

DOUBTING YOUR DOUBTS

QUESTIONS FOR LIBERALLY-MINDED CHRISTIANS

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*"If you believe what you like in the gospel and reject what you don't like;
it is not the gospel you believe, but yourself."*—Augustine

INTRODUCTION

When I was in my twenties, I was heavy into theology, and would often measure people by how they stacked up theologically. Once I recall throwing out a test question to a fellow pastor to see how he *measured up*. I don't remember what I asked him, but I was stunned by his reply.

He said, *"I'd rather get to know you first, and come together on that which unites us in Christ, rather than that which might divide us. Once I know you, then I'll be glad to share my beliefs with you."* Even now, the sensitivity of his answer, and the love he showed me, almost brings tears to my eyes. I came to love him, and even though he is more theologically liberal than I, we remain friends to this day.

I am sorry that I do not have the privilege of getting to know you before sharing my *confession* [faith and beliefs] with you. I believe there is much that unites us, and my goal is to stimulate your thinking, not build a wall between us. I am aware that in the end we may have to lovingly agree to disagree.

I have no idea how this booklet got into your hands. Regardless of whether it was from a positive or negative source [from your perspective], in a spirit of open-mindedness, I ask that you weigh what I share, based on the merits of the material.

I'll be the first to admit that evangelicals can be guilty of judgmentalism and stereotyping.—Where I am guilty of either of these, forgive me. I want you to know that I do *not* view you as the *enemy*. I do not question your love for God. Some of the most sensitive, intelligent, caring people in my life are liberals. The man who has had the most positive influence in my life the last three years is a dyed-in-the-wool liberal-existentialist. He is also the best listener and intuitively sensitive man I have ever known. I will forever be indebted to him.

Speaking candidly, when I am around some of my liberal friends, I sometimes feel a sadness because it seems to me they lack an intimacy with God so characteristic of most [not all] of my evangelical friends. I rarely hear liberals telling of answers to prayer or expressing what new things God is doing in their lives. Their sharing is almost always on the cognitive level when it comes to spiritual matters, or it

is centered on human and social concerns, which are often very good. Even this man whom I love so dearly will admit that he believes in God as the Almighty, the Transcendent, but yearns to know God more personally, as *Abba* [Father].

Liberals are generally very relational and psychologically astute, far more than most evangelicals. However, when it comes to God, it seems to me there is often a formality and an uneasiness about spiritual matters.—Do you pick that up?—While many liberals leave evangelicals in the dust when it comes to social concerns, evangelicals speak of *knowing* God relationally, while liberals, who are normally so relational, speak of God more impersonally.

I'm reminded of the poster I saw years ago which said, "If you can keep your head while others all about you are losing theirs, then, just maybe, you haven't grasped the situation."—Whether evangelicals have grasped the situation or not, their faith seems more unshakable than most liberals I know.

From time to time, my liberal friends challenge me to doubt and question my faith (especially my belief in the inerrancy of the Bible). In turn, I like to challenge them to doubt their doubts.—Why? Because I feel it is their theological doubts which are keeping them from experiencing the presence of God as deeply as they would desire. God honors faith [Hebrews 11:6], and faith does not grow well in the soil of unbelief or skepticism.

A friend of mine, who graduated with a PhD from Stanford, shared that during an advanced biology course his professor had lectured for several weeks on the theory of evolution. Then, out of fairness, the professor decided to devote one day to presenting arguments against evolution. The professor proceeded to show that evolution was a mathematical impossibility, that there were virtually no fossil links between the various species, that evolution runs counter to the law of entropy and the second law of thermodynamics, etc. In this one lecture the professor demolished virtually all that he had been teaching for most of a semester. Finally one of the students asked, "*So, professor, why do you believe in evolution?*"—The professor walked to the window, stared outside for the longest time, then turned to the student and said, "*Because I want to!*"

May I ask you a similar question; "Are you a liberal because of *facts*, or because you *want to*?"

I can certainly appreciate the fact that you might want to be a liberal if you consider evangelicals to be *closed-minded, legalistic, Bible-thumping, right-wing, fundamentalists*.—The sad thing is that there are some evangelicals who have rightly earned those names. As I was recently discussing with a friend, I feel more of an affinity with some liberals than I do some evangelicals. There are some ultra-conservative evangelicals who would classify me as a liberal because I don't use the King James Bible exclusively. [*"If it was good enough for Paul, it is good enough for me."*] They would label me a backslider because I believe that some things, such as drinking wine, are a matter of conscience [Romans 14:23].

My point is that labels, such as liberal and conservative, are a matter of degree. I've even known some conservatives who think Billy Graham is liberal. [Now that's conservative!]
—About the only thing that makes these conservatives nervous is someone even more legalistic than they are.

In order for me to have some degree of credibility with you, I feel it would be helpful for me to share some of my own spiritual journey. I don't want you to feel that I'm seeing the splinter in your eye while ignoring the log in my own eye. It is not flattering, but I struggle with being Pharisaical. Jack Deere, in his book, *Surprised By The Voice Of God*, describes very well how I used to be, and how, but for the grace of God, I could still be. Jack was a former professor at Dallas Theological Seminary. By his own admission, he too had become very Pharisaical. When he described himself it was like reading my own autobiography. He said:

" . . . Bible deism appealed to a serious weakness in my heart. The weakness was a fear of being hurt. I didn't like emotions because they caused me to lose control, and if I lost control, I became vulnerable. And vulnerable people get hurt . . . So I decided that my primary relationship would be to a book, not to a Person. . . . With Bible deism, I could be in control. My principal task in life was to

study the Bible and to cultivate the intellect. I didn't need my emotions for this task, just discipline and will power . . . If God only spoke through the Bible, then the one who knew the Bible the best would be the one who heard God's voice the best . . . One of the most serious flaws of Bible deism is the confidence the Bible deist places in his abilities to interpret the Bible. He assumes that the greater his knowledge of the Bible, the more accurate his interpretations . . . Wrong! It takes more than the Bible to interpret the Bible . . . The Author of the Bible is the best interpreter of the Bible . . . What kind of people does God speak to? . . . [Are] the best interpreters of God's word . . . the people who are the most intelligent and disciplined? It seems much of our current religious education operates on the lost beatitude: Blessed are the smart, woe to the dumb . . . After all, where would God be if he didn't have any smart people to witness to smart unbelievers? What if God was left with just a handful of businessmen or blue-collar workers, say, people who fished for a living—whose only qualification for ministry was that they loved God and wanted to be with Jesus?"

For years I leaned toward being a Bible deist. It was Bruce Larson's book, *No Longer Strangers*, which first began to show me my Pharisaical nature. Bruce said that the Bible is "*not primarily a book of theology.*"—I recall thinking to myself, "*Hmmm, if it isn't that, I wonder what it is?*"—He proceeded to say that the Bible is "*not primarily a book of prophecy or history,*" although it obviously contains both.—By this time I was honestly starting to wonder, "*What's left?*"—He then said that the Bible is primarily a *book of relationships*: man with God, man with man, and man with himself. He said that if we miss the *relational*, we miss what the Bible is all about.—I was blown away by the force of his comments for I knew they were true. It was as though someone had changed the rules of the game, and instead of my being such a hotshot, I realized that I was sadly lacking. I have spent the last twenty-five years learning to be a relational Christian, not a walking concordance.

God used some liberal friends of mine, who were not impressed with my Bible knowledge and theology, to love me and begin the process of humanizing me. My wife had twisted my arm into joining a type of Christian encounter group, where the only requirement was honesty. [You could see my heel marks all the way across the driveway into the house where we met.] It so happened that I was the only diehard conservative in the group. It was only my pride that kept me from quitting. At that time I had no vocabulary for feelings. Whenever I was asked what I *felt*, I'd tell them what I *thought*. With time, and a lot of patience on their side, they drew me out and helped me get in touch with a lot of repressed feelings. I was eventually able to confess some of the dark secrets and hidden skeletons from my past. This group saw me at my worst, and the amazing thing to me was they still loved me. It was through them that for the first time in my life, God's unconditional *agape* love became real, through liberals.

From then until now, my core theology has not changed a lot, but how I apply scripture has changed drastically. I now stress *both* the head and the heart. One of my favorite passages that I love to challenge fellow evangelicals with is Galatians 6:2, where Paul wrote that we are to "*bear one another's burdens*" and thus "*fulfill the law of Christ.*"—I point out to them, "*How are we to carry one another's burdens if we don't feel free to share them?*" The thing that makes some of them uncomfortable is that, scripturally, I'm right. With all my heart I believe Christ calls us to live authentic Christian lives, where we can share even our dark sins in the light of Christ's grace [James 5:16].

Another contrast I see is that evangelicals are often very cognitive and fact oriented. They have well thought out answers for most things. Liberals, to me, are often sloppy in their thinking [no offense intended]. Just as I love to challenge evangelicals to "move a position" and become more Christ-like relationally; I like to challenge my liberal friends to *rethink* the presuppositions behind their liberalism. I see huge holes in liberal thinking.

If you are a liberal, in love, and with deepest respect, I want to challenge some of your presuppositions and beliefs. Please believe me when I say I am not attacking you. My goal is not to tear down, but to build up. This is not about winning or losing. I could care less about winning some theological debate

with you. My prayer is that as a result of reading this booklet you will fall more deeply in love with God, as you come to know and believe the love he has for you. [I refer to God in the masculine as that is culturally accepted. Obviously, since God is Spirit, God probably has no gender, since, as God, he would contain both male and female characteristics. In fact, that is exactly what scripture says, that God created *man* and *woman* in his *own image* (Genesis 1:26); thus, both males and females bear the mark of divinity.] While being relational and coming from the heart is important, being right in our heads and in our thinking about God is also important. We are to love God with all our *mind* as well as all our *heart*.

