneser V and Sargon there were constant migrations out of the northern into the southern kingdom (1 Kings 12:17; 2 Chron. 15:9 and 30:11, 18, 25). Consequently, when the Babylonian captivity took place, it was a mixture of the twelve tribes that went to Babylon.
- b) In any case, the southern kingdom always consisted of four tribes from the start, not two: Judah, Benjamin, Levi (2 Chron. 11:13,16,17), and Simeon, which had its territory in that of Judah (Joshua 19:9).
- c) The return from the captivity included people out of “all Israel, yet they are called “Jew”. Thus another basic assumption of British-Israelism, that “Jew” always means “man of Judah,” is disproved (Neh. 7:73 and 5:8, 17). See also 1 Chron. 9:2,3, which all authorities accept as a reference to the return from captivity.
- d) British-Israelism insists that the British Commonwealth is a fulfillment of the blessing in Gen. 48:19, 20 But Scripture invariably speaks of Israel's scattering as a punishment (Jer. 32:36-44).
- e) Matt. 10:6: the “lost sheep of Israel” were in Palestine - or else the Twelve did not obey their instructions! But according to British-Israelism the lost sheep of Israel were at that very time wandering across Europe in the direction of Britain.
- f) Acts 26:7 represents the Twelve Tribes as “earnestly serving God” (R.V) at the very time when Paul spoke. Yet according to British-Israelism they were godless and pagan in the first century.

Eccl. 12:7- “The spirit shall return unto God who gave it”

- a) The rest of Ecclesiastes teaches mortality most emphatically (9:5,6, 10 and 6:6 and 3:19,20).

- b) “Return” means “to go back to a place you came from”. “One day I hope to return to China” would be meaningless, unless spoken by a man who had been there. So, if the spirit is to return to God, it came from God. But none of us had any conscious existence in heaven before this life began. Therefore there is no reason to expect a conscious existence in heaven when this life ends. The “spirit” which returns to God is simply the life power with which He endows us.
- c) Some attempt to argue that the spirit must go somewhere. But must it? When an electric light is switched off, no one thinks to ask: Where has the light gone to? It has gone out. It has just ceased to be a light. Even so is man in death.
- d) The word “spirit” is the same here as in chapter 3:19. Yet would anyone argue that beasts have or are immortal “spirits”?

Micah 5:2- “Whose goings forth have been from of old, from ancient days” (R.V.)

- a) The expression is commonly interpreted as signifying that Christ, the “ruler in Israel”, has existed as a person from ancient days. But it need not mean any more than this: his “going forth” (his birth; see first part of the verse) has been known to God and foreordained “from ancient days” (1 Peter 1:19,20).
- b) But there is good reason to believe that these two phrases “whose goings forth” and “from ancient days” should be read with reference to Israel (the immediate antecedent), and not to the Messiah. The identical expressions occur in the Hebrew of chapter 7:14,15: “thy coming out”, “as in the days of old”, and the reference here is certainly to Israel’s escape from Egypt. Chapter 6:4 is another allusion to the same thing.

Matt 1:23 - Is Isa. 7:14 - really a Prophecy of the Virgin Birth?

- a) Objections are usually that the Hebrew word there translated “virgin” simply means “a young woman of marriageable age”: and that the context of Isaiah 7:14 is purely historical, and has nothing whatever to do with Christ. How, it is asked, could the birth of a child 700 years later be in any sense a sign of divine help to desperate Ahaz faced with threat of invasion?
- b) The first of these points need not be argued against even though the truth of the statement is by no means sure. It may, however, be observed that the Septuagint translators some 150 or more years before Christ chose the Greek word for virgin to represent the Hebrew word in Isa. 7:14, although they can have had little idea of this prophecy relating to Messiah. There seems to have been no expectation amongst the Jews that Messiah would be born of a virgin.
- c) The second point is met in the first instance by agreeing that Isaiah’s words had a local and immediate reference to Ahaz’ problem, with a fuller Messianic significance (the real significance) in days to come. This is a normal feature of Old Testament prophecy.
- d) But the main point to be insisted upon is that the context of the prophecy requires a Messianic application Faithless Ahaz, fearful for the safety of his kingdom, should have rested in confidence on God’s promise to David (2 Sam 7). Hence the implied rebuke in

Isaiah's words, "Hear ye now, house of David". More pointedly still, Isaiah bade the king ask a sign, concerning the promised Messiah! This is the idiomatic meaning of the words: "ask it either in the depth, or in the height above" (verse 11). In one passage after another these expressions are used with reference to the Messiah. See Gen. 49:25; Prov. 30:4, Deut. 30:2 (Rom 10:6); Isa 45:8; Psalms 85:11; Gen. 22:17; Zech. 8:12; Deut. 33:13.

Matt. 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13 - The Temptation of Jesus

There is no lack of reason to require that this story of Christ's temptation be not read as a narrative of what literally happened.

- 1) Verse 8. From what mountain can all the kingdoms of the world be seen, in a moment of time? (Luke 4:5)
- 2) Verse 9. "All these things will I give thee". But the emphatic teaching of the rest of the Bible is that "God rules in the kingdoms of men, and giveth them to whosoever He will".
- 3) Mark 1:13: "forty days, tempted of Satan". But the entire temptation could comfortably have been packed into a couple of hours!
- 4) "In the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan". The temptation did not take place in the wilderness at least, the second and third items were in Jerusalem and on a high mountain.
- 5) The order of the temptations in Matthew and Luke is different. So either one evangelist is in error, or the records must be read in such a way as to be harmonized, and that means coming away from a literal interpretation.
- 6) Heb. 4:15 is conclusive: "Tempted in all points like as we are". But what person has ever had experience of being tempted by a personal appearance of a superhuman Devil? Neither did Jesus.
- 7) Suppose the Devil had appeared to Jesus in person! Then there would have been no temptation. The whole power of temptation lies in its subtilty, not its obviousness. This has been well expressed by a famous German theologian, de Wette; "The appearance of the Devil in person would have taken all force from the temptation for the Son of God would know him at once".
- 8) Where did Matthew and Luke get their accounts of the temptation? Possibly by direct inspiration from God, but far more likely from the lips of Jesus himself. And how could Jesus put into words an adequate impression of the power and variety of his temptations except by expressing it in the vigorous figurative language so characteristic of him?
- 9) James 1:13,14; "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God, for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed".
- 10) The present writer is strongly of the opinion that the temptations of Jesus were all subjective (as James 1:14 emphasizes). It should be noted that all the difficulties listed

above cease to be difficulties as soon as the subjective interpretation is adopted. This case of interpretation is itself a further argument in favour of such an approach to the question.

11) A brief summary of the issues facing Jesus in his temptation:

The main part of his life's work now lies before him. And he begins it equipped with divine power such as no man ever had. What are the principles to be followed?

Suppose this miraculous power be used for selfish purposes, to make life smooth and easy? (Stones into bread). NO! There must be dependence upon God. (Hence Matt. 8:20).

Suppose he aim at converting purblind Israel by dazzling displays of miraculous power? NO! The Father wishes men to come to Him in faith and not through spiritual bulldozing. (Hence Matt. 12:15-20).

Suppose he turn away from the wretched prospect of suffering and death? Why not aim directly at dominion of the world? Jesus could have been a supremely beneficent emperor of Rome within a few years. (Hence John 6:15). Again, NO! First the cross, and then the crown.

There are doubtless many other aspects to the temptation of Jesus besides these.

Matt. 16:16-19 - "Upon this Rock"

- a) The rock is not Peter but Peter's confession 1 Cor. 3:11; Eph. 2:20; Matt 7:24,25; 1 Peter 2:6,8.
- b) In the O.T. the Rock is always God or (prophetically) Christ. Psalm 18:2 and 42:9 and 78:16 (1 Cor. 10:4), and many others.
- c) The power of the keys was committed to the other apostles as well as to Peter; ch. 18:18; John 20:23; Rev. 21:14. And note that 1 Cor 12:28 says; "First, apostles"; not "First, Peter; then apostles....".
- d) In verse 23 Peter is a stumbling stone ("an offence") not a Rock. And there he is also "Satan"!
- e) The Roman Church makes great play with John 1:42- Jesus gave the name Rock to Simon at the very start. But in Matt. 16:18 the Greek is: "Thou art Petrous, and upon this petra I will build my church". The change in the terminology suggests a distinction rather than an identification. There is available a neat Biblical proof of this which a priest might appreciate but which unfortunately is above the level of the ordinary Catholic: Luke 22:31,32: "Simon, Satan hath desired to have you (apostles) that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee (Simon) and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren". Without doubt these words are based on Amos 9:9, where note: "Yet shall not the least grain (mg. Heb. Stone) fall upon the earth". That word "stone" shows why Jesus went to this passage and also that he understood the name Peter to mean a tiny stone, not the living rock.

- f) The Roman Church, insists almost querulously on the tradition of the Early Church as the only safe guide to the interpretation of Scripture. On this passage the Fathers are anything but unanimous. Lannouy, a French Catholic, catalogued the evidence thus: 17 fathers say the rock was Peter; 44 say the rock was the faith Peter confessed; 16 say the rock was the Church built on all the Apostles. In the second category are great names like Hilary, Gregory of Nyssa, Chrysostom, and Cyril of Alexandria. And even Origen and the great Augustine hover between different interpretations.
- g) The early Church quite evidently did not regard Peter as a supreme authority in things spiritual. In Acts 11:1-3 it is the church which calls Peter to account. In Acts 8:14 “the apostles.... Sent Peter and John” to Samaria. In Gal. 2:11 Paul rebuked Peter publicly for a blatant error in the principles of Christ.
- h) Luke 22:32 does not belong to Peter exclusively. The church in Rome itself was strengthened by Paul (Rom 1:11, where the same Greek word is used). See also 2 Cor. 11:28. And note the limitation on Peter’s jurisdiction in Gal. 2:8.
- i) Even if it is established that Peter did receive authority over the church, where is the evidence that he was also given power to pass that authority on to others? And suppose such evidence were available, where is the proof that the bishop of Rome is his successor? (Even in the Fourth Century the illustrious Eusebius maintained strongly that the Rock was Peter only, and none after him). Note that it is not wise to attempt to contest the claim that Peter ever went to Rome. The evidence is almost all the other way.