C.S. Lewis astutely pointed out that the devil usually throws lies into the world in pairs. He tries to get us to go to one extreme or the other.—Truth, on the other hand, is like a road with a ditch of error on either side. By overreacting to one lie we often end up in the opposite ditch. Evangelicals often end up in the ditch with Bible deists, worshipping a book rather than the Author. Liberals, in their reaction to Bible deism, and wanting to appear open-minded, often end up in the opposite ditch, in the muck of naturalism and moral relativism, where the Bible has virtually no authority or relevant message, where the church is merely a social organization.—It is like the man who complained to God because He had been kicked out of the church for his belief in the virgin birth. The Lord replied, “*What are you complaining about? They haven’t let me in their church for years.*”

At the outset, can we agree that intellectualism, devoid of the Spirit, is dangerous, whether we are liberal or conservative? We both need the Holy Spirit to lead us into truth [John 16:13].

If you are a liberal, I assume you lean more toward an existential, feeling-based theology, which denies and/or minimizes some of the supernatural/historical elements of the Bible. Have you ever stopped to think that you probably arrived at your existential theology through an intellectual process? In other words, you did not arrive at your existential position existentially. You were cognitively *taught* your theology. Isn’t that true? Was it the Spirit of Christ that taught you to doubt and embrace a liberal theology?—No.—Was it the Spirit of Christ that taught me to be afraid of intimacy with God?—No.

My point? Isn’t it possible that in some areas you were taught wrong, just as I was taught wrong? I am convinced that false teaching has robbed many liberals of greater intimacy with God, just as false legalistic teachings have robbed many an evangelical from being more relaxed and relational.

Tal Brooke, a former Hindu mystic who converted to Christianity, had this astute observation about a danger he sees plaguing our Western, post-modern culture:

“Once people have been seduced into abandoning reason, you can no longer reason with them.”

For me, faith and reason are *both* important. As a liberal, if you have abandoned reason, and you only trust in experience and feelings, then you will probably reject most of what I am about to say. On the other hand, if you believe as I do, that God gave us each a mind as well as a heart, then what I say will hopefully challenge you. Please remember that Jesus is referred to as the *logos* [“Word”] in John 1:1. *Logos* is the root of the word *logic*.—I believe God is the Author of rationality and logic, as well Creator of the experiential and empathetic. [Can there be such a thing as a rational existentialist?]

You may be starting to feel angry, “*Why do you *####!* evangelicals have to insist that others adopt your way of thinking? Why can’t you just accept that we’re different and let it go at that?*”—That is a fair question. Let me respond.

If liberalism is correct, then you’re right, it probably makes no difference. On the other hand, if liberalism is wrong, it means you are probably misrepresenting the One you profess to love and serve. For that reason alone it makes a big difference, and it is on this basis, the basis of love, that I make my appeal to you.

Obviously, we are each following what we believe to be true. I don’t doubt that for a minute. As an evangelical, I am trying to follow what I believe scripture teaches. For example, in Jude 1:3 Christians are told to “*contend* [the same root word used for contentious] *for the faith which was once for all delivered to the*

saints.” Right or wrong, most evangelicals feel the need to defend the faith, just as Paul told Timothy to defend the faith in II Timothy 3:12-4:5. If this makes us a pain-in-the-butt, so be it.—We are just being true to our convictions.

DEFINING OUR TERMS: Evangelical and Liberal

Recently, I had a liberal chaplain co-worker ask me, “*What is an evangelical anyway?*”—I tried to explain to her that not all evangelicals support televangelists, nor is being an evangelical synonymous with being a Republican. I have been surprised at how little many liberals know about evangelical theology, and how so many of their stereotypes are wrong. One of the reasons I have written this booklet is so you will better understand (and hopefully respect) the evangelical position, whether you end up agreeing with it or not.

In case you don’t know what an evangelical is, let me briefly define the term *evangelical* as I believe it is most widely used:

An evangelical believes that salvation comes solely through the finished work of Christ on the cross when he died for our sins, was buried, and was bodily resurrected [I Corinthians 15:1-3]. Salvation is purely a work of God’s grace [Romans 5:8]. It cannot be earned through our good works or deeds, but it can be received when people are willing to repent of their sins and place their faith in Christ [John 1:12; Romans 3:21-26; Ephesians 2:8,9]. Most evangelicals accept the verbal plenary inspiration of scripture (that the very words were verbally inspired in the original manuscripts). Evangelicals, by and large, interpret the words of the Bible in a literal fashion.

For example, when the Bible speaks about Heaven, Hell, Jonah being swallowed by a great fish, about Satan, judgment, the resurrection, miracles, etc. evangelicals, by and large, take these as historical and theological truths. We believe that if God is big enough to create this vast universe, then for God to implant a sperm in a virgin or heal a blind man is no big deal, but a micro-miracle compared to the macro-miracle of creating the universe. Evangelicals even believe that the symbolic parts of the Bible, such as Revelation, portray futuristic events which will be *literally* fulfilled. We may disagree on the time line, but there is no doubt in our minds that Jesus Christ will return in glory just as predicted [e.g., Matthew 24, I Thessalonians 4:13-18, Revelation 19-21, etc.]

In a nutshell, this is what an evangelical is.—Anything beyond that is where evangelicals begin to differ. There are many shades of evangelicals, which I will not go into here; fundamentalists, charismatics, neo-evangelicals, those with right wing politics, etc.

Just as there are many shades of evangelicals, there are many shades of liberals. Speaking in broad generalities, most of the liberals I know believe the following:

1. The Bible contains the word of God, but it has been contaminated by man. They believe much of the Bible is holy *myth*, including such stories as Adam and Eve, Jonah, and the Crossing of the Red Sea. Many, if not most, liberals deny the literal resurrection of Jesus, as well as most of the supernatural accounts of Jesus’ healings, walking on water, etc. They say some are wonderful stories which may teach a point, but there is little likelihood that these events really happened. They believe that many of these stories were probably added by the early church fathers or Jewish rabbis to embellish and spiritualize the Old and New Testaments. The Bible, even life itself, is viewed through naturalistic lens [versus supernatural lens].

2. Most liberals, when push comes to shove, believe in universal salvation. Doctrines such as hell are considered vile and out of character with a God of love. According to them, everyone will make it to Heaven, if there is such a place. Numerous liberals I know question the reality of a literal Heaven.

3. Many hold to a form of relativism, that it is impossible to know anything with certainty. They believe that while Christianity may hold elements of truth, Christianity is certainly not the sole bearer of truth. A sincere Muslim, Buddhist, or Hindu may be equally saved and in touch with God and the

Christ-spirit, just in a different form.—Allow me to discuss these three points.

I. Liberal assumption #1: “The Bible contains the word of God, but it has been contaminated by man.”

The fundamental question is whether the words and thoughts of the Bible were truly inspired, and sovereignly given through human instruments. Or, has the transmission of this message been lost through human error and manipulation? Let’s examine the evidence.

1. Is the Bible historical reliable?

a. You may be surprised to know, that there are over 24,600 partial or complete manuscripts of the New Testament in either Greek or Latin. (The second best documented manuscript of antiquity is *The Iliad and The Odyssey* by Homer; it has around 600 manuscripts.) Most ancient documents have fewer than 10 original copies still in existence, yet they are still considered “A-1” historical documents by historians. For example, there are only 7 extant copies of the works of Plato, and 5 of Aristotle’s works, yet I never hear arguments that they are invalid because of how long ago they were written.

Even if all of the New Testament manuscripts were destroyed, historians could still reconstruct all of the New Testament, with the exception of about eleven verses, from the writings of the early church fathers before the year 325 A.D. [which is when the Council Of Nicea was convened by Constantine].

By cross comparing all of the different Bible texts and fragments, found in all parts of the Mediterranean world [Asia, Asia Minor, Europe, North Africa, etc.], by all scientific, archaeological, and historical standards applied to any ancient manuscript, the New Testament we have today is over 99.9 percent reliable. Not one word in 1,000 is in question, and no major doctrine is in doubt. We even have copies of manuscripts written by such people as Polycarp, who was a disciple of the apostle John, which help us bridge the time gap between when the New Testament was written and intact copies of the New Testament.

Archaeologists have found one portion of the New Testament, called the Chester Beatty Papyri, dated around 120 A.D. This means that it was written within 35 years of the last apostle, John, who supposedly died around 95 A.D. The Chester Beatty Papyri reads just like all other New Testament Greek manuscripts. If there were any significant alterations to the Biblical text, as some liberals say, this parchment certainly does not support such a theory.

One of the strongest arguments for the gospels and epistles being written early in the life the church is that no New Testament book describes the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D. by the Romans. The only reference to this event is the prophetic words of our Lord in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21. Since Christianity began as a movement within Judaism, and later spread to the Gentiles, the destruction of the temple would have been a huge event. If liberalism were right, that much of the New Testament was not written until a hundred years later, then why is the temple mentioned as though it were still intact?

In II Peter 3, Peter alludes to the writings of Paul [which means they were contemporaries], and yet no mention is made of the fall of Jerusalem. Luke, in the writing of the book of Acts, the most historical of all New Testament books, makes no mention of the destruction of the temple, nor of the demise of the Jewish state in 70 A.D. The book of Hebrews, which was written to Jewish converts, makes no mention of this historical event. With the exception of the Book of Revelation, the historical evidence suggests that all of the New Testament books, which were later canonized, were all written prior to 70 A.D. If this is so, then there were easily hundreds of people alive who could have refuted any falsehoods written into the text of scripture, such as the resurrection and the miracles of Jesus and the apostles if they did not happen.

Concerning the Old Testament, up until 1947, most scholars had been using Hebrew Masoretic text dated

around 1,000 A.D. In 1947 the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered in the caves of Qumran, near the Dead Sea, by a young shepherd boy. They are easily dated around or before the time of Christ (100 B.C.–70 A.D.). They were virtually identical to those the scholars had been using dated 1,000 years later.

I was at a conference where one of the translators of the Revised Standard Version of the Bible spoke. After completing his translation of the book of Isaiah from Hebrew into English, he cross-checked his work against the Dead Sea Scrolls. He said he added 8 footnotes where there were tiny differences. He said if he had it to do over, he wouldn't have included any of the footnotes, as they were so insignificant.

Add to this the reverence and painstaking methods that Jewish scribes used to copy, check and double check their handwritten copies of the Old Testament, and you see why the entire Bible is the most well-preserved piece of literature from ancient times. Jewish scribes would not merely copy the Hebrew text word for word, but letter by letter. The name of God was considered so holy that they would often bathe and change clothes before writing the Hebrew word Yahweh, the proper name for God. Anyone can dispute the Bible's message, not so its historicity.

Logic alone should tell us that the Bible has to be reasonably well preserved. If I were in charge of copying the Bible, and I believed it was inspired by Almighty God, I'd hate to be the one to screw things up by miscopying it. Wouldn't you? Further, would you feel free to take liberties with the text; adding or deleting things you did or did not like? No, you wouldn't, not if you believed the letters were inspired, had apostolic authority, and were foundational for your faith. That is why virtually all of the differences between ancient manuscripts are minor, and are obviously the result of scribal errors, and why not one major doctrine is in jeopardy as a result of the Bible being copied and recopied.

Further, would you start a new religion, supposedly based on truth and high moral values, and then intentionally write known lies into the text? I think not. As you read the New Testament, simply ask yourself, "Does it read as though it were embellished and edited to make it more believable?" Actually, no. Quite the opposite is true. The New Testament speaks of the disciples arguing about who is the greatest. It tells of Peter being rebuked by Paul, Peter denying Christ, the cowardice of the disciples before the crucifixion, etc.—If I were going to embellish and edit the New Testament, I'd make it more flattering; I certainly would not have included some of the texts which we find in the New Testament. It is actually this authenticity, and this dirt-under-the-fingernails type of honesty, that makes the Bible so believable.

For those who say the Bible has supposedly been doctored up and embellished by over-zealous Christians, my response is, "Where's your evidence?" "Can you present copies of manuscripts which are undoctored and in pure form?" "Can you present copies of any Biblical manuscript which omits miracles?"—To my knowledge, they do not exist. All the manuscripts of the New Testament are virtually identical, whether they appear in North Africa, Asia, Europe or the Middle East. They are intact as far back as we can archaeologically verify. By cross-comparing manuscripts from different regions, such as manuscripts found in Asia Minor with manuscripts found in North Africa, most mistakes become quickly identifiable. Further, the account of the resurrection and other miracles are recorded in *all* the ancient manuscripts.

There is no documentary evidence, to my knowledge, which would indicate that the accounts of miracles were added later. For example, if a Bible manuscript were found saying Jesus flew to Jerusalem in a Boeing 747 jetliner, and yet all other manuscripts omitted this verse, I could safely guess that such a verse had probably been added much later. However, what if all 24,600 manuscripts all said the same thing; that Jesus Christ arose bodily from the dead, on what basis could I reject such evidence without casting doubt on everything written about Jesus Christ?

The Bible as a whole is a miraculous piece of literature. Its 66 books were written over a period of approximately 1,600 years, by 40 authors, on three different continents (Asia, Europe and Africa), in three different languages (Hebrew, Chaldean and Greek), with many literary styles (poetry, historical narrative, parables, proverbs, allegory), under all types of conditions (on the battlefield, in times of peace, in prosperity, in poverty, in captivity, at sea, in palaces, in the desert), by all sorts of people (fishermen, shepherds, kings, a physician, a rabbi, a tax collector, scribes, priests), on about every topic imaginable (God, salvation, sex,

money, marriage, family, war, politics, religion, relationships, leadership, business, etc.), and yet the Bible reads, not as a fragmented mess, but as a unified whole.

Three thousand, eight hundred times [3,800] the Bible claims to be the word of God; making statements such as: “*Thus says the Lord*,” “*God spoke to . . .*” “*The Word of the Lord came to . . .*,” “*Jesus said . . .*,” etc. Such dogmatic statements are made concerning not only God’s love, but also his judgments, his wrath, virtually all accounts of miracles, healings, etc. Either the Bible is the recorded words of the eternal, omniscient, omnipotent God, or else the Bible is one of the greatest forgeries foisted upon mankind. On what rational historical basis could a liberal theologian say, “I’ll accept 350 of the *thus saith the Lord’s* as authentic, while I reject as false the other 3,550 divine claims of inspiration”?

I am aware that when it comes to the Bible you may be skeptical about what I have just shared, but before you disregard the evidence I have just presented, will you at least, out of intellectual integrity, read what some evangelical scholars and apologists have to say. As starters, I recommend Dr. F.F. Bruce’s book, “*The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?*,” Josh McDowell’s two books, “*Evidence That Demands A Verdict*,” Volumes I & II, and “*Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*” by Dr. Gleason Archer. These books will provide you with historically document evidence, and cogent answers to virtually any argument ever presented by liberal theologians. Then weigh the evidence and come to your own conclusions. That’s all I’m asking.

b. Are modern translations of the Bible accurate translations of the originals.

There are many different Bible translations on the market, which is often confusing. Some mistakenly assume that because there are many different Bible translations they must be saying contradictory things. Except for one or two Bible translations by cult groups [e.g., Jehovah’s Witnesses], where they have intentionally altered key verses to fit their theology, this is not true. For example, most Bible translations are translated from one of two basic New Testament Greek texts (considered to be most reliable by Biblical scholars) and one basic Old Testament Hebrew text.

Thus, while translations vary in style, they are all saying the same basic thing. To say, *Hi*, *Hello*, or *Howdy* are all accurate ways of saying the same thing. The content is the same, but the wording varies. The same principle is true of Bible translations. It is my personal belief that the original writings were “inspired,” perfect in every way (II Timothy 3:16-17). Modern translations are not inspired, but most are accurate translations of those which were inspired.

2. Literal vs. Myth: How are we to interpret the Bible?

I admit that I am more of a literalist when it comes to reading the Bible, even though I try to apply sound hermeneutics [the academic science of Biblical interpretation]. For example, when Jesus calls himself the *door*, I don’t look for a doorknob. Parables are interpreted one way, metaphors another, but straight-forward narratives and historical accounts I take very literally.

How would the recipients of those letters received them? How would a first century person being handed a copy of the Gospel of John have read it? How did the writers of the Biblical texts mean for them to be taken?—I believe they would respond the same way you are interpreting what I’m writing—literally.

Think with me. Are thoughts, as found in this booklet, generally communicated through words?—Of course they are. In fact, as you have been reading this booklet, you’ve been applying a literal method of interpretation. You are taking my words at face value. It is doubtful that you have been looking for some esoteric, spiritualized interpretation. In other words, you *know* what I have been saying, whether you agree with my ideas or not. You haven’t been looking for some deeper hidden message. You’re letting my words speak for themselves.—Why treat scripture any differently? Why not let scripture speak for

itself? Why spiritualize the words of scripture unless there is something in the text which clearly identifies the passage as parabolic, symbolic, etc. Why redefine words and assume, because of one's *presuppositions*, that something cannot be believed if it involves the supernatural?

What if God really is a God of miracles? Are the texts of scripture really so contaminated and historically unreliable that liberals cannot, or will not, believe their literal message?

Liberalism says that such Biblical accounts as Adam and Eve could not be true. First, how does one *know*? [We don't.] For what it is worth, virtually every controversial Old Testament passage cited by liberals as *not* being true, Jesus affirmed *as true* in the New Testament. Jesus affirmed the accounts of Adam and Eve (Matthew 19:4-6); Noah and the Flood (Matthew 24:37); Jonah and the great fish (Matthew 16:4) and Sodom and Gomorrah (Luke 10:12), just to name a few.

There is also the matter of character. If Jesus said one thing, while believing another, wouldn't that make him a liar or a hypocrite? Or, was Jesus such a poor teacher that his disciples got it all wrong? Or, was Jesus deceived or deluded? Was he just plain wrong? Did he have a Messianic complex?—If any of these points were/are true, why would any rational person want to be a Christian since nothing about the Founder of the faith could be trusted with absolute certainty? If the Son of God is not infallible, who is?

The liberals I know pride themselves in being nonjudgmental. Why judge the writers of the New Testament, and those who later copied it, of embellishing the truth, of editorializing, and twisting the truth? Why judge those who believe the miraculous portions of the Bible? Why classify something as *myth*, just because it falls into the category of a miracle? Why not give the writers the benefit of the doubt? First-century men may not have been very scientific, but they weren't stupid. When they recorded miracles, the lame walking and the blind seeing, they knew those things couldn't occur naturally, so when they recorded such events they opened themselves to ridicule; unless there were thousands of eyewitnesses to the miracles, which is exactly what the New Testament states. I have personally witnessed astounding answers to prayer, and I know that miracles still happen today for those who know Jesus.

Why mythologize what could actually be true, when, by all historical accounts, these things are said to have happened in historical time and space? [E.g., the crossing of the Red Sea, Sodom and Gomorrah, the miracles of Jesus, his literal resurrection, etc.?] Why discredit the Bible writers as either morons who didn't know better, or as deceivers who intentionally wrote mythical misleading material?

Further, where is the historical proof to back up the liberal presuppositions? How does one explain the fact that virtually all known writings by the early church fathers of the first and second centuries, not to mention the weight of over twenty-thousand New Testament documents, contradict such presuppositions?

It is interesting, but Paul, in a prophetic warning to Timothy, said that in the *latter days*, near the end of the church age, some would “. . . *not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.*” [II Timothy 4:3,4 emphasis mine].

Examining this passage: (1) Paul implies that *sound doctrine* is very important. (2) False teachers would follow their *desires*. These false teachers would be experience-based rather than truth-based. (3) They would amass a *great number of teachers* who would teach false doctrine to *many* within the church. (4) They would preach to the crowd, to please and placate, rather than preach truth. (5) Turning away from the historic truths of the gospel, Paul said they would instead turn to *myth* and false doctrine.—Could it be that, just maybe, Paul was describing modern day liberalism?

This may also be a disturbing question, but would you ask yourself, “*Is it possible that evangelicals are actually the most open-minded because they at least entertain the idea of miracles?*” Evangelicals' presuppositions don't rule out the possibility of certain things being true, such as miracles.—So, how broad are your presuppositions? Isn't it rather narrow-minded to automatically rule out all evidence that goes contrary to ones' presuppositions? [Isn't that a bit like saying, “*I'm sorry, but I won't entertain the notion that the earth may be round.*”] Could it be that liberalism is actually the least scientific?