Matt. 22:32 - “God is not the God of the dead but of the living”.

Some quote these words as a proof that Jesus meant to teach that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are still alive. Yet the context (verse 23:31) is entirely about resurrection, the resurrection of the body. And the Lord’s argument is God is a God of living people and not of dead people, therefore the fathers must one day rise from the dead. Note also that the passage is quoted from Exod. 3:6,16 where the emphasis is clearly on the future purpose of God: see the R.V. margin of verse 14: “I will be that I will be”, which is certainly the correct reading of the Hebrew.

Matt 26:26 - “This is my body”

The Roman Church claims that the priestly blessing changes the bread into the veritable body of Christ.

- a) Did this transubstantiation actually take place in the upper room? The entire complete body of Christ was with them there at the table.
- b) “This is my body”. Compare “I am the true vine”: the seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sitteth”: “I am the door”: “The Rock was Christ”. In each of these the verb “to be” is used for “to mean, to symbolize”. Especially, compare 1 Cor. 11:25: “This cup is the new testament (covenant)”, So if “this is my blood” means that the wine became literal blood, then the cup became a literal covenant.

Mark 9:43-48 - “If thy hand offend thee, cut it off...”

A careful reading of this passage makes it plain that the words cannot be read literally.

- a) “It is better for thee to enter into life maimed (or halt, or with one eye).” Is it possible that the life to come is to be a state of imperfection? Further, hands, feet and eyes are parts of the material body. But those who quote these words believe in a disembodied immortality!
- b) “Cut it off-pluck it out.” Is Jesus really asking his disciples to cut off hands and feet and to pluck out eyes? Strange that no one has ever done it - literally!
- c) “Than having two hands (feet, eyes) to go into hell”. But those who interpret this of eternal torment believe that the soul, and not the body, goes to hell. Does the soul have hands, feet, eyes?
- d) “Where their worm dieth not.” If these words are taken literally, then hell (the place of fiery punishment of the wicked) is populated with immortal worms.
- e) This passage is based on Isa. 66:24. Is that about hell fire?
- f) “And the fire is not quenched.” A long list of passages shows the sense to attach to this O.T. idiom. Isa. 34:10; Ezek. 20:47 (which Jesus applied to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70; Luke 23:31) Jer 7:20 and 21:12; 2 Kings 22:17.

Mark 10:14,15 - “Suffer the little children to come unto me”.

This passage is the great resort of those who would justify infant baptism.

- a) It is, of course, quite right to infer from this incident that Jesus is well pleased when parents seek to dedicate their children to Christ from earliest days.
- b) But there is here no mention or hint of baptism.
- c) Further, if infant baptism is the logical outcome of these words of the Lord, what of verse 15, which must then mean that only those baptized in infancy have a hope of life!
- d) But, evidently enough, verse 15 means that only he will enter the kingdom who has the humble teachability of a little child (1 Cor. 14:29; 1 Peter 2:2).

Luke 12:58, 59 - “I tell thee, thou shalt not depart thence, till thou hast paid the very last mite”.

That these words must be taken figuratively cannot be denied. The R.C. interpretation asserts that “prison” here is Purgatory and “till thou hast paid the very last mite” implies a going out of Purgatory when “cleansing” of the soul is complete.

- a) It is a confession of weakness to build a major doctrine on a parable. Matt 18:34; 1 Cor 3:12-15, are further similar confessions of weakness by the same church with reference to the same doctrine.

- b) What will the R.C. do with the word “until” in Matt. 1:25? “... And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son.” The Roman Church regards as heresy the suggestion that Mary bore other children after Jesus. But their argument in Luke 12:59 requires precisely that conclusion in Matt 1:25. Douai Version of Isa 46:4 is: “I am till you grow old”. Does God cease to be when the house of Jacob grows old?
- c) The “Fathers” exhibit marked disagreement in the understanding of this passage.
- d) Jerome who translated the Vulgate version used by the Roman Church, and Maldonatus the Jesuit, both take this passage to mean everlasting punishment.

Matt. 12:32 is read as implying that there is forgiveness in “the world to come”, i.e., in Purgatory. But see the parallel passages in Mark 3:29 and Luke 12:10.

1 Peter 3:18-20: whatever this passage may mean, the R.C. can hardly quote it to prove Purgatory, for in the Douai Version which “sometime were disobedient” reads “were incredulous”. But unbelief is regarded as a mortal sin, and such do not go to Purgatory!

Luke 17:21 - “...the Kingdom of God is within you”.

- a) The words were spoken to Pharisees (verse 20) and therefore can hardly be taken in the orthodox sense (a kingdom in the heart).
- b) R.V. Mg.: “in the midst of”. A.V. Mg.: “among you”, and so also the Old Syriac Version. Either of these is to be preferred.
- c) People do not say: “Lo, here! Lo, there!” about a kingdom. But they would say it about a man.
- d) In verse 24 Jesus tells plainly what the coming of his kingdom will be like -something as clear and unmistakable as the lightning. Would he contradict himself in the space of four verses?
- e) The phrase “the Kingdom of God cometh not with observation” is commonly taken to mean; “The kingdom is not something you can see by looking for it; it is unseen and spiritual”. But this overlooks the most important factor in this passage, the tenses of the verbs. Thus: This kingdom is not coming (i.e. now), whilst you are looking for it. But the days will come when you will eagerly desire it. And then there will be no need to search here or there, for the coming of the kingdom will be as vivid as lightning (verse 24).
- f) “The Kingdom of God is within you”, should surely be taken as an example of the dramatic present tense. Compare John 12:8; Matt. 10:20; Mark 9:12.

Luke 23:43 - “With me in paradise”.

This hardy annual is commonly quoted to prove (a) that good people go to heaven when they die, (b) that baptism is not necessary for salvation.

- a) The thief was not asking to go to heaven, but for a blessing at Christ's second coming: "Remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom" (R.V.).
- b) That very day Jesus was not in heaven with the thief. For, on the third day, he said to Mary at the tomb: "Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father".
- c) Christ promised paradise. But every other mention of paradise in the Bible is on the earth; e.g. Rev. 2:7, compared with Rev. 22:2 and 21:4, Gen. 2:8 (Greek version). Even 2 Cor. 12:4 is no exception.
- d) How to explain the word "today"? Some prefer to emphasize that "today" or "this day" (same word in the Greek version) is used in a wider sense elsewhere in Scripture, e.g. Deut. 2:18 and 5:24 and 9:1.
- e) Almost certainly more correct is the suggestion that the translators have punctuated the passage wrongly. Instead of: "I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise" read: "I say unto thee today, Thou shalt be with me in Paradise". As who should say (In answer to the plea, "Remember me when thou comest") "Remember you then? I give you my solemn promise now. Verily I say unto thee today, Thou shalt be with me in paradise".
- f) It is to be borne in mind that the original manuscripts have scarcely any punctuation. Even without a knowledge of Greek a glance at a photograph of any of the old uncial manuscripts demonstrates this.
- g) It may be objected that another change has been introduced by the reading "thou shalt be", instead of "shalt thou be". This is no change at all really, since both expressions would be represented by the same single Greek word.
- h) It needs to be realized that there was frequent re- punctuation of passages by the Revisers of 1883. Reference should be made to the R.V. or R.V. Margin of Luke 12:1; 21:34; 24:47; 1:45 (there are lots more).
- i) But was the thief baptized? Suppose he was not. Does this invalidate the commandment concerning baptism to those who can be baptized? And is it not within the power of Christ who appointed baptism to allow of an exception if he sees fit? Further baptism is a symbolic dying with Christ. But this thief died with Christ literally. So there was perhaps good reason why an exception should be made in this instance!
- j) However, most probably the thief had been baptized. Consider the remarkable understanding shown by him of God's purpose in Christ.

Here was Jesus dying before his eyes; yet he speaks of him "coming in a kingdom". This expression implies, therefore, a conviction that Jesus would rise from the dead, that he would ascend to heaven, that he would come again and that he would then establish a kingdom. Was there at that moment any other person in all the world with such a faith as this?

His words to the other malefactor who reviled Jesus are also eloquent: "Dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this man hath done nothing amiss". Here are two more of the basic essentials of forgiveness, a frank acknowledgment of personal unworthiness before God, and a

recognition that Christ was the perfect sacrifice! But how could the thief know that “this man hath done nothing amiss” unless he had known Jesus intimately at some time previously? Everything points to his having been a disciple, albeit a backslider. (This, if true, gives special point to Christ’s reference to paradise. He is comparing this wayward disciple to Adam and Eve losing paradise through their transgression; but you, he says, shall regain paradise through your faith in me.) Now the gospels are emphatic that during his ministry Jesus caused his disciples to be baptized (John 3:22; 4:1,2; Matt. 3:15.)

There, is therefore good ground for believing the thief to be a baptized disciple who had fallen away and who now turned to Christ again with the finest faith in all the world.

John 1:1-3 - “In the beginning was the word...”

Apart from the orthodox erroneous interpretation of this passage which would make it into a bald declaration of the pre-existence and deity of Christ, there are two possible ways of interpreting it. Both are given here.

- a) “The Word was God”. It is important to observe that “God” here is distinguished in the Greek from the previous phrase: “the Word was with God”, where the Almighty Father is undoubtedly meant. Moffatt preserves the distinction: “the Word was divine”.
- b) The “Word” (Greek logos) expresses the divine intention, mind or purpose. Jesus existed from the very beginning as the focus and centre of the divine plan. It is in this sense that he was “in the beginning”; in this sense he was “with God”; in this sense “all things were made through him”. Then in verse 14, “the Word was made flesh”; this is Jesus, the divine purpose now expressed in a man. For O.T. passages expressing the same idea, see Psalms 33:6; 107:20; 147:15,18; Isa. 55:11; Prov. 8: 12-31.
- c) In John’s other references to “the Word” he means Jesus the man. 1 John 1:1,2; Rev. 1:2 (an allusion to the gospel he had written) and 19:13. Compare also Luke 1:2; Heb. 4:12,13.
- d) “The beginning” John speaks of is “the beginning of Christ’s work on earth”. Compare the same kind of usage in John 6:64; 8:25; 15:27; 16:4; 1 John 2:7; 3:11; 2 John 5:6.
- e) “With God” now expresses simply and powerfully the idea that Jesus was the only man who ever lived an entirely God - ward life. The Greek strongly supports this.