I apologize for asking such hard questions, but in a spirit of open-mindedness, let me stretch your comfort zone a bit more. Why do liberal theologians sometimes try to come up with multiple authors for the same book? Is there any clear historical evidence to prove such theories? Can untainted manuscripts be produced showing what they were like before they were altered by additional authors? [The answer is, “No.”] Do liberal critics look for multiple authors in the writings of Plato, and other ancient writers?—Generally speaking, the answer is, “No.”—Then why do it with the books of the Bible?

I’ll tell you why. It is again because of liberal presuppositions which deny the supernatural. They have to come up with some explanation to account for miracles. How? Come up with a conspiracy theory: “Maybe some conspirator(s) secretly injected all this miraculous garbage into the Bible, as though no one would notice and object.”—Hmmm. Does that sound reasonable? Can you imagine the outcry that would occur from those who knew the truth, if, all of a sudden, someone tampered with God’s word? If the conspiracy theory is true, where are the historical documents reporting the outcry of those who knew the truth?—To my knowledge, there are no documents to support such theories.

It is rather humorous to me, but some evangelical scholars, just for fun, applied the same methods of determining multiple authorship to one of the supposed scholars who held such a view, and, using this man’s own criteria for testing multiple authorship, concluded that he must have had multiple authors helping him write his own work.—To me, such ideas fly in the face of common reason. There is no hard evidence to support multiple authorships of the gospels, only the *presuppositions* of those trying to find ways to debunk the clear message of the text.

Take C. S. Lewis, the great English scholar and popular author, as an example. He wrote fantasy, poetry, apologetics, satire, literary critiques, personal letters, etc. His writing styles are often different. Will scholars a thousand years from now say that there were eight or ten men contributing to the works of a man collectively called C.S. Lewis?—Do you see my point?

I recently had a liberal friend ask me, “*What do you do about all the contradictions?*”—I asked her which ones she had in mind. The only one she came up with was the two creation accounts in Genesis 1 & 2. In this case, I have read and reread Genesis 1 & 2 and for the life of me I don’t see two creation accounts. To me, chapter two is descriptive of some of what happened in the first chapter. I am very familiar with many of the alleged contradictions in scripture, most of which been answered by evangelical scholars [and no, the term *evangelical scholar* is not an oxymoron].

In the last 100 years archaeology has authenticated the Bible time and time again. Years ago, in the 1800’s, some scholars came up with a list of irrefutable contradictions in the Bible. Now, over 100 years later, every one has a satisfactory historical explanation as a result of more recent archaeological discoveries. There are some excellent scholarly works which answer most alleged discrepancies. I recommend “*Encyclopedia Of Bible Difficulties*” by Dr. Gleason Archer [Zondervan Pub.] or “*Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*” by Dr. Norman Geisler [Baker Pub.].

What I see my liberal friends struggling with is not provable contradictions, but with the *premise* that God is as interactive with earth’s inhabitants as scripture alleges. Liberal theologians generally rule out the miraculous portions of the Bible as unscientific. The problem with this, of course, is that if it could be explained scientifically, then it wouldn’t be a miracle. If one’s premise is that miracles can’t occur, then of course no amount of arguing to the contrary will convince one otherwise. If the metaphysical is just as real as the physical, then I see no reason why the two cannot overlap. Ask yourself, “Do I believe God can perform miracles?” If you say that God *can* perform miracles, then why reject and deny all the eye-witness accounts of those miracles? If you believe that God is the metaphysical antecedent to all creation, the non-physical Being who existed and aided in the creation of vast galaxies, why stumble over whether such an awesome God could pull off a few small earthly miracles?

I believe the German theologians who gave us liberal theology and higher criticism were wrong because their *presuppositions were wrong*. Again, if one of their presuppositions was, “*miracles can’t happen,*” then of course they would have to spiritualize or rationalize scripture to fit that presupposition.

To me, this is very narrow thinking. By definition, can't God do anything he chooses? It is sort of like the joke, "Where does a 6 ton elephant sit?"—Anywhere it wants!

I guess it boils down to whether one thinks God is omnipotent and omniscient enough to do what the Bible says. If one says God isn't powerful enough, then I'd say there is a problem with one's perception of God. A vast universe of amazing complexity stares back in incredulity at such unbelief and lack of faith.

Liberalism teaches that some of the *ideas* of the Bible are inspired, but not the *words*, and most certainly not the historical facts. Biblical themes of love are accepted, but themes of God's judgment, hell, are to be rejected. Is this logical? If certain parts of the Bible are inspired, and other parts are not, how would one know what is inspired and what is not? How would you *know*? Wouldn't you have to be inspired yourself to know? Can I trust your inspiration? Are liberals more inspired than evangelicals? Are only liberal theologians qualified to interpret scripture? If only those with theological training are qualified to interpret which parts are inspired, then of what value is the Bible for the common person?

Further, if you can't trust the historical and scientific parts of the Bible, why should you trust the spiritual parts of the Bible which you can't verify? If the Bible is wrong about the *physical*, why should it be trusted in the *metaphysical*?

Doesn't it boil down to a matter of integrity and truthfulness?—Either the Bible is lying when it speaks of the miraculous, or else it is speaking the truth. If the Biblical accounts, such as seeing angels, or talking to the resurrected Christ never happened, then those who wrote such things were lying and falsifying history. The Bible never presents accounts of the miraculous as fictional, but as fact. As Paul said in I Corinthians 15:14, 15a, ". . . if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God . . ." Why celebrate Easter if Jesus' bones are in some 2,000 year old tomb? Either Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene and the disciples on Easter Sunday or He didn't.

C.S. Lewis, who is usually respected by evangelicals and liberals alike, was professor of English Literature at Oxford. He was an expert on ancient language and literature. According to Lewis, very little of the Bible could have been written as myth, as liberal theologians use the term. Lewis says such fictional writings did not remotely appear on the literary scene until centuries later.

Take for example the area of prophecy; Jesus applied all Old Testament prophecies concerning himself literally. —If the first forty-eight plus prophecies about Christ's first coming were fulfilled literally [all the way from being born in Bethlehem, from the lineage of David, to his death on a cross, etc.], why should we doubt that all futuristic prophecies will not also be fulfilled literally?

Jesus rebuked the Sadducees [the liberals of his day] for not believing the Old Testament scriptures. He rebuked the Pharisees [the literalists of his day, much like some fundamentalists of today], *not* for their interpretation of scripture, which he seemingly agreed with, but for their hypocrisy and hardness of heart. In Matthew 23:3, Jesus told his disciples concerning the teaching of the Pharisees, ". . . therefore all that they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds; for they say things and do not do them . . ." If words have any meaning, Jesus accepted their literal interpretation of God's word, but rejected their hypocritical application of those words.

a. Let's look at some examples where I feel many liberals dismiss what scripture teaches, not because of facts, but because of presuppositions.

1.) Anthropomorphisms: A concept that drives some of my liberal friends crazy is when I anthropomorphize God [put God in human terms]. I can see where they are coming from. I don't know how far we are to go in thinking of God in human terms. I can, however, tell you who taught me to anthropomorphize God. It was Jesus. God became *anthropos*. He became man [Philippians 2:6, 7] to reveal the spiritual essence of the invisible God who is Spirit [John 4:24]. Scripture says that in Christ dwells all

the fullness of deity in bodily form [Colossians 2:9]. And, according to my understanding, in some fashion, Jesus will forever exist in some sort of bodily form [Revelation 5:13]. When liberals disagree with such anthropomorphisms, I am forced to choose between what they say versus what the Bible says. I choose the Bible.

Just how physical God can become? There are numerous *theophanies* in the Old Testament, where God allegedly appeared in physical form [e.g., Genesis 18, 19; Zechariah 14, etc.]. Scripture treats both the earthly and heavenly as tangibly real. It speaks of thrones, angels, streets of gold, etc., only in a different dimension. One of the clearest examples of the two dimensions meeting is the Mount of Transfiguration where Moses and Elijah [from Heaven] appeared with Jesus as Peter, James, and John [from earth] watched. The common point joining the earthly and the Heavenly was/is Jesus. Both spheres of reality were objectively real.

2.) Does Heaven Really Exist? I don't know how much of what scripture says about Heaven is to be taken literally or figuratively. I do know that all scriptural visions of Heaven treat Heaven as a tangible place with beauty, singing, worship, angels, etc. According to I Corinthians 15:50-58, we will have new resurrected bodies. In Revelation, chapters 20-22, we will see Jesus, and God will create a new heaven and a new earth [something very physical].

Most liberals I know freely recite the Lord's Prayer. How does it start? "*Our Father who art in Heaven . . .*" A bit later it says, "*Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven . . .*" If Heaven is not a real place, and it is nothing more than a *Dairy Queen Blizzard* or *Mocha Coffee*, as one liberal friend told me, then isn't it hypocritical for such people to pray the Lord's prayer? If Jesus is wrong about Heaven, then liberals with such beliefs should have the honesty to say, "*I can no longer pray the Lord's prayer for I don't believe Jesus' teaching about Heaven.*" At a funeral, such liberals should tear John 14 out of their Bibles and not read where Jesus said, "*In my Father's house are many mansions, if it were not so I would have told you so . . .*" [John 14:1,2]

Even though I may not understand many of the teachings in the Bible about Heaven, I see no reason to dismiss the pictures scripture paints of Heaven. Take for example Jesus' words in John 14:1,2 which I just cited. Jesus said that in his Father's home there are many rooms, and that if it were not so he would tell us. While I'm not dogmatic on some of these points, isn't it possible that, just as God has made a physical world for us here on earth, there could also be a Heavenly world with some of these same physical properties? Maybe God enjoys flowers and butterflies. Because we are physical creatures, maybe, in love, he created a Heaven with many of these same physical properties. Who can deny it?

If God is Spirit, can't he choose to focus his presence in physical ways as He did in the incarnation? By definition, God can do anything he likes. By sheer observation, we know God works in the physical realm. He created a whole universe of it. According to most Christian theology, it is Jesus, the second member of the Godhead who chose to reveal in physical form qualities of the invisible God [John 14:6-10].

I'm originally from Kansas. I can tell you about the hayfields of Kansas in the summer. Why? Because I'm from there. The reason I believe the words of Jesus about Heaven, is that he came from Heaven to earth, and if anyone should know about Heaven it is him. [See: John 6:38; Philippians 2:6,7, etc.] Why do I believe in a literal Heaven? Because of Jesus. He told me so in his word and I believe him.

3.) Is God Punitive? Is God a God of justice and judgment? Generally speaking, liberalism totally rejects such a notion. Liberalism sees God as only a God of love and grace. I agree that God is a God of love and grace, but from my perspective, he is also a God of justice. If we strip the Bible of the concepts of justice, judgment, and punishment for the wicked, one might as well discard most of the Bible. Why claim to be Christian and deny the vast majority of what the Bible teaches?

A liberal friend of mine recently read a portion from Paul's Epistle to Timothy as part of a meditation. Sandwiched right along with the point she was making was Paul's clear reference to "that day" [the day

of judgment in Heaven], a concept my liberal chaplain friend clearly rejects. She had overlooked those two tiny words. Her face blushed when I pointed those words out to her. If I were to cut out all portions of scripture which liberalism finds objectionable, it would leave the Bible a tattered, shredded book with absolutely no continuity or cohesion.

Take for example, the tiny book of Habakkuk. God prophesied judgment and destruction on Israel by the Assyrians. Historically did Assyria conquer Israel? Yes. Therefore, historically speaking, Habakkuk is either a false document, written after the fact to make it appear as prophecy, or else God did reveal his coming judgment on Israel. This is but one of hundreds of examples of God's judgments on sinful behavior.

If God is not a God of judgment, then what do you suggest we do with the Pentateuch [Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy]? There are severe consequences for those who break God's Law [e.g., Deuteronomy, chapters 28-30]. And what about Joshua, Judges, I and II Samuel, I and II Kings, I and II Chronicles, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and *all* the Minor Prophets? They *all* carry the same themes of repentance and judgment? Further, how does one explain the many times Jesus quotes from the Old Testament books, lending his approval to them? And what about Jesus' teaching of judgment and hell? What of Paul's teaching of sin and judgment? What about Peter's teachings of God's coming wrath in II Peter? What about the book of Hebrews' teachings of judgment? What of James' writings about judgment? What of John's teaching about the Battle Of Armageddon and God's coming judgment in the Book of Revelation? From cover to cover, the Bible addresses these topics.

Please consider this carefully: *every* single author in the Bible affirms God's judgment upon those who refuse to turn from sin and embrace his forgiveness. From Genesis to Revelation, from Moses to John the Revelator, the Bible carries one very clear theme. God hates and judges those who hold onto sin. There is scarcely a page you can turn to in the Bible which does not carry the message: God is holy, man is sinful, God offers forgiveness, and God will judge those who refuse his forgiveness. For those who choose sin over repentance and forgiveness, they will go down with their sin like one refusing to get off the Titanic.

4. The Bible's Own Claim Of Inspiration:

So many of the differences between liberalism and the Christian faith center on the authority of the scriptures. In a spirit of open-mindedness, please read the following passages and observe what the Bible has to say about itself.

- II Timothy 3:16 "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness . . ."
- II Peter 1:20, 21 "For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."
- II Peter 3:16 "He [Paul] writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction."
- John 17:17 "Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth."
- Luke 24:25-27, 44-45 "He [Jesus] said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! . . . And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself . . . This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."
- Matthew 5:17-19 "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear,

not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven . . .”

There is a choice to be made: either you believe the historical and theological information set forth in the Bible, as it has have received over the last 3,500 years, or else you must dismiss much of what the Bible teaches as false. If you reject much of the Bible as being false, then to whom do you look to sort out what is fact from what is fiction? Even liberal theologians don’t agree among themselves. If the Bible is so distorted, as they imply, why embrace any of its teachings? Why not just trash the Bible and teach universal love and universal salvation? If Noah never existed, if Moses and the children of Israel never crossed the Red Sea, if David never killed Goliath, if the blind remained blind, and the lame really remained lame, if the church cannot expect the literal second coming of Christ, if salvation is not through the sacrificial blood of Jesus shed on the cross, why continue the hoax any longer? Why perpetuate the lies? Why waste your time? If liberalism is right, if Jesus never arose from the dead, why not drop the resurrection story about Jesus rising from the dead, and just tell our kids about the Easter bunny?

I believe liberals who minimize the literalness of scripture are putting themselves in a very dangerous position. If they are right and evangelicals are wrong, God will probably say, “*That’s OK. Just lighten up. I was only joking when I said all that stuff about hell and judgment.*”—On the other hand, if evangelicals are right and liberals are wrong, I fear for them [for you?] on the day of judgment, not merely for the harm they have brought on themselves, but for the ones they have led astray [See II Peter, chapters 2 & 3.]. According to scripture, it is a serious thing to minimize or change God’s word [e.g., Revelation 22:18,19], especially if it leads others away from the saving grace of God clearly set forth in scripture.

I don’t say this condemningly, but let me say that in the strictest sense, liberalism is *not* Christian. It is its own philosophy which uses a few Judeo-Christian concepts. Liberalism is a negation of virtually all that the Bible and church history have proclaimed for the last 2,000 years. Christianity believes in the supernatural. Liberalism is naturalistic. Christianity is historical. Liberalism is mythological. Christianity is based on a creed and set of beliefs. Liberalism is primarily experiential. Christianity worships Jesus as the object of faith. Liberalism looks to Jesus as an example of faith. Christianity believes the message and words of Jesus. Liberalism denies the vast majority of Jesus’ teachings.

Some might respond, “*How dare you insinuate that liberalism is not Christian!*”—My response is that it is scripture, the very words of Jesus, which leads me to this conclusion. In love, I urge you to rethink where you stand with the real Jesus and with scripture. Are there things you are pretending not to know?

II. Liberal Assumption #2: Truth is relative.

1. Can we know anything?

One popular saying I hear in liberal circles is, “*we can’t know anything.*” It sounds very open-minded and humble, but is that really true? First, speaking existentially [experientially], can one person say what another person does or doesn’t *know*?—Isn’t it possible, that, just maybe, someone, somewhere, might *know* some things to be true? Didn’t Jesus and the writers of scripture claim to *know* many things?

To say there are no absolutes happens to be a logical fallacy; for every argument used to say there are no absolutes depends on absolute truth existing. To say “There are no *absolutes*,” is an *absolute* statement? To say, “There is no such thing as absolute *truth*” raises the question, “And you *know* this to be *true*?” If one says, “You can’t be *sure* of anything,” I would ask, “And you are *sure* of this?”—Every

such statement is self-contradictory.

Hinduism, the New Age Movement, and much of liberalism view truth as an illusion, as relative [subject to change, not concrete, not absolute]. I disagree. I believe that truth is truth, no matter what anyone says. There are natural laws of science which we consider to be true [e.g., the law of gravity]. There are also spiritual absolutes which I believe are just as true. Good is good. Evil is evil. God is good. God opposes evil.

If we were born with a sense of right and wrong, as I think we were, it is because God knows right from wrong and created us with such knowledge. In most cases I believe we do *know* right from wrong.—If I had a candy bar and said, “*Here, let me divide this with you*” and I kept four-fifths for myself, you would probably say, “*Hey, that’s not fair.*” Automatically you would have appealed to a higher sense of fairness—of right and wrong. I have yet to hear someone say, “*You’re correct. There is no such thing as right and wrong. Go ahead and take the bigger piece.*”—Intuitively, you and I know better. We are moral and rational beings because a moral and rational God made us.

The reason the scientific revolution began in the West was because of the Western view of God and of truth.—The early scientists believed that if God created the universe with wisdom and order, then the universe should reflect that order and wisdom. Virtually all of the first scientists, such as Newton, were theists (believing in God). Most held a Christian world-view. Scientific inquiry and the explosion of knowledge in such fields as physics, chemistry, mathematics, engineering, psychology, and modern medicine all had their origins in Judeo-Christian thought. Scientific progress would probably never have arisen with Eastern relativistic, pantheistic thinking. Science and illusion don’t blend well.

Have you noticed how logical and scholarly many liberals are in their persuasive arguments to disprove the rational? Their very form of logical reasoning betrays the fact that they *do* believe in logic.

Logic and rational thought are behind most communication. Otherwise, communication would not happen. If I’m talking apples, and you think I’m talking oranges, then truth is not being communicated. I have a liberal friend who rejects much New Testament thinking because, he said, it is founded upon Aristotelian [Aristotle] rationalistic logic. As he made his rational argument against such logic, I finally responded, “*Aren’t you using Aristotelian logic to refute Aristotelian logic?*”—He became quiet and he had to admit that he was using logic to disprove logic, thus proving the very point he was trying to disprove.

As you observe life, do we live in an illogical world or a rational world?” Does $2 + 2 = 4$ or will any answer do as long as you are sincere?

Do you know that it is impossible to sanely live in a world where there are no absolutes? Can you imagine going outside not knowing whether the law of gravity was going to work, or whether you might float into outer space? You will discover that if you act as though truth and absolutes exist, life works well. If one truly acted as though everything were either an illusion or relative, they could end up in a mental hospital with paranoid schizophrenia [fearful and out of touch with reality].

Regardless of whether people say they believe in moral relativism or not, they *behave* as if the world is rational. Reason with me.—**One’s behavior is the greatest indicator of one’s beliefs.**—If I observe a person *behaving* as if the world is rational, then regardless of what that person says, I would say his or her actions speak louder than words. **One’s behavior shows what one really believes.**—If I were a betting person, I’d bet you a million dollars that even the most diehard liberals, in their day-to-day worlds, *behave* rationally, as though moral and physical absolutes exist.

If one were to insist on saying truth is relative, I would then ask, “*Why should I believe anything you say? Why should I trust someone who is illogical? How can one logically defend the illogical?*”—Would you trust a doctor who told you, “*There are no absolutes. It doesn’t matter what medicine you take as long as you are sincere.*” Would you keep going to that doctor? No, you wouldn’t. Why? Because your heart and your mind *knows* better.