And “was God” emphasizes his divine origin. See (a).

- f) Verse 3: “all things were made by him” can now be read literally, concerning the new creation in Christ, of which he is the beginning (Col. 1:18). Note the R.V. margin of the next expression: “That which hath been made was life in him”.

John 2:15- Did Jesus use force in clearing the Temple Court?

- a) Was it by the “whip of cords” or by the strength of his personality that Jesus cleansed the temple? Any three of those men could have overpowered him, had they attempted it. There was also a temple guard which could have been called.

- b) “He drove them all out of the temple.” The word “all” must refer to the animals, not to the men. The Greek expression requires this. See the significant changes in the R.V.

John 3:13 - “And no man hath ascended up to heaven, But he that came down from heaven, even the son of man which is in heaven”.

- a) This verse must be read as being the words of the apostle John, not the spoken word of Jesus to Nicodemus. At the time he was writing his gospel no man had ascended to heaven except Jesus, the one who “came down from heaven”, even the Son of man who (at the time of writing) was now in heaven.
- b) But what of the expression “came down from heaven”? This, like a number of other phrases used by John in a similar connection, is not to be taken literally, e.g. Ch. 1:6.
- c) In the O.T. a manifestation of divine power is spoken of as God “coming down”. The termination of such a theophany (God manifestation) is described as God “going up or ascending”, e.g. Gen. 11:5; 18:21; Exod. 3:7,8; 19:11,18,20; 34:5; Psa. 18:9,10; 68:18; Isa. 64:1; Prov. 30:4; Eph. 4:9,10; hence also John 6:33,50,51,58,62.

John 6:62 - “What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?”

Either:

- a) This is a reference to the resurrection of Jesus, going up out of the tomb to be with his disciples “where he was before”. Note the following words: “It is the spirit that quickeneth”.
- b) Here again is the language of theophany. See John 3:13.

John 5:23 - “...That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father.”

There should be no attempt to whittle down the meaning of these words. Jesus, although eternally subject to the Father (1 Cor 15:28) is worthy of divine honour. See Matthew 16:27; Heb 1:3. But the context itself here is sufficiently emphatic in disallowing that Jesus is co-equal or co-eternal with the Father. The next verse speaks of “him that sent me”. The previous verse says, “The Father hath committed all judgment unto the Son”. Verse 19: “The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do”.

John 10:27, 28 - “... Neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.”

- a) This is true, as the passage says, of those who are Christ’s sheep. But who is to know before the day of judgment whether he is a “sheep” or a “goat” (Matt 25:33)? Many who deem themselves to be “sheep” will find that they are really “goats” (Luke 13:26,27; Matt. 7:21-23).
- b) “And they shall never perish” does not mean “they shall never die”. For the disciple, death is not a “perishing” but a “sleep” (John 11:11,13; Matt. 9:24; 1 Thess. 4:13).

John 11:26 - “And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die”.

This verse must be taken with the preceding one. Verse 25 speaks of those who die before the coming of the Lord in the last day. Verse 26 completes the picture: disciples alive at the Lord's return will never die, being transformed directly from mortality to immortality without ever experiencing the sleep of death.

John 12:31 and 14:30 and 16:11 - “The prince of this world”.

- a) John 12:31 is a big difficulty in the way of a “personal Devil” interpretation. For orthodoxy has it that the Devil was cast out of heaven before the creation of Adam, and is not to be cast out of the earth until Christ's Kingdom. This verse squares with neither, for it emphasizes: “Now shall the prince of this world be cast out”, Then who is “the prince of this world”? Two possibilities are available, both worthy of consideration:
- b) 1 Cor 2:7,8 suggests that “the prince of this world” may be equated with human ignorance of divine things. “Through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers” (Acts 3:17). Each of these passages in John yields good sense when read from this point of view. Does 1 John 4:18 refer to another “prince of this world” cast out by the love of Christ?
- c) The phrase may be taken literally as meaning “worldly rulers”, with special reference to the chief priests who were very shortly to come to arrest Jesus and who were to be “cast out” from their holy office by the sacrificial death of Christ (his “lifting up” John 12:32). Note that the identical word is translated “ruler” or “chief ruler” in John 12:42 and 7:26, 48 and in many other places in the N.T., mostly with reference to the religious rulers of the Jews.

John 13:2,27: Luke 22:3 - “Satan entered into him”.

- a) The orthodox view of these words is not without its difficulties. Does Satan enter into one who is a devil? (John 6:70, cf. also R.V. of verses referred to).
- b) The distinction in John 13:2,27 between “the devil” (verse 2) and “Satan” (verse 27) is interesting. Verse 27 must refer to Iscariot's own evil purposes. Verse 2 may suggest that the idea was first sown in his mind by some emissary of the chief priests.
- c) Verse 27 may be compared with God's hardening of Pharaoh's heart (Exod. 10:20,27) and also with 2 Sam. 24:1; 1 Chron. 21:1. The suggestion has also been made that Judas was a man subject to black moods of evil temper, like Saul, and that these expressions are intended to suggest that idea.

Luke 22:31 - “Satan hath desired to have you” (plural)

The Satan here is surely the chief priest and his evil associates. These words probably refer to a proposal in the secret councils of the high priest's palace that the entire band of apostles be rounded up as well as Jesus their leader.

Romans 10:9,13 - “Only Believe”!

This passage is the sheet anchor of the rabid evangelical who declares that all that is needful is to “accept the Lord Jesus, take him as your own personal Saviour”.

- a) The words just quoted are, of course, sound enough if only it is understood in a wholesome Biblical sense. The trouble is that the meaning put into these words and into the passage from Rom. 10 is usually so completely contrary to the tenor of the entire New Testament. Especially is the assumption usually made that baptism is unnecessary.
- b) The immediate answer to the last assumption is the plain evidence of Matt. 3:15; Mark 16:16; John 3:5; Acts 2:38; 10:48; 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21. So baptism is clearly essential.
- c) Is it credible that Paul can be disallowing the need for baptism in Rom. 10:9,13, when he has just written so powerfully about baptism in Rom. 6?
- d) Is it possible to be a true believer in Christ and at the same time disallow the plainest and simplest (so far as ease of obedience goes) of his commandments?
- e) Just, how to fulfil Rom. 10:13 (quoted from Joel 2:32) is shown by Peter, who makes these very words the fulcrum of his appeal to the crowd at Pentecost: Acts 2:21. Now note verses 37,38: “Men and brethren, what shall we do?... Repent, and be baptized... for the remission of sins”. See also verses 40,41: “Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized”.
- f) Is it of any value to confess Jesus as Lord (verse 9) and at the same time openly and deliberately to reject one of the most obvious and most simple of his commandments?

“Why call ye me Lord, and do not the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46). Compare the fate of the one who hears Christ’s words “and doeth them not” (Matt. 7:26,27).
- g) Similarly, can one be a believer in Jesus (verse 13) and yet flout his authority in something as clear and important as baptism? “Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you”.
- h) These very words: “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved” (cited from Joel 2:32) were also used by Peter at Pentecost (Acts 2:21). Nevertheless Peter went on to require baptism of his hearers: “men and brethren, what shall we do?... Repent, and be baptized... Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized” (verse 37, 38, 40, 41).
- i) Then why does not Paul also emphasize baptism in Rom. 10? Because, firstly, he is writing to baptized believers (see 1:7), and, secondly, because he has already emphasized baptism more than sufficiently in chapter 6. Note that Rom. 6:3: “So many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ”, is so phrased in the original as to mean that all the readers had (with Paul also) received baptism. The R.V. reads accordingly.
- j) The same arguments apply in Acts 16:31; “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house” (note verses 32, 33; the jailor “was baptized, he and all his”).

- k) In Rom. 10:13, the Greek is, more literally: “Whosoever shall call the name of the Lord upon himself (Gk. Middle voice) shall be saved”; and a comparison with Acts 22:16, where the identical word-form is used, shows that Paul probably did have baptism in mind in this chapter: “Arise and be baptized, calling on the name of the Lord (literally: calling the name of the Lord upon thyself)”. Compare also James 2:7.

Infant Baptism

This perversion depends almost entirely on Acts 16:33 and Mark 11:14.

- a) The Philippian jailor was baptized, “he and all his straightway... And rejoiced, believing in God with all his house”. The argument goes thus: not only the jailor but also his household were baptized. There must have been children in the family. Therefore child baptism is valid.
- b) But this argument overlooks two important details. First, verse 32: “And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house”. So whoever they were who were baptized, they were evidently of an age capable of receiving instruction first of all, and therefore not babes in arms. Note also in connection with this: “believing in God with all his house”. The entire household was of an age when intelligent belief was possible.
- c) What of Mark 11:14: “Suffer the little children to come unto me... for of such is the kingdom of God”. Note first that there is nothing in this passage about baptism. Jesus merely put his hands on them and blessed them. It would be logical to infer from this that the Lord is pleased when parents seek to consecrate their children to him (as Hannah did Samuel) and certainly looks down with blessing on those thus committed to his care. But to infer baptism, which elsewhere invariably follows belief, is to go beyond what is written.
- d) A useful quote from Jerome, the translator of the Latin Vulgate, and a name held in reverence among all churchmen whether R.C. or C. of E. or N.C.: “Not of these, but of such is the Kingdom of God... It is not the age but the disposition that receives the Kingdom”.
- e) If indeed age is what Jesus was referring to, what of verse 15: “Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein”. If this were interpreted in the same way that verse 14 is used, it would mean that only those baptized in infancy (“as a little child”) have a hope of life. Reduction and absurdum!

1 Cor 1:17 - “Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel”.

- a) Surely only the very ignorant or the very prejudiced would ever quote this to prove that baptism is not essential. For in the same context (verses 14, 16) Paul mentions certain ones whom he had baptized. Are we then to infer that Paul deliberately disobeyed his Master in this matter?
- b) Verse 13, 15 explain: “Was Paul crucified for you, or were ye baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius, lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name.” The Apostle, concerned lest there should arise a party calling itself by the name of Paul and glorying in his prowess, had studiously refrained from administering the rite of baptism himself. It mattered not who performed the actual act

of immersion. Thus some years later Paul expresses an understandable uncertainty of memory as to precisely who were the people that he himself baptized. What does it matter? he exclaims, my job is the preaching of the gospel.

- c) The general tenor of the passage is, then: Anyone is qualified to perform the rite of baptism itself. No special virtue whatever is associated with the “dignity” of the baptizer. Paul himself was commissioned by Christ to be, first and foremost, a preacher of the gospel. Whether he personally undertook the baptism of converts was a matter of no importance at all one way or the other.
- d) If indeed “Christ sent me not to baptize” is read (as some perversely try to read it) as a prohibition of baptism, then Paul writes his own condemnation in the same passage, for he mentions the baptisms by his own hand of Crispus and Gaius and the household of Stephanas!
- e) It is sometimes overlooked precisely how very strong is the testimony concerning the vital importance of baptism: “Except a man be born of water and of the spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:5, and see also verse 22, 23). “The like figure whereunto even baptism doth now save us” (1 Peter 3:20). “And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord” this, after the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:48). “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16). “Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness” (Matt. 3:15). “If we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection” (Rom 6:5).

Matt 10:28 - “Kill the body but not the soul”.

- a) It is sufficient in the first place to draw attention to the fact that this very verse says the soul is destructible: “Fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell”.
- b) And this “destruction” of the soul cannot possibly be eternal torment, for the hell spoken of here is carefully and precisely defined by the context: “destroy both soul and body in hell”. Without controversy, the body is destroyed in the grave. Therefore this “hell” is the grave. It follows that the “soul” of the unrighteous is to be destroyed in the grave also.
- c) But now an objection: This verse speaks of men being able to destroy the body but not the soul. How is this to be reconciled with the conclusion just reached? Remember that the word “soul” means “life”, e.g. “whosoever shall lose his life (soul) shall preserve it” (Luke 17:33). If this is read as having reference to an immortal soul, the result is ludicrous. Further, a careful reading of Matt. 10:28 makes it evident that it is final and irreparable destruction that Jesus speaks of; “Fear not (for an instant) them which kill the body, but are not able to kill you for ever; but rather fear (always) him which is able to destroy you utterly and finally.”

John 14:1-3 - The Father’s house of many mansions.

A hoary favourite with those who believe that good people go to heaven. With such it ranks only second to the thief on the cross. Indeed, with those who are good at misquotation it takes first place: “I go to prepare a place for you that where I am there ye may be also”.

Rejoinder may emphasize the following;

- a) Verse 3: “If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also.”
- b) Chapter 13:33: “As I said unto the Jews, whither I go, ye cannot come; so now say I unto you (disciples).” Compare chapter 3:13: “No man hath ascended into heaven (save Jesus)”. If the words just quoted from chapter 13:33 refer to martyrdom (see verse 36), then logically is not this the case in chapter 14:2,3? Thus, “go to prepare a place for you” would refer not to the Ascension but to the Crucifixion, by which Jesus “prepared a place” for those who are to share his suffering and his glory.
- c) If indeed disciples do go to heaven, then the second coming of Christ would be a separation and not a re-union “that where I am there ye may be also”.
- d) Where is the evidence that the Father’s house is heaven? This is gratuitous assumption. Every reference in the Bible to the Father’s house is to a temple on earth, e.g. chapter 2:16: “My Father’s house shall be called of all nations a house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves”, this, at the cleansing of the Temple. O.T. examples: Exod, 23:19; 1 Sam. 1:7; 2 Sam. 7:13; 1 Kings 8:10; 2 Kings 20:5, and many more. The temple Jesus speaks of is, of course, the spiritual house of Eph. 2:20-22; 2 Cor. 6:16.
- e) “I will come again and receive you unto myself”. By many (e.g. Plymouth Brethren) the simple meaning of these words is twisted to mean that Jesus comes to gather the saints together and take them to heaven. The devastating answer to any such contention is the combined testimony of the Scriptures that Jesus comes to reign on the earth. Nowhere is his reign spoken of as being in heaven. “Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool” (Psa. 110); “Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion”, (Psa.2); “The law shall go forth from Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem” (Isa. 2); He shall sit on the “throne of his father David”. (Luke 1:32)
- f) The view is not infrequently encountered in the ecclesias that “I will come again” has reference to a mystical spiritual dwelling, and not to a literal bodily return. Verse 23 is usually cited in support of this. This is not the place to query the validity of such a use of either verse 23 or verse 3. For the moment let it suffice that if this be the sense intended by Jesus, he has never gone away. Is not the allusion in verses 1-3 to the High Priest’s atonement for the sin of the people? Likewise, Jesus must first offer the sacrifice, then present it in the divine Presence, and in due course come forth and bless the people in the name of the Lord (Heb 9:28). If this suggestion be a correct one, a literal going away and coming again seem to be required by the words under discussion.

1 Thess. 4:16- Caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air

This passage is almost the sole ground of the fantastic notion that at the second coming Jesus will gather the saints together, take them to heaven, and with them rule from thence over the earth.

- a) It is futile to meet these perverters of the word of God with the suggestion that here “clouds” mean “bands or groups of people” and the “air” means the “aerial”. To support

such contentions with Bible proof the Christadelphian might be hard put to it. Is there any other passage which states clearly that the saints will be gathered by the angels in “bands”? Luke 17:31-37 points fairly strongly to a different conclusion. And what support can be adduced is some consideration which definitely rules out a literal interpretation of “clouds” and, requires an insistence, probably mistakenly on a figurative meaning.

- b) In fact, when the passage is carefully examined the literal reading of it is almost entirely free from difficulties. First, let it be insisted that nowhere does this passage say that the saints are taken to heaven. Clouds are mentioned; so also is the air. But not a hint of heaven.
- c) “And so shall we ever be with the Lord”- where - in heaven? Heaven has not been mentioned. In the air? - but the air extends at most sixty miles high. Are we being asked to believe that the saints are to spend an eternal existence suspended in mid-air? The average zealot for the “Rapture” has never given a thought to these details or their logical consequences.
- d) Now is the time to point out that the Greek word translated “caught up” carries with it no idea whatever of “up”. It simply means “snatched away”. Other examples where the same word is used: “the spirit of the Lord caught away Phillip” (Acts 8:39): “The wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep:” (John 10:12); “No man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand” (John 10:29).
- e) Further, it is useful to point out that the phrase “in the air” should really be “into the air”, i.e. the idea is that of the saints being caught away into the air. (For the purpose of (this is the force of the Greek preposition here) meeting the Lord.)
- f) Couple this with an emphasis on “meet the Lord”, as in Acts 28:15 and Matt. 25:1-6, and the picture becomes clear: Christ and his angels come to the earth in glory. The angels are sent (Matt. 24:30) to gather the elect from the four winds of heaven. See the emphatic passages which declare that Christ will reign on the earth, from Jerusalem. See also the equally emphatic words that the saints will “reign on the earth” (Rev. 5:10). It is worthwhile, perhaps, to mention that the Plymouth Brethren and J.W.’s especially, aware of the weakness of their case when Rev. 5:10 is cited, propound one of the most bogus bits of Bible exposition on record. They retranslate thus: “And we shall reign over the earth”, i.e. as though from heaven. In sixteen other places in Revelation the identical phrase is translated “on the earth” or “upon the earth”, but not “over the earth”, as though suggesting remote control.
- g) What about the phrase “in the clouds”? It is inadvisable and almost certainly wrong, to insist that this should read “in clouds”. Further, since there is now no possible objection to the “air” being literal air, is there any reasons why these should not be literal clouds? Consider: When the Tabernacle and the Temple were consecrated, the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud. When Israel were delivered from Egypt, the angel of the Lord in the midst of the cloud protected them. When Jesus was transfigured, as in his Kingdom, this cloud of the Glory surrounded him. When he went away, it was in a cloud - The Cloud. And at his return, “behold, he cometh with clouds”- the Glory once again. When he sends his angels to gather his elect, again the Cloud will protect them and direct them to him. Could anyone wish for a more harmonious combination of scriptures?

- h) The spurious doctrine of the “Rapture”, dependent as it is on perversions of two passages (John 14 and 1 Thess. 4) and utterly devoid of any other support in the Bible, is one of the outstanding instances of how men are determined to make the Bible mean what they want it to mean. Its only rival, from this point of view, is the “Latter Day Saints” doctrine of baptism for the dead, with its only foundation - a confident but unstable reading of one verse.

The Pre-Existence of Christ

- a) Did Jesus exist in heaven as a person before he was born in Bethlehem? The Bible seems to answer plainly, yes; e.g. “in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made”; “No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he was before?; “I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me”; “Before Abraham was, I am”, “The glory which I had with thee before the world was”; “Thou loved me before the foundation of the world”. The list is formidable, and the meaning is plain. But why are they all in John? With the exception of Hebrews I and Colossians I, easily dealt with separately and easily shown to have no connection with the foregoing, the “pre-existence” of Christ cannot be even traced elsewhere in the Bible. Was John the only inspired writer to have this truth or to believe in it? This consideration should immediately awaken suspicion, for if this doctrine is true it should be one of the salient features of the Divine purpose and revelation. All the other fundamentals of truth can be found scattered throughout the Book. Why this most unexpected exception? Can it be that John has been misunderstood?
- b) Besides, what a contrast is presented in Matthew and Luke, where the narratives of our Lord’s birth carry no kind of suggestion that this little baby in a manger was really the metamorphosis of an Eternal Being. Notice Luke 1:32; “He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Highest”- not “He is great; He is the Son of Highest”. And contrast how these future tenses become present tenses when Jesus is born: “A Saviour, which is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:11).
- c) It is necessary to observe that the Bible speaks of the ‘pre-existence’ of others besides Jesus. “Before I formed thee in the belly, I knew thee; and before thou earnest forth out of the womb, I sanctified thee” (Jer. 1:5). “There was a man sent from God whose name was John (the Baptist)” (John 1:6). This example is specially interesting and extremely forceful, for the literal force of the Greek expression is: “a man sent from beside God”! Could words declare more clearly the preexistence of John? Yet no one believes that John the Baptist existed in heaven as a person before he was born of his mother Elizabeth. More than one enthusiast for the personal preexistence of Christ has been rendered speechless by this remarkable verse! The “pre-existence” of the saints is similarly implied in Eph. 1:4: “Chosen in him before the foundation of the world”.
- d) The whole subject is put in perspective by the two following passages:
- 1) “... the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev. 13:8). Manifestly these words do not teach that Jesus died before the world began; they are only an emphatic way of stressing the self-evident truth that it was in the foreknowledge and

plan of the Father from the very beginning that Jesus should die as “the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world”.