2. Can we know absolute truth?

Let's pretend we take a panel of religious experts of differing faiths [Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, Christian, atheist, agnostic, etc.] and we ask one question, "*Does God exist, and if so what is God like?*" As we interview each panel member we discover that there are as many different opinions as there are panel members. Assuming that truth is not *relative* (subject to change), then they could not all be right. For example, if one says that God is personal, another says that God is impersonal, and yet another says God does not exist, then obviously one or more of them must be wrong.

Question: "*Who can say for sure what God is like?*"—Answer: God.

The only One who can say for sure what God is like is God. As simple as this is, it is an important point to grasp. *Only God can give the final word on himself.* Now, what if one of the panel members stood up and said, "*To clear up all the confusion about God, I emphatically tell you, I AM GOD! I am THE way, THE truth, and THE life.*" . . . "*Before Abraham was, I AM.*"? (Cf., John 14:6; 8:58; emphasis mine.)

This gets into the verifiable. Anyone making such a claim would be one of three things: *psychotic* (with delusions of grandeur), a *deceiver* out to pull off the greatest hoax of all time, or he would be *God*.—This is exactly the claim Jesus made. Jesus taught and claimed to be God [not one of many gods, but the one, eternal God become flesh]. It is as if God had chosen to write himself into his own story and become a man.

The answer to how I know truth is quite simple: Jesus. If I can clearly show that Jesus was/is God, then whatever he stated is not merely one man's opinion about God or about life, but is absolute divine TRUTH.—How can we know truth? Because God became man, and spoke truth to us.

If Jesus is God incarnate, and he is our Master Teacher, then allow him to answer the question of whether we can *know* anything as true. As starters, check out the following verses:

- John 7:28, 29 "*Jesus . . . cried out, 'Yes, you **know** me, and you **know** where I am from. I am not here on my own, but he who sent me is true. You do not **know** him, but I **know** him because I am from him and he sent me.'*"
- John 8:55 "*Though you do not **know** him, I **know** him. If I said I did not, I would be a liar like you, but I do **know** him and keep his word.*"
- John 14:6 "*Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the **truth** and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'*"
- John 10:4 "*When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they **know** his voice.*"
- John 10:14 "*I am the good shepherd; I **know** my sheep and my sheep **know** me.*"
- John 16:13 "*They will do such things because they have not **known** the Father or me. . . .*"

Note too what Paul and John have to say about *knowing*:

- II Timothy 1:12 ". . . I am not ashamed, because I **know** whom I have believed . . ."
- I John 4:13 "*We **know** that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.*"
- I John 5:13, 19 "*I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may **know** that you have eternal life. . . . We **know** that we are children of God . . ."*

The words "**know, known or knowing**" are used over **1,400 times** in Scripture. The Hebrew word translated "*know*" is often translated as *acquaint, discern, discover, distinguish, knowledge, observe, perceive, realize, take note, and understand*. Out of the hundreds of times the word is used in the Old Testament, it is used less than twenty times in the sexual sense [e.g., Adam *knew* (sexually) his wife Eve]. To my knowledge, the derivation of the word *know* has little to do with sex or cohabitation, but rather it is a cognitive term. In the New Testament two words are used for *know*. The root of one word means *to have seen or perceived*. The other Greek word is *gno* (root of the word *gnostic*), meaning to

know, perceive or recognize.—It is a mental knowing.

One reason I believe so many people want to be moral relativists is because it absolves them of moral responsibility and accountability. If there are no moral absolutes, then there can be no absolute standard for judging their behavior. However, if God has revealed moral truths [e.g., the Ten Commandments], then it means that on the day of judgment their lives will probably be judged by those standards. They can't say, "*Oh. I thought those were the Ten Suggestions.*"

Let's consider the topic of evil briefly. Do you believe evil exists?—If you say, "*Yes,*" then you are admitting that moral absolutes do exist. In my work as a former chaplain in a psychiatric hospital, I have worked with numerous Satanists who have told me that they participated in ritually killing babies.—Were they *wrong*? Do you *know* that for a fact? If you say, "*Yes,*" then you are admitting to moral absolutes. To say, "*No*" is to deny reason.

Let's take another example: What if a father wants to sexually molest his two year old daughter because it feels good? Is that father existentially justified, or is he wrong? Do you *know* that for a fact? Was Hitler existentially right or wrong in his feelings and actions against the Jews?—You see, in your heart I believe you *know* the answer to these questions. True moral laws do exist. Intuitively you and I know that. Every time liberals crusade for social justice [and rightly so] they testify to the fact that evil and moral absolutes exist. People, especially women and children, are abused.

Just as moral evil exists, I also believe moral good exists. Contrast the way Mother Teresa treated the orphaned babies she found on the streets of Calcutta, with the way Satanists treat babies. Is one morally good and one morally evil, or are both morally relative? Do you *know* that for sure?

The resounding message of scripture is that God wants us to *know* certain truths, such as how dearly we are loved and how deep is his love for us. Isn't that Paul's prayer in Ephesians 3:14-21; that we might *know* the love of God expressed in Christ?—What was Christ's prayer the night before he was crucified? . . . that we might *know* God [John 17:3].

God speaks to us through nature (Romans 1:18-22), through his written word (II Timothy 3:16,17) and through the incarnation of the Lord Jesus (Hebrews 1:1-3). To the degree we rightly interpret these revelations to us, isn't it possible to *know* certain truths, because God has *revealed* them to us? Colossians 1:26,27 says, ". . . the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations . . . has now been manifested to His saints, to whom God willed to make *known* what is the riches of the glory of this mystery . . . Christ in you, the hope of glory. . ." (emphasis mine). Scripture is resplendent with images of God's mystery being revealed in ways that are *knowable*. In fact, isn't the faith you hold in Christ based primarily on your knowledge of the person and character of God?

In the final analysis I believe moral absolutes do exist, and that faith (heart) and belief (head) are only as good as the object(s) of that faith/belief. For example, I could have all the faith/belief in the world, but if it is based on a lie or misinformation, it will eventually break my heart.—I could display incredible faith/belief that I could make a chair fly around a room, but will it happen? No. [Unless, maybe, you get mad and throw the chair at me.] On the other hand, if I only have faith/belief the size of a mustard seed that the chair will hold me if I sit in it, will it still hold me? Yes.—What this tells me is that it doesn't matter how much faith/belief I have; rather it depends on whether what I believe in is *true*. A lot of faith/belief in a lie will not work, while a tiny mustard seed of faith in the truth will always work. That is why I believe my faith in Christ works so well; Jesus is worthy of my trust/belief for he is *Truth*.

III. Liberal assumption #3: Salvation is universal.

Why do evangelicals say Jesus is the only way to Heaven and liberals deny it? The evangelical position is certainly not very popular or politically correct these days.—My response is to simply ask what did Jesus have to say on the matter. He said such things as, ". . . *if you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins.*" [John 8:24]. He said, "*No one comes to the*

Father [God] except through me.” [John 14:6b]. Peter, the spokesman for the early church, in Acts 4:12 said, “*Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.*” According to a literal reading of the New Testament, to believe wrongly about Jesus is a big deal. To knowingly refuse his claims and his offer of salvation is spiritual suicide.—Evangelicals believe there is salvation in only *one name*, as the New Testament teaches.—It’s not Muhammad, Buddha, Krishna, Confucius, Baha’u’llah, Moses, or Abraham, but JESUS. If that makes evangelicals like myself narrow-minded, it is because our reading and interpretation of scripture leaves us no other choice. The only exception, if at all, is the one Paul makes in Romans where he indicates that those who have not heard of Christ will be judged by a slightly different standard, that of conscience [Romans 2:12-17]. The sad truth is, apart from the Holy Spirit’s intervention, most of us go against our consciences. That is why we experience guilt. That is why the world desperately needs a Savior.

Logically speaking, all religious creeds concerning salvation cannot be equally true since they contradict one another. Either they are all equally false, equally uncertain, or one is ultimately true and the rest are wrong to varying degrees.

According to a literal reading of the New Testament, when Jesus Christ died on a Roman cross, he was not merely a good Jew or some prophet dying a martyr’s death, rather he was God-incarnate, the Creator, coming to earth to die for his creation. The central theme and message of Christianity is that the eternal God chose to become a man [Philippians 2:6,7; John 1:1, 14], die for the sins of his rebellious world [Acts 20:28; John 1:10-12; 3:16-18], be buried and resurrected the third day [I Corinthians 15:3-4]. Scripture teaches that salvation comes only through the blood of Jesus [Hebrews 9:12, 24-28; Romans 3:21-26]. Salvation is not to be found in some idol-filled Hindu temple with demon-looking gods, nor by following Buddha’s Enlightened Way, nor in surrendering to the teachings of Muhammad. If salvation could be found or earned in some other way it would be like telling God, “*You made a mistake. You didn’t have to come and die after all. We found salvation another way.*”

Death will be the hour of truth for all of us. When we die will Jesus be the one to meet us [e.g., Stephen, Acts 7:58]? Or, will it be Muhammad, or Buddha, or will we be immediately reincarnated into a cow or some Hindu life-form? Personally, when I die I expect to step into the presence of a holy God with myriads of holy angel and saints surrounding the throne of God [e.g., Isaiah 6, Revelation 6, 21]. All of the major religions cannot be simultaneously true. Only one reality will await us, and I’m placing my bet with the Judeo-Christian God as revealed in the person of Jesus Christ.

It is rather fashionable in our day of tolerance and political correctness to say that it doesn’t really matter what one believes about God as long as one is sincere. After all, don’t all roads lead to Rome? Don’t all religions lead to the same God?

I see a couple of dangers with this type of thinking: the first is the matter of truth. It is possible to be sincere but sincerely wrong. As a lady from Europe once told me. “*All roads don’t lead to Rome. I know. I’ve gotten lost driving there.*”—When it comes to God, the major world religions say a whole bunch of contradictory things about God. Some say He is *one*, others that God is three-in-one. Some say God is personal and others that He is impersonal, etc. Logically speaking, they can’t all be right.