- 2) The Apostle Peter is explicit: “Redeemed... with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you” (1 Peter 1:19,20) - foreordained, but not formed.
- e) It is necessary, then, in the light of paragraphs (c,d) to be on one’s guard against reading the idiom of the Bible, and especially the idiom of the Apostle John, as though it were ordinary everyday modern English. There are passages in abundance to illustrate the need for this caution, e.g.:
 - 1) “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death” (1 John 3:14). It is clear enough that here John does not use the words “life” and “death” in their ordinary sense.
 - 2) “Ye are from beneath; I am from above” (John 8:23). Are those who take this second phrase literally prepared to do the same with the first? Of course, the meaning is immediately made clear by what follows: “Ye are of this world; I am not of this world”.
 - 3) “Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). How can this past tense be taken literally? Could Jesus possibly speak of having already “overcome the world” when there still lay before him the agony and sweat of Gethsemane? (But those acquainted with the Hebrew of the O.T. will have no difficulty here. For the sake of emphasis the O.T. commonly puts in the past tense what is to happen in the future.)
 - 4) “Those whom thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them perished (R.V.) but the son of perdition” (John 17:12). Here Judas is referred to as having already perished, although the next chapter shows him to be still very much alive.

With many an example such as these available in the Gospel of John (they are hard to find in the other gospels), it ill becomes any man to dogmatize about his understanding of those listed in paragraph (a). Let him prove his point clearly first from other parts of Scripture (if he can), and then perhaps he may have some justification for coming back to these with a zeal according to knowledge.

- f) The insuperable difficulties of the orthodox believer in Christ’s pre-existence are his human nature and sacrifice. How can that which is immortal become mortal? If Jesus was always conscious of having existed in heaven as the glorious, creative Eternal Son, how could he be “tempted in all points like as we are”? The temptation of Jesus, his agony in the garden, even his death on the cross-all these become make- believe, playacting, except Jesus were truly Man and not an Epiphaneis.
- g) The relevance and force of Paul’s argument in 1 Cor. 15:46 is often overlooked: “First, that which is natural; then that which is spiritual”, with reference to the saints attaining to immortality. But if Jesus had an eternal pre-existence, then for him this divinely appointed order is reversed: First, spiritual; then natural. How then is he the firstborn among many brethren if indeed his experience is the very reverse of theirs?

Again, is there not a good deal of point in the words so emphatically applied to Christ: “Thou art my Son: this day have I begotten thee”? That expression “this day” requires that the begetting of the Son be in the finite time (for see Gen. 1:5). The words are meaningless if they refer to a Son begotten before all ages.

- h) It may be asked: What then is to be said about the positive meaning of the disputed passages in John’s Gospel? It can hardly be satisfactory merely to say airily “Ah, yes. John has an idiom of his own”. One requires to say what the words do mean.

John 8:42 - “I proceeded forth and came from God... he sent me”.

The phrase “from God” is the very one that is used of believers in verse 47: “He that is of God heareth God’s words”. And in the expression “he sent me”, the word is identical with that used of John the Baptist (John 1:6). There can be no doubt that here Jesus is piling up synonyms to emphasize the fact of his divine mission. Beyond this no one can argue with certainty, especially in the light of the use of these same phrases of men like John and the disciples.

John 8:58 - “Before Abraham was, I am”.

This great favourite is a first-class illustration of what can be achieved by divorcing a passage from its context. Verse 56 reads: “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad”. Promises concerning Christ were given to Abraham, were believed and were rejoiced in. Thus, in prospect and in purpose, Christ existed in the day of Abraham, and even before Abraham was.

John 17:5 - “The glory which I had with thee before the world was”.

The similar expression in verse 24 helps towards an explanation: “Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world”. Compare Matt. 25:34: “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world”. The kingdom, not yet established, has been (in the Divine purpose) in prospect since the very beginning - “prepared from the foundation of the world”. So also has the glory of Christ, for it is inseparable from the kingdom. The architect sees and knows every beautiful detail in his cathedral before ever the site is prepared and the foundation-stone laid. In this sense, and in this sense only, Jesus had glory with the Father before the world was.

Col. 1:6-7- “By Him were all things created”

- a) The usual (Christadelphian) approach has been to take refuge in various alternative and, for the most part, illegitimate translations of the Greek prepositions, e.g.,: “all things were made on account of him”. This is wrong; it is bad.
- b) Another mistaken approach (under the baneful influence of modern criticism!) is to try to read Paul’s phrases and argument as an attack on the heresy of Gnosticism. This also is completely without foundation. There is nothing in Colossians which cannot be readily understood as a counter blast to Judaism, the inveterate enemy of Paul and his message. Gnosticism did not become a serious evil for at least 70 years after Paul died.

- c) In what sense was Jesus “the firstborn of every creature”? More correctly this is: “the firstborn of all creation”. Verse 18 interprets. There Jesus is “the firstborn from the dead” (and Rev. 1:5, same phrase). It is the New Creation of regenerate men and women that is spoken of, not the material creation of sun and stars, mountains, seas and forests. The demonstration of this is completed by two further points: (1) the words “creation”, “create”, are frequently used in this sense: Gal. 6:15; 2 Cor. 5:17; James 1:18; Eph. 2:10 and 4:24 and 2:14,15 (in all these the root word is the same in the original). 2 Cor. 4:4-6; 5; Isa. 51:6,16; 45:7,11,12,13 and 42:5,6; Psa. 102:18,25-28; and many other passages have the same idea but a different word. (2) Col. 1:15 not only has “firstborn of all creation” but also “the image of the invisible God,” a plain allusion to “let us make man in our image”, i.e. Christ is the beginning of a New Creation: he is a second Adam.
- d) Once this point is grasped the language of Paul can be taken literally (a strong recommendation always for any interpretation!) Jesus is literally the firstborn of the New Creation; all things in the New Creation were literally created by him and for him; he is literally before all things in the New Creation in point of time (which is what the word “before” signifies), since he was the first to rise from the dead; he is the Beginning. With this point of view established, where is the “pre-existence” of Christ in this passage? From every aspect its introduction is utterly irrelevant. In the face of the battery of passages in paragraph (c) the orthodox interpreter is helpless.
- 3) But in a desperate attempt to save the day (being more intent on maintaining his dogma than on finding truth) he may cling with pathetic tenacity to the details of verse 16, where Christ’s pre-eminence and creative work covers not only earth but heaven.

Here once again the parallel passages in paragraph (c) answer the difficulty. Let it be strongly emphasized in any argument on this question that Colossians and Ephesians are twin epistles, explaining and interpreting each other. There is scarcely any detail in the one which does not find its counterpart in the other. Here Eph. 2:15 provides the key: “Having abolished in his flesh (= Col. 1:22) the enmity (Col. 1:21), even the law of commandments contained in ordinances (Col. 2:14,20); for to make (R.V.: that he might create) (Col. 1:16) in himself (Col. 1:19,20) of twain one new man (Col. 3:10). “When carefully perused this passage is seen to mean that Christ has created out of Jew and Gentile (twain) one new Christ-man. But observe that this creating is not a creating out of nothing but a re-constituting of both Jews and Gentiles on a different footing; by him they have been given a different status before God. The same idea is perhaps even more obvious in Eph. 2:10: “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works”. This regeneration of men and women is spoken of as their creation. So also in Col. 1:16 both earthly and heavenly beings are “created” by Christ, i.e. in him they now have a fresh status, a different standing and a new function, in the great Purpose. “In him all things consist “(have their proper standing). Wherefore, it is written,” All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth”, and “Let all the angels of God worship him (Christ)”, and “who maketh his (Christ’s) angels spirits, his ministers a flame of fire”, and “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?”

Three Passages in Hebrews 1

“By whom also He made the worlds” (Verse 2)

The word “worlds” here is “ages” and has nothing to do with the ordered or habitable universe. (Verse 8 has the same word: “Thy throne, O God, is unto the age of the ages”.)

“Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundations of the earth” (vs 10-12).

- a) This quotation from Psalm 102 reads here as though it were applied to Christ, and accordingly the words are seized with gusto by those who seek to prove his pre-existence, the more so since the preceding six quotations from the Old Testament undoubtedly apply to him.
- b) A good case can be made for the view that these words are a symbolic prophecy of the passing of the old Mosaic order (for does not Scripture insist that “the earth abideth for ever”?). Compare Isa. 50:9 and 51:6, 16. But suppose this be granted, if the “Lord” of Heb. 1:10 be Christ, the words still require his pre-existence.
- c) Is the “Lord” of verse 10 really Christ? A careful reading of the context in Psalm 102 strongly suggests that this is the Creator Himself (is not the sufferer in Psalm 102 Christ?). This is the most obvious meaning of the words. But, and this is the main point, any Jew asking himself: “How will God sweep away the old order spoken of here?” would also immediately supply the answer: “By the Messiah, of course”. This idea is implicit in the quotation in Hebrews. But this old order to be swept away by Messiah on God’s behalf was first inaugurated through the ministry of angels: “For if the word (Moses’ law) spoken by angels was steadfast...” (Heb. 2:2); “Ye who received the law by the disposition (ordinance) of angels, and have not kept it” (Acts 7:53; Gal. 3:19). Hence the One whose work supercedes that of the angels must himself be of higher status than the angels. Thus Heb. 1:10-12 falls into its place as part of a sustained argument that Christ is greater than the angels. And at the same time any suggestion of a “pre-existent” Christ is shown to be completely foreign to the passage.
- d) Many an adversary might be disposed to contest the truth of the conclusion reached in paragraph (b). So be it. Let the words be read with reference to the literal material creation. Then the argument of paragraph (c) still stands, for that creation also was brought into being through the ministry of angels: “And Elohim said, Let us make man...”; which creation is also to be superceded by a New Creation, the work of a Christ greater than angels.

“Unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever” (verse 8).

Another favourite not only in support of the “pre-existence” of Christ but also in support of the doctrine of three co-equal persons in the God-head.

- a) This argument staggers badly in three directions. First, “unto the Son” is a translation of debatable accuracy. The same preposition comes in the previous verse: “of the angels he saith...”. And in line with this the R.V. of verse 8 reads: “But of (concerning) the Son he saith...” Jesus comes in the glory of his Father (Matt. 16:27) and to sit on a throne assigned to him by the Father (Psa. 110:1), so that the throne might with appropriateness be spoken of as God’s throne.

It is important here to observe that this R.V. translation cannot be insisted on, but it is at least equally as likely as the A.V., and this fact is sufficient in the first place to dilute the dogmatism of the self-confident champion of orthodoxy, especially too if he be reminded that all the Revisers except one were believers in the doctrine of the Trinity!

- b) Secondly, the context is a further source of difficulty to the orthodox. Verse 9, still part of the same quotation from Psalm 45, goes on: “therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee...”. Are these two co-equal, co-eternal persons? Similarly, verse 4: “(Jesus) being made so much (R.V.: having become by so much) better than the angels” - carrying a plain implication that Jesus until his glorification had known no superiority to the angels.
- c) Guns are finally spiked by a demonstration that one who acts on God’s behalf, whether he be angel or man, is often spoken of in Bible idiom as God, e.g., Angels are spoken of as God: Gen. 16:13 and 18:13; Exod. 23:20,21; Hosea 12:3,5. Men are spoken of as God: Exod. 22: 28; Exod. 21:6 and 22:8 (Elohim); Psa. 138:1: and especially John 10:34, where Jesus quoting Psa. 82.:1,6, uses exactly the argument of this paragraph.
- d) Paragraph (c) was the answer also to those who seek to turn to bad account such words as “Mighty God” (Isa. 9:6) or Thomas’s confession: “My Lord and my God” (John 20:28). With regard to this last is it credible that doubting Thomas would go at one leap to the conclusion that Jesus was God Almighty? Remember that he was a Jew soaked in “Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord” Remember too that he had heard from Jesus such words as: “There is none good but one, that is, God”.

**John 14:26 - “The comforter, which is the Holy Spirit.... He shall teach you all things...”
(And John 15:26 and 16:13,14).**

The orthodox doctrine of the personality of the Holy Spirit rests almost entirely on these passages, which all seem to refer to the Holy Spirit as “he”. What is the explanation?

There appear to be three possibilities:

- a) These three instances employ the common figure of speech, personification, i.e. just as Riches is personified as a god to be served (Matt. 6:24), and Sin as a king to be obeyed (Rom. 6:12) and Wisdom as a woman building a house (Prov 9:1), so also the Spirit is represented as a personal Comforter and Friend. A point to be urged in favour of this idea is that these seem to be the only places where the Holy Spirit is referred to as a person.
- b) A different approach: The Holy Spirit is the power of God (Luke 1:35). Consequently what the Holy Spirit does is really what God is doing. Thus the distinction between God and Holy Spirit becomes such a fine one as to be almost negligible, and the personal pronoun is not altogether inappropriate. Thus, “the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, shall teach you all things” means, in effect, “He - God - shall teach you all things through His divine power”. Compare: “to lie to the Holy Spirit... thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God” (Acts 5:3,4).
- c) Yet another view, basically simpler than either of the preceding, is this: It is one of the universal rules of grammar, whatever the language, that a pronoun shall agree in gender with its antecedent (the word it refers to), e.g. “You see that table? It used to stand in the

middle of the floor”. “Table” is neuter; therefore “it”. Again, you see that boy? He is eight years old”. “Boy” is masculine; therefore “he”. Another more interesting example: “In the beginning was the Word (Logos)... All things were made by him”. The original Greek reads “him” because Logos is masculine. But in the French version, the equivalent word for Logos is feminine and therefore accordingly the passage in the French Bible reads: “All things were made by her”!

Returning to John 14,15,16, it is note-worthy that all three passages are introduced by the word Comforter which in Greek is masculine. Consequently every succeeding pronoun is necessarily masculine also; not because the Holy Spirit is a person, but because being spoken of as a masculine Comforter it must grammatically be referred to by masculine pronouns.

- d) It may not be inappropriate to deal here with three other passages bearing on the same question. Acts 13:2:”... the Holy Spirit said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work where unto I have called them”. Do not the pronouns “me... I” require that the Holy Spirit be a person? By no means.

Nothing is known definitely of the call of Barnabas. But who called Saul and for what work is known precisely: “I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.... I have appeared unto thee to make thee a minister and a witness... delivering thee from the people (of Israel) and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from the power of darkness unto light” (Acts 26:16-18)

Hence Acts 13:2 means: “Separate unto me (Christ) Barnabas and Saul”. Why then are these words represented as an utterance of the Holy Spirit rather than of Christ? Because the words were spoken through a man endowed with Holy Spirit power: “There were in the church at Antioch certain prophets... And as they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Spirit said...” (Acts 13:1,2).

- e) What of the triple benediction in 2 Cor. 13:14? Does not this imply the personality of the Holy Spirit?; “... and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all”.

The argument goes, quite impressively:

- (I) Jesus and the Father are separate and distinct persons. So does not the third part of the benediction require the Holy Spirit to be a person also?
 - (II) Communion means fellowship, which can only be experienced with persons.
- f) Acts 8:16: “For as yet he (the Holy Spirit) was fallen on none of them”. This is an interesting illustration of how theological prejudice can operate almost unconsciously in the mind of a translator. The original Greek has no pronoun in it (except one corresponding to the word “them”). Consequently, it is at the choice of the translator to put ‘he’, ‘she’ or ‘it’ according to his own judgment, with the balance loaded in favour of ‘it’ since the word “Spirit” is neuter in Greek. The common version here reads “he” simply because King James’ translators had themselves inherited without question the doctrine of the Trinity and its implied or explicit teaching of the personality of the Holy Spirit.

John 20:28 - “My Lord and my God”.

A stock “Trinity” proof text. Is it?

- a) In an attempt to evade the application of these words to Jesus, the suggestion is sometimes made that this was just an ejaculation of utter surprise. This is altogether unworthy. Thomas may have been a doubter, but his spiritual level was still infinitely higher than that of a blasphemous British dock - labourer. It must be conceded that the words “My Lord and my God” were intended to apply to Jesus. Then how? In what sense?
- b) Let it be emphasized and re-emphasized that Thomas was a Jew, soaked from childhood in the unshakable belief of Israel that “the Lord our God is one Lord”. For such it would be a moral and spiritual impossibility to move in a split second (or in a lifetime) from believing Jesus to be an ordinary man (verse 25), to an emphatic conviction that he was God Almighty.
- c) Next, let it be remembered that it is the common principle of the Old Testament to refer to God’s accredited representatives, be they men or angels, as though they were God. Those who act for God are spoken of as God. Angels are referred to as “God” in Gen. 16:13; 18:13; 32:30; and Exod. 23:20,21; Hos. 12:3,5, men are referred to as “God” in Exod. 21:6; 22:8, Psa. 138:1; 82:1,6; (John 10:34). Similarly, Messiah is referred to as “...him”; Isa. 64:4 (where he “the almighty: and “thee, O God”= Messiah). In Mal. 3:1 “prepare the way before me” becomes “before thee” in Matt. 11:10.
- d) So Thomas’s confession is certainly a recognition of the divine act in raising Jesus from the dead; it is probably an acknowledgment of Jesus as Messiah (Zech. 12:10, cp. “reach hither thy finger”); it is certainly not a declaration of belief that Jesus was God the Son.

Rom. 9:5 - “Christ... who is over all, God blessed forever”.

Another Trinitarian favourite!

- a) It is very tempting to deal with “difficulty” by making a textual amendment. For the most trilling modification of the text imaginable would make the passage read: “Of whom is God who is over all...” This would fit splendidly into the context. Paul enumerates the spiritual privileges of Israel: the Shekinah glory, the law, the promises, the fathers, the Messiah himself and even God over all is specially the God of Israel. This alluring approach to the problem must be put aside, simply because there is no manuscript evidence in its favour.
- b) The margin of the R.V. indicates that, as in the more familiar Thief on the Cross passage, there are uncertainties of punctuation here. Besides the A.V., there are two other possibilities, both of which need to supply part of the verb “to be” (as also in verse 9, 16 [observe the italics] and many another N.T. passages).

“Of whom, as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all. Let God be blessed for ever”;

Or: “Of whom, as concerning the flesh Christ came. Let God, who is over all, be blessed for ever”.

Of these, the second is definitely preferable, on the grounds of both grammar and doctrine. But, read either way, the passage is seen to be a thankful ascription of praise to God for all that He has done for Israel.

- c) Let it be re-emphasized that, with scholars quarrelling as to how the words shall be punctuated (see R.V.mg.) no one is in a position to assert dogmatically that the A.V. reading must be received.

If read as punctuated in the A. V. (which it is contended is the most natural reading of the Greek) the term “God” can be understood in the light of the Scriptural usage referred to in the previous note on John 20:26.

Acts 8:37 - “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God”

Is this all that is necessary for salvation, that one should merely “believe in Christ” without troubling about baptism or the acceptance of a creed? Are not these words inconsistent with the idea that understanding and acceptance of some creed or system of doctrine is necessary before baptism?

- a) The words themselves are of doubtful authenticity. The textual evidence is strongly against their retention. Nevertheless the case for insisting on them is made much stronger by Acts 9:2,1 John 5:5, where no textual queries of any kind arise.
- b) It needs to be recognized that early believers with Jewish background already had a corpus of sound doctrine and understanding of the divine purpose. What they needed more than anything else, was a recognition that the “Son of God”, the Messiah, was none other than Jesus of Nazareth. Once this fact was accepted, the purpose of his death and resurrection and ascension became evident at once, and the whole divine purpose in him could be seen as a harmonious whole. Hence, with such people, acceptance of Jesus as the Son of God was the key to a ready and tolerably complete appreciation of the Truth.
- c) Why then is it not sufficient today to require this same simple assent: “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God”? Because: (i) recognition that “salvation is of the Jews” has today been most completely lost sight of; (ii) the average individual today lacks the good Biblical background which could safely be taken for granted in those days with every Jew (and with many who were not Jews, e.g. Cornelius); (iii) in the earliest days there was not the same clutter of false doctrines and perversions of Christian principle to contend with. It is this most of all which makes negative as well as positive teaching so necessary today. It was not long before the Apostles found the need for a double emphasis of that sort, e.g. 1 Cor. 15: 35,36; 1 Tim. 1:19,20: cp. 2 Tim. 2:17,18: 1 John 4:1-3.

2 Cor 11:14 - “Satan transformed into an Angel of Light”

- a) This passage really proves too much. For is it not true that those who quote it to support the idea of a personal Devil also believe that Satan was transformed from an angel of light because of rebellion in heaven? They can hardly have it both ways, even though they may wish to.

- b) One is tempted also to ask just what is this personal Devil. Four at one moment we are asked to believe he is an angel of light, at another a roaring lion (1 Peter 5:8), at another a many-headed dragon (Rev. 12). Is he also a chameleon?
- c) As in so many places, it is only attention to the context that is needed to demonstrate the true meaning and expose the error which men try to read into these words. Let these passages in the same epistle be studied with care: ch 3:1 and 10:2,3, 10, 12, 17,18 and 11:3,4, 18-23. It soon becomes evident that Paul writes to defend himself against the insinuations of Jewish adversaries who are doing their utmost to undermine his authority in the ecclesia at Corinth. They set themselves forth as Jews of high standing, they parade proudly their qualifications and they boost one another's prestige by letters of recommendation and eloquent encomiums about each other. They go further than this, and denigrate Paul in every possible way, making base insinuations about his weak physique and his contemptible speech. And all this in order that another gospel (with a strong Judaistic emphasis?) might be foisted on these hospitable Corinthians. Nevertheless, says Paul, these teachers are really false apostles, deceitful workers' a thing not to be surprised at, since the chief adversary, their leader and organiser, sets himself forth as an angel (or perhaps just a messenger) of light. Thus the Satan is seen to be a human Satan, deliberately and wickedly seeking to subvert the Corinthians from loyalty to Paul and the gospel he has taught them.

The same Satan is referred to in ch. 2:11, "Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices."

Jude 9 - Michael and the Devil contending about the body of Moses

- a) The believer in a superhuman devil, who may perhaps be forgiven for reading this verse as clear-cut evidence for his dogma, is nearly always too easily satisfied about the conclusiveness of his proof texts. Here, for instance, it rarely occurs to him to ask: Why should the Devil want custody of the body, of Moses? Is not his concern with souls, rather than bodies? And if such a question is put to him he has to fall back on a pure invention usually the idea (of mediaeval flavour) that the Devil wished to lure the people of Israel into superstitious veneration of Moses' body, a likely tale, when one considers the constant bitterness with which they contemned their leader all through the forty years of wilderness wanderings. It is not amiss to emphasize in this way that the adversary's evidence concerning the Adversary rests on passages which are at best only half understood by the one who cites them.
- b) It is usually blithely assumed that this verse is a reference to or a quotation from the apocryphal book "The Assumption of Moses". But this is not definitely known to be the case, for the only evidence is the assertion of a late Christian Father. Further, it is far from certain that "The Assumption of Moses" was already in existence when Jude wrote; for the part of that book which is now known appears to make allusions to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and should therefore be written, presumably, after that date. It is by no means unlikely that Jude was misunderstood by some early writer, who then proceeded to write his own apocryphal story, "The assumption of Moses", on the strength of it. Again, much is made by some critics of the detail in the Targum of Jonathan about the body of Moses. But the Targum makes no allusion to the Devil or to any contention concerning the body of Moses.

- c) More positively, it is possible to adduce two Biblical proofs that the Devil of Jude 9 is human and not superhuman. It is only a pity that these proofs involve a detailed sustained argument of a type which is often above the heads of those who cite Jude 9 so readily.
- d) The first of these rests on the palpable dependence of Jude's Epistle on 2 Peter. The many similarities between the two epistles must have impressed every careful reader. Jude 17,18 (2 Peter 3:3) shouts the conclusion that Jude had 2 Peter before him when he wrote. It follows, then, that verses 8,9 are Jude's version (or amplification) of 2 Peter 2:10,11,12; "... them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous are they, selfwilled, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities. Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord. But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption". It is clear that the whole of 2 Peter 2 is about human and not superhuman adversaries of the Truth. So the same of the details there are obscure in their meaning.
- e) The words "The Lord rebuke thee" provide an unmistakable clue, for they clearly come from Zech. 3:2. Observe that both passages mention the angel of the Lord (Michael), Satan (the devil), and these words: "The Lord rebuke thee". If further evidence is needed that Jude alludes to Zechariah, it is to be found in two further references to the same passage. Verse 23: "Pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh" looks back to Zech. 3:2,3: "Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments...". Thus an exposition of Zech. 3 provides also an explanation of Jude 9.
- f) Then what of Zech 3? Most probably the Satan there represents the priests of Zechariah's time who were put out of the priesthood through lack of adequate qualification (Ezra 2:62). In their chagrin these turn on Joshua; "Then what of you as High Priest? Where are your high-priestly robes?" (These would doubtless have disappeared during the long years of the Babylonian Captivity.) So, by divine mandate, Joshua's "filthy garments" are replaced by garments "for glory and for beauty". Also divine decision is thus given that the One who is to stand up with Urim and Thummin to decide all matters of priesthood (Ezra 2:63) is none other than Joshua himself (Zech 3:9).

There is an impressive parallel with Jesus (Joshua). He, though despised and rejected of the leaders of Israel, is God's declared High Priest and is himself the cause and means of their rejection. But this is not done by him in person during his priesthood, nor by angels (who earlier had ministered the Law of Moses). Instead, "the Lord rebuke thee" The casting out of reprobate Israel is God's own act.

Thus by an easy extension the same kind of argument can be used by Jude concerning other Jewish would-be corrupters of the Faith (antinomians, judging from the tone of the Epistle). These by their conduct would make Christ's priesthood a tainted one. But he does not take any direct action against them as yet. Instead, "the Lord rebuke thee".

- g) The rock on which all the foregoing seems to founder is the phrase "the body of Moses". The usual method of coping with this difficulty is to argue by analogy that as the ecclesia is the Body of Christ (Eph. 1:23; 1 Cor. 12), so the people of Israel - baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea are the body of Moses. There is a double weakness here: (2) No

such usage of the “body of Moses” occurs in Scripture. (l) The idea that “the body of Moses” equals “the people of Israel” is difficult to read back into the context of Zech. 3.

- h) An alternative approach which seems to have been generally overlooked: The word “body” was also used colloquially for “slave” or “servant”. See Rev. 18:13 R.V.mg., and also bro. John Carter on Hebrews, page 177.

The first Joshua was literally the servant of Moses (Exod. 24:13). The Joshua of Zech 3, being High Priest, was also Moses’ servant, in a figure, for he served the Law that Moses gave. Thus the phrase in Jude 9 slips neatly into place as part of the allusion to Zech. 3. It scarcely needs to be stressed here how aptly the same words apply to Christ, “the minister of the circumcision for the truth of God”.

Rev. 12:7 - “War in Heaven”

A great favourite with those who believe that the Devil was an archangel who rebelled against the authority of the Almighty and who was therefore cast out to work unlimited evil in this world. The interpretation of this passage on these lines is an example of the carelessness of those who use it to support such a dogma. In reply, then:

- a) Revelation is a book of signs and symbols. This fact is immediately self-evident from a perusal of any chapter, e.g. chapter 12; do verses 1, 14 describe a literal woman? Does the Devil really have seven crowned heads and ten horns? Is he really a dragon? Rev. 1:1 (signified”) declares the symbolism of the book. And interpretative verses here and there confirm such a conclusion: e.g. 1:20 and 17:9-12.
- b) How can this “war in heaven” refer to a conflict which took place “before the world began”, when the conclusion of the war brings “the kingdom of our God and the power of his Christ”? (verse 10). The other words of verse 10 are equally forceful: “which accused our brethren before God day and night”. How could the devil do this if he were cast out of heaven before the creation of Adam?
- c) If indeed the dragon and his angels became rebels against the will of the Lord of all, it is pertinent to enquire: Where is the guarantee that those who are glorified with Christ (made “equal to the angels”) will not similarly rise up against the authority of the Almighty after they have tasted the blessings of immortality?
- d) Verse 8: “neither was their place found any more in heaven”, poses an interesting contrast with John. 1:6. The orthodox Devil worshipper cannot hang on to both of these verses. He must make his choice between them.
- e) “He knoweth that he hath but a short time” (verse 12) is a serious difficulty to the believer in a personal devil. Can the entire duration of the human race be termed “a short time”?
- f) In recent years “Jehovah’s Witnesses” have realized some of the weaknesses inherent in their interpretation of this chapter. A directive from Brooklyn now requires them to expound thus: The war in heaven took place in 1914 (the date they claim of the invisible “coming” of the Lord). In that case one may reasonably enquire: since God is “of purer eyes than to behold evil” (Hab. 1:13; Psa 5:4,5), how did the devil manage to stay so long in

heaven? And again, if 1914 be the date of the devil's casting into the earth, was that also the date of the establishing of "the Kingdom of our God and the power of his Christ"? What sort of a kingdom of God has the world been since 1914?

- g) It is strongly recommended that when in controversy on this passage, no attempt be made to put forward an interpretation of Rev 12. To do this is to invite the adversary to slip happily away after half a dozen side-issues. The basic question here is; Does this chapter teach the existence of a personal Devil. But the one contending earnestly for the Faith has a duty to satisfy himself as far as possible as to what this chapter is about. A purely negative Christadelphian is a poor sort of creature.