The second problem is that people who take the all-roads-lead-to-Rome approach to religion rarely ask themselves which God they’re going to face on the other side of death. Who is the true God? Who will they truly encounter?

For example, when you die, what if you face Allah, the God of Islam? If so, you better pray you’ve been a Muslim, because if you’re not, putting it bluntly, you’re in *big trouble*. If you haven’t followed Allah’s teachings, and honored Muhammad as his prophet, you’re likely bound for hell. Islam has its basic pillars of faith. If you haven’t diligently followed these, you’re going to encounter an angry God, the same God who instructed his followers to kill infidels who dishonor Allah and Muhammad. Further, if you’ve ever believed in Jesus Christ as God, or believed in the Trinity, you’re guilty of an unpardonable sin. (See: *Qur’an*, Surah 5:17,73) In short, if you’re not a Muslim, you’d better pray that you *don’t*

meet Allah after death.

What about Hinduism? In Hinduism, Bramah, the World Soul (God) of Hinduism, is impersonal, and is both good and evil. There are also millions of lesser gods. The goal of every Hindu is to be reunited with Bramah and be absorbed back into him, like a drop of water being absorbed back into the great ocean. This is done through meditation and reincarnations. After possibly hundreds, or even thousands, of reincarnations, you may just possibly get it right. Once you're absorbed back into Brahma, you will cease to exist as "you." You will lose all self-identity.

Also, are you a vegetarian? If Hinduism is the true religion, and you have eaten beef, then you may be guilty of having eaten someone's uncle George who blew it in his last life and was reincarnated as a cow. Oops! You'll probably be reincarnated, but in a much worse life than you experienced this go-round. Who knows, you might even end up as a cow. The deeds you've done in this life (karma), whether good or bad, stick to your soul. Ignorance is no excuse. There is really no forgiveness, grace, or mercy with Bramah. If I were you, I'd hope and pray that Bramah is not who you encounter after death, and if you do, pray you encounter his good side.

Are you an orthodox Jew? Have you ever violated the Ten Commandments? Have you ever told a lie, stolen, committed adultery, been disrespectful to your parents, or coveted what is not yours? If so, you're now guilty before a holy God. Do you have an atoning blood sacrifice for your sins? The Old Testament portion of what many call the Bible says, "*Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin.*" (Leviticus 17:11). In your all-roads-lead-to-Rome religion, you'd better pray you don't meet Yahweh (the Jewish name for God) without a blood sacrifice to atone for your sins. The God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses is a forgiving God, but on His terms. The main problem is that since the destruction of the last Jewish temple in 70 A.D (A.C.E.) by Titus' Roman army, there have been no blood sacrifices. Technically speaking, Judaism has had no true forgiveness to offer its followers other than following the law sinlessly from birth to death (which is no small feat).

Do you expect to meet the Buddha after death? Have you lead a life of meditation and self-renunciation? Have you renounced the desires of this life which are the root of all evil? Have you followed the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path as taught by Buddha? If not, much like Hinduism, you may be in for a series of not-so-good reincarnations.

Time and space do not allow me to explore Confucianism, Taoism, Jainism, Zoroastrianism, etc. But, in each of them, as with the religions I have just discussed, there is little hope for you if you've not belonged to their religion and lead a life of good works based on their teachings; which is hard to do if you don't know what those teachings are.

There is only one major religion on the face of this earth that offers real hope to sinners, who tells a thief on a cross that "*Today you will be with me in paradise,*" who offers hope and forgiveness to prostitutes and adulterers, who portrays a God who would run after a rebellious prodigal son—a God who would greet his wayward son with hugs and kisses, who would put a ring of inheritance on his finger, place a beautiful robe on his back, kill the fatted calf and throw a party. (Luke 15:11-32) Who offers such hope, love and forgiveness?—Jesus.

There is a story told of a brother and sister who got their school pictures. The sister complained about how bad her pictures looked. She said, "*These pictures just don't do me justice!*" Her brother replied, "*You don't want justice, you want mercy!*"—You see, virtually every religion you can think of, except one, offers very little hope of forgiveness as they're almost all based on works and an unbending law. If you haven't performed enough good works, based on their teachings, you may not make it to Heaven.—Do not pass go, do not collect \$200.

I don't know about you, but I am in need of mercy when I die. I don't want justice. I don't want my sins (bad karma) clinging to my soul like black road tar one can't wash off.

The blood Jesus shed on the cross is central to everything the New Testament teaches. The whole context of the crucifixion is set in the context of the Jewish Passover, and the shedding of a lamb's blood for

the sins of the nation. As John the Baptist states: Jesus is the “*Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world*” [John 1:29]. To evangelicals, either these scriptures are wrong and misleading, or else the shed blood of Jesus Christ is a reality, and our response to it determines our eternal destiny: heaven or hell. I am all for being sensitive and tolerant, but I also believe truth is truth, and it must be proclaimed no matter how people respond. As one person said, “*We must speak the truth even if our voice trembles.*”

In our world, as in the days of the apostles, to preach such a message may bring with it a high price-tag. It cost Jesus and most of his disciples their lives. True followers of Christ are told to expect persecution for preaching this message [Luke 6:22,32, Philippians 1:29; I Corinthians 1:18-25; II Timothy 3:12; etc.].—Is the liberal preaching of Christ met with opposition and persecution? Usually not, because its message is non-offensive. According to many, or even most, liberals “*It doesn’t matter what you believe as long as you are sincere.*”—Is that the message Jesus preached? Not remotely.

Admittedly, some evangelicals bring on persecution because they are obnoxious [people would find them irritating even if they were selling Girl Scout cookies].—However, as an evangelical, I feel compelled to take the gospel message to as many people as possible. It is an issue of obedience to Jesus who told me to preach His *gospel* to the whole world and to make disciples of all nations [Matthew 29:19,20]. If that turns people off in our scientific age, so be it. The preaching of Christ as Lord was offensive in the first century. Technology may have changed, but the hearts of men are still in need of a Savior, and there is only one Savior, Jesus [I Timothy 2:5; II Timothy 1:8-12].

The whole of the Christian faith, the *gospel* as it is called, is founded upon a historical life message, reportedly from God, that salvation [being saved from hell] is a gift for all who will *believe* and *receive* the Son [John 1:12, 3:16-18; Ephesians 2:8,9, I John 5:11-13, etc.]. The New Testament, the Apostles Creed, and virtually all early church creeds were founded upon three unshakable historical truths: (1) Jesus died (2) Jesus died for our sins (3) Jesus arose from the dead [I Corinthians 15:3-4]. When liberalism dismisses such teachings, it is not because of historical facts, but because of certain presuppositions. As mentioned before, it negates the entire message of the New Testament as well as the writings of the church fathers.

Liberalism usually teaches a compromise, that because of Christ’s redemptive work, *all* will be saved [universal salvation]. The term universal salvation can be used in two ways: (1) that no one will ever go to hell, that hell does not exist. (2) that hell is real but eventually God will restore *all things*, even Satan, demons, and those in hell.

Personally, I reject the first definition. The weight of evidence and the message of scripture is that hell does exist. In fact, Jesus talked about hell more than all other Bible writers combined. To deny its existence is to reject our Lord’s own teaching. If you are interested in seeing what Jesus had to say on this subject, look up the following verses: Matthew 3:12; 5:22, 29,30; 7:19; 8:12; 10:28; 13:30, 42, 56; 18:6-9; 22:30; 23:14,15, 33; 25:4, 30, 41, 46; 26:24; Mark 8:36; 9:43-48; 12:40; 16:16; Luke 3:17, 12:5; 13:28; 16:24, 20:47; John 3:18, 36; 5:29; 12:48; 8:21; 16:11; 17:12.—Add to these the many other verses from Paul, Peter, James, the writer of Hebrews, and John [as found in the Epistles of John and Revelation], plus Old Testament references such as Daniel 12:12, etc., and the scriptural evidence for hell existing is overwhelming. [I wish it weren’t.]

One reason I believe hell exists has to do with free will. As long as free will exists, someone might say, “*I’ll be damned if I will submit to God!*”—And God will say, “*Your will be done.*” God honors free will, even though I believe Jesus, in love, died for all. To me hell is the logical and just alternative to rejecting his love. What if hell is the ultimate choice revealing the severity of sin, and the fullest expression of God loving us enough to give us free will with resulting consequences?

I disagree with my Calvinist brothers who teach that Jesus only died for the elect [*limited atonement*]. In II Peter 2:1-3, Peter mentions that certain false teachers had rejected the Christ who “bought” [redeemed] them. Peter goes on to speak of their just condemnation.—According to this passage they were *redeemed*, but lost. What a concept: *redeemed but lost*. Christ had paid for their sins, but it was of no avail because of their rejection of him. Just as a prisoner can refuse his pardon, these false teachers

forfeited salvation by rejecting Christ's redemptive work on the cross.

Scripture teaches that Christ's death and redemption was for the whole world [John 3:16]. However, only those who receive it will actually experience this salvation [John 1:12; Ephesians 2:8,9; I John 5:11-13]. For those who reject it, for those who refuse to *believe*, scripture teaches that there will be judgment and condemnation [e.g., John 1:12; 3:18]. Paul echoes the same sentiments in Romans 9:1,2, 22; 10:1-4; 11:20-22 regarding the Jews who rejected Christ as their Messiah. Did Christ die for all? Yes. Will all be saved? No.

What does the term *salvation* mean if it doesn't mean *saved* from something? Doesn't the justice side of God make hell, or some form of punishment, necessary? Should the Hitlers and the Satanists who choose evil go unpunished when they knowingly reject Christ and his offer of forgiveness? Isn't hell, which is the absence of God, granting what the sinner has chosen?—If anyone should know about hell it is Jesus, the eternal God become man. Only a fool would ignore his warnings.

Hell doesn't sound like a joke to me.—I wish to God it were a joke.—Hell is the most unsettling doctrine I am asked to embrace as a Christian. Jesus spoke often of judgment, even going so far as to say that on the day of judgment, men will render account for every careless word they've uttered [Matthew 12:36]. John 3:16, the most quoted verse in the Bible, states that those who believe will "*not perish*" [implying hell]. Verse 18, just two verses later, says, "*Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already . . .*" Those who do not believe will perish. Where will they be condemned?—To Hell.