Rev. 14:10,11- "The smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever"

It is remarkable how eager many sincere believers in the Bible are to prove that God is not love- by consigning millions of their fellows to torture which is to last not just for hundreds of years but for ever! This passage and Rev. 20:10,15 are prime favourites with all such. And this in spite of the following difficulties in their path:

- a) The figurative character of the Book of Revelation. See Rev. 12:7.
- b) If verse 10b is literal- "tormented with fire and brimstone" so also must verse 10a be literal: "The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation". But who would be so foolish as to see anything but a figure of speech here? (cp. Jer. 25:15).
- c) "Tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb." If this is hell-torment, then Jesus and his angels will be in hell also! Did not Jesus describe the fate of the wicked as "outer darkness"? Is he not to say to them "depart from me..."?
- d) The "fire and brimstone" of Chapter 9:17,18 is figurative enough.
- e) "The smoke of their torment, ascendeth up for ever and ever" is paralleled by chapter 19:3: "Her smoke rose up for ever and ever" which in turn is explained by chapter 18:18, where the destruction of "Babylon the great" is depicted. And this is no hell-fire, for it is witnessed and lamented by merchants and ship-masters.
- f) Then why "for ever and ever"? To give emphasis to the idea of utter destruction. Compare Jude 7: "Sodom and Gomorrah... suffering the vengeance of eternal fire"- which is certainly not to be taken literally; see Lam. 4:6: "which were overthrown as in a moment". (That phrase "eternal fire" is interesting. It is an example of transferred epithet: "suffering the fire which is God's eternal vengeance").
- g) It is important to recognize that the words of verse 11 are quoted from Isa. 34: 10. Each passage is a commentary on the other. Isaiah 34 is a manifestation of divine wrath in the Last Days against "all nations" and especially against Edom (Idumea). Is this going to be fulfilled in hell? Again, the ultimate desolation of this stricken territory - thorns in her palaces, nettles and brambles in the fortresses thereof... an habitation of dragons, a court for owls"- is so literally described that it is difficult to see how these words can be fulfilled in

hell. Yet the one who would quote Rev. 14:10,11 with reference to hell fire, ought, logically, to be prepared to make the same kind of application of Isaiah 34.

Acts 15:29 - "... That ye abstain... from blood, and from things strangled..."

A favourite passage with Seventh Day Adventists in their insistence on a careful distinction between permitted and proscribed foods. It is a pity that some Christadelphians also have been taken in by a mistaken exegesis of this passage and have allowed themselves to be tied down to unnecessarily severe food laws.

- a) There can be no doubt that the fourfold prohibition of Acts 15 was a temporary measure for the sake of harmonious relationships between Jew and Gentile in the early church. Three of the four were definitely revoked by apostolic authority in later days (1 Cor. 8:7-13 and 6:12; Rom. 14:2-6 and 14-23; 1 Tim4:4,5; this last passage is specially emphatic).
- b) Then why the prohibitions in the first place? For the reasons indicated in Rom. 14 and 1 Cor. 8. Where brethren have a conscience on a matter of this kind, they are to be regarded as "weak" and out of Christian charity as little as possible is to be done which might give offence in their eyes. Three of the four prohibitions fall into this category of things permissible but not expedient because of ingrained Jewish prejudices among the early brethren.
- c) It is worth noting that all four prohibitions had close association with idolatrous practices of those days. The fornication referred to was one of the vilest evils of the time. Corinth and all other large cities abounded with pagan sanctuaries and temple prostitutes. Again, much of the meat offered for sale in the shops came from temple offerings which had been slain and devoted to an idol in ways altogether repugnant to the scruples of the average Jewish conscience. Thus Acts 15 was a very practical gesture of consideration for Jewish brethren who were becoming seriously disturbed by "latitudinarian" trends in the early church- see especially Acts 15:21.

1 Cor 3:15 - "He himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire"

This is the passage to which, above, all others (what others?) the Romanist goes with confidence for proof of his doctrine of Purgatory.

- a) His interpretation is vetoed immediately by the context. According to the Catholic, this fire, which burns up a man's work but saves himself, is the discipline of Purgatory which follows immediately after death and endures for an unspecified but varying period. But Paul says: "Every man's work shall be manifest, for the day shall declare it, because it (the Day) is revealed in fire" (verse 13, R.V.). It is the Day of Judgment which is alluded to here (2 Thess. 1:6,7) and not a time of punishment or purging of long duration.
- b) In this same verse 15, the Romanist is inconsistent. He argues for the burning up of the "wood, hay, stubble" as being the purging out of a man's soul of all that is unworthy. Yet Paul says concerning this: "if any man shall suffer loss". Strange language, truly, to use of that which a man ought to be glad to be rid of in order to fit himself for eternal happiness!

- c) The simplest way in this case is to show simply just what the passage really does mean. Because of the partisan spirit in Corinth (verse 4), Paul discusses at length the relations between a man and his converts to Christ: "I planted, Apollos watered: but God gave the increase.... we are labourers together with God: ye are God's tilled land, ye are God's building.... I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereon" (verse 6, 9, 10).

"Every man's work shall be made manifest." The Day of judgment will reveal the spiritual quality of a preacher's converts, whether gold, silver, precious stones for the eternal temple of God, or wood, hay, stubble-cheap, tawdry, unenduring.

"If any man's work abide (i.e. if his converts endure to eternal life) he shall receive a reward"- the reward of seeing in the Kingdom of God the fruits of his labour and travail.

"If any man's work shall be burned (if his converts prove to be of no lasting value in the sight of the judge of all), he shall suffer loss"- the loss of seeing much loving labour come to nought. There are few preachers of the gospel who do not experience this bitterness of the Day of Account long before that Day dawns, through the defection of converts for whom they have worked and prayed.

"But he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire". The same fire of judgment which perhaps burns up the fruits of a life time's labours is to be endured by the preacher himself also. And even though all his converts should perish, he himself may yet stand approved, because of the faith and a zeal with which he has lived and worked in all good conscience before God. (Is it the figure of a man escaping with his life from a burning house?)

The very coherence of an exposition such as this sweeps the Romanist error out of existence, and exposes more pointedly than ever the complete lack of connection between the "purgatory" interpretation and the context.

1 Cor. 15:29 - Baptism for the dead

- a) On this verse and on this verse alone the Latter Day Saints (Mormons) dogmatically base their dogma that a baptism undertaken on behalf of friends, relations and ancestors, dead and gone, will save them from eternal damnation.

In reply it is sufficient to ask for other Bible evidence for the same remarkable doctrine. Strange, surely, that a vital doctrine should be set forth in only one place in the whole Bible (and that just in passing, not explicitly), whilst every other doctrine can be readily traced in a dozen places in a dozen different books. And how can the Mormon be sure that his interpretation of this verse is a correct one, since at least half- a-dozen other quite different interpretations have been put forward at one time or another? These considerations are sufficient to put the Mormon and his baptism - for- the- dead right out of court. One cannot help feeling sorry for people who can be so easily misled.

- b) It cannot be too clearly recognized or too strongly insisted on that there is no evidence whatever of the early church ever practising any form of baptism for the dead. The notion is sometimes found in commentaries that it was an early custom to baptize vicariously some living person in the same room as the corpse of one who had just died unbaptized. All this is mere conjecture - a kind of back inference from this very verse in 1 Cor. 15. Many chapters

about Bible manners and customs have also been written by the same entertaining but unedifying method.

- c) Since it is desirable to be able to offer a positive explanation for this passage, one or two alternatives are listed here. One suggestion is that the words of Paul are an ellipsis for: “What shall they do which are being baptized on behalf of (the hope of) the dead?” A similar sort of ellipsis occurs in verse 3, where “Christ died for our sins” clearly stands for the fuller expression “Christ died as a sacrifice or expiation for our sins”.
- d) Alternatively in this sense: “What shall they do who are being baptized so as to fill up the ranks of those taken from us by death? Why, in that case, receive baptism to fill their vacant places?” Such a view as this runs on smoothly into verse 30: “And why (same Gk. phrase as at end of verse 29) stand we in jeopardy every hour?” There seems to be a suggestion of exposure to peril by an open profession of faith.
- e) Re-punctuate (as with the well-known thief-on- the-cross passage) and supply the ellipsis differently - and perhaps more probably “What shall they do which are being baptized? (It is) on behalf of the dead, if the dead rise not at all. Why then are they baptized for the dead?” If there is no resurrection of the dead, baptism associates one with a dead “hope” and not with a living hope. If it is also noted that verses 20-28 really form a parenthesis, verse 29 now continues the argument of verse 19 perfectly. About this suggestion two further details call for mention. The word “dead” is plural, and cannot therefore refer to Christ, as some might be tempted to read it. Also, the supplying of the words “it is” is a common feature of N.T. translation, e.g., verse 27.

1 Cor. 15:50 - “Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God”.

- a) This passage is commonly quoted (i) by those trying to prove that the “spiritual body” Paul talks about in verse 44 is really no body at all; (ii) by “Jehovah’s Witnesses”, who use it to “prove” that Jesus rose from the dead as a spirit without a body.
- b) It is not recommended that in discussion on this passage one take refuge in the familiar: “Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, but flesh and bones can”. The unsympathetic debater invariably regards it as a rather slick evasion - a quibble in fact.
- c) One stage in the answer to either of these is to ask how a “spiritual body” (by which these controverters commonly mean “a spirit without a body”) can inherit the kingdom of God which is to be on the earth.
- d) Best of all is to carry the offensive into the camp of the enemy by exposing his inability to understand Bible language. What does the New Testament mean by “flesh and blood”? Certainly not the meat on our bones and the fluid in our veins, but the frail weak sinful nature we bear, e.g., “Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven” (Matt 16:17); “I conferred not with flesh and blood” (Gal. 1:16); “As the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same...” (Heb. 2:14).

These passages are decisive. Paul’s argument clearly is: This weak human nature of ours needs to be changed before it is fit for immortality. God has equipped everything in His universe to be

perfectly fitted for the environment it is to live in - fishes for the sea, birds for the air, and so on (verse 39). So also with man. When God designs him for eternal life, he must be freed from the frailties which are characteristic of a life of mortality, but not freed from a body. See Phil. 3:21.

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