According to scripture, all of us will stand before God as either forgiven or unforgiven. If there is no such place as hell, as some liberal theologians say, then why doesn't God put a stop to evil and get on with the good stuff? What purpose is being served by allowing evil and suffering to continue? It is because hell *is* real that God delays. God is giving people time to repent and receive salvation. It is God's mercy that has delayed His coming. [See: Matthew 13:36-43 and II Peter 3:8,9.] As C.S. Lewis said, God is giving us time to ". . . *join His side freely . . . once the Author walks onto the stage the play is over.*" [From *Mere Christianity*, MacMillan Pub.]

Do you realize that out of the 66 books of the Bible, only two books in the entire Bible [The *Song Of Solomon* and *Philemon*] do not have as one of their major themes man's sin, God's judgment and God's redemptive plan? [Some would even argue that The *Song Of Solomon* does as well.] My point? Liberalism, with its teaching of universal salvation, is diametrically opposed to virtually *all* that the Bible teaches concerning sin and salvation.

The second position concerning universal salvation is that God will one day restore all of creation back to wholeness, even Lucifer (Satan) and those in hell. Concerning this position, I cannot dogmatically say one way or the other. Only God knows for sure. It would be nice if that were true; that way there would be a happy ending for everyone. However, as I read scripture, I do not see this doctrine being taught, even though the restoration of Israel and the Church are both clearly taught. If one thinks of *everlasting*, not as a concept of time, I suppose it could be argued that hell may not endure forever in the sense of time. Personally, I would hate to wager my soul on the possibility that hell is not eternal [as a concept of time]. The Bible speaks of hell as being eternal and never-ending [e.g., Mark 9:48; II Thessalonians 1:9, Jude 1:7; etc.]. Only God knows the ultimate end of those who descend into hell, and that is as it should be. I know that God can be trusted to do what is right.

CONCLUSION

You have hung with me thus far, even though I have challenged you to rethink many of your beliefs. In humility, I ask you to weigh one last major concept, even though I know it may take you out of your comfort zone, and that is the topic of a literal devil who disguises himself as an angel of light. I believe that some major deceptions which have occurred within liberalism have not been done intentionally, but

have been devised by the deceiver, Satan. Let me state my position, and then explain why I feel and think the way I do.

I believe that the majority of liberals have been deceived by God's arch enemy, Satan, especially in regard to the word of God. It is my position that Satan would like nothing more than for you, or anyone, to begin doubting God's word; for once one begins to doubt the truth of God's word, one is like a disarmed soldier. Paul describes the Christian's armor in Ephesians 6:10-18. The only offensive weapon he mentions is "*the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.*" When Jesus was under attack from Satan, as recorded in Matthew 4:1-11, he used scripture exclusively to combat Satan's attacks. One of Satan's primary attacks against God's Church is upon the authority and reliability of God's word, the Bible. Such deception and attacks were forewarned in scripture [e.g., II Timothy 3:1-4:5; II Peter 1:19-2:2; etc.].

Since I'm speaking so frankly, allow me to address who I consider to be the the real enemy. It is not you. It is not liberals or liberalism. You are not my enemy, and I don't hate you. Paul says, "*For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.*" [Ephesians 6:13]—The enemy is an evil spiritual force in the heavenly realm, and he commands legions of demons. I hate the deception and impotence Satan has foisted upon well-intentioned people who have bought into the liberal lies, not about showing kindness to one's fellow man, but in regard to truth and salvation.

Jesus taught about fallen angels, called demons, more than any other Bible writer. Where do demons fit into liberal theology? If literal demons don't exist, then was Christ psychotic or delusional because He addressed and cast out demons? And, what does Paul mean when he says that Satan *has blinded the minds of the unbelieving* [II Corinthians 4:4], or that Satan comes *disguised as an angel of light* [II Corinthians 11:14]?

Do you believe in holy angels? At Easter, don't you read about the angels sitting on the tombstone as the women approached the empty tomb? At your Christmas pageant, or in the nativity scene in the front of your church, don't you represent angels bringing "*good tidings of great joy?*" Or, is this another liberal pretense? For sake of argument, if you believe good angels exist, couldn't evil angels (demons) also exist?

Whether you believe me or not, and without trying to over sensationalize, on more than one occasion I have heard demons speak through individuals. Once, when I was working with a young Satanist who wanted out of Satanism, I met to pray with her along with a pastor's wife. This young girl had a *spirit guide* (demon). The girl later reported to me what she saw happening as I began to pray for her.

Her spirit guide, who had always appeared in her mind as a beautiful young woman, suddenly turned into a ghastly demon. At that moment a deep voice from within the girl began telling me, "*Leave her alone! You can't have her. She's mine!*"—The girl began to literally pull out her hair and we had to momentarily restrain her. I commanded the demon in the name of Christ to be quiet and "*go back down*"—and it did. Immediately she calmed down. Later this demon was cast out as the girl renounced her involvement in Satanism and invited Christ into her life.

Another time a young man talked to me. He said that he had become a Christian, but felt there were still demons in his life as a result of his past involvement with drugs, having a "spirit guide," pornography, being a former Neo-Nazi, etc. My wife and I agreed to pray with him. We claimed the Lord's protection, based on the fact that as children of God we outrank and have authority over demons (Ephesians 1:19-23). After praying I began to address any demon(s) present in his life. I said, "*If you are present I know you can hear me, and in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I command you, what is your name?*"

All of a sudden the man began to convulse, the blood vessels on his neck stood out, his face turned red and the muscles in his face began to constrict, his fingers curled up like claws and he began to hiss at me and make deep growling sounds. (And yes, it was scary!) One by one, as I addressed the demons, they revealed their true identity by name, and one by one, as the man renounced the sins associated with each

demon, we commanded them to leave, and they did. As the first demon was leaving, the man's head turned up and to the left, as though an invisible hand were pulling something out of him. His body jerked like a bolt of electricity just went through him. He almost flipped his chair over backwards as it crashed into the wall. Then, suddenly the man's body went limp. He fell to floor, and he began to sob that he had ever opened his life up to such an evil being.

As we prayed and counseled with him we discovered he had several other demons. While I was addressing one demon the man looked up at me and said, "*The demon wants to hurt you.*"—I commanded the demon, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, to tell this person why he couldn't hurt me. The man's arms, controlled by the demon, immediately pointed to the left and this demonic voice said, "*Because of him!*"—I looked and there was no one there. I said, "*Who?*" and the demon responded, "*There is an angel standing there!*"—I'm not making this up. This did happen.

The thing that was powerful to me was that the demons obeyed me when I used the name of Jesus and quoted scripture. At first, I confess that my fear was very high and my faith very low, but once I learned that they would obey the Word of God, and that the name of Jesus had power over them, my fears began to subside and my faith began to increase dramatically.

I have seen and heard too much, and have talked to too many Satanists who have conjured up demons, channeled demons, levitated objects, cast spells and curses (which really work), seen ghostly manifestations, seen a Bible self-ignite, etc. not to believe an evil spiritual world exists. While many Christians remain ignorant of these areas, occultists believe because they *know*. In the last ten years I have worked with well over one hundred Satanists and victims of Satanic Ritual Abuse [SRA]. I've heard them tell of human sacrifices. I have heard story, after story, after story, of supernatural, non-psychological manifestations. Humanly and psychologically speaking, I know of no explanation other than that the supernatural world of Satan and demons is real.

I *believe* because of what I have seen and heard, not to mention that it is consistent with scripture. In fact, you couldn't pay me enough to make me go into these types of spiritual encounters with a liberal theology. I'm afraid I'd get my butt kicked. Without the authority of God's word as my protector, I honestly believe I'd be dead.

As you reflect upon what I've said, I know my position has some pretty obvious, far-reaching implications. To me, if I were in your position, I would want to ask myself whether it is possible that, just maybe, I had been sincerely misled [Romans 10:2]?—It is not an issue of loving God. I know you love God, but I also believe that by embracing some major false teachings, these teachings are actually keeping you from God. I believe that it is time that you started *doubting your doubts*. If you are interested in objectively studying the evangelical position, contrasted with liberalism, I would recommend you read *Christianity and Liberalism* by J. Gresham Machen [Eerdmans Pub.], or Josh McDowell's, *Evidence That Demands A Verdict, Volumes I and II*.

Could liberalism be a Trojan horse which Satan designed to attack and destroy the faith from within the Church? By trying to be so philosophically open-minded, is it possible that liberalism swallowed Satan's old lie first whispered to Eve, "*Has God really said . . .?*"

If the evangelical position is correct, and Satan has gotten liberals doubting the accuracy and reliability of scripture, to the point they no longer trust it, then he [Satan] has effectively stripped them of their major weapon against himself, and cut off the clearest link of communication between them and our Commander in Chief. Could it be that Satan used the pride and arrogance of certain philosophers and liberal theologians to inject his lies into the heart and soul of the Church; all under the guise of science and scholarship?—You know, "*All that stuff about sin, judgment, and hell is a bunch of garbage. There's been a big mistake. The Bible's all screwed up. Ignore all that crap about hell and choices really mattering. Everyone's got a free ticket to Heaven. Celebrate. Be free. Do your own thing.*"—Does that remotely sound like the Jesus of the Bible? Does that remotely sound like any of God's people in the Bible?—No. So who does it sound like?—I think you know.

In II Corinthians 11:4 Paul spoke of some who believed in *another Jesus*; same name, different spirit. Liberals believe in *Jesus*, but I ask, “Which *Jesus*?” Do they believe in the Christ of the Bible who loved us, who died for some very real sins, who makes salvation conditional upon acceptance of him? Is it the Jesus who boldly angered the religious establishment of his day by calling them white-washed tombs full of dead mens’ bones? Is it the Jesus who had the audacity to tell one of the most religious men of Israel, “*Unless a man is born again he shall never see the Kingdom of God.*”? Is it the Christ who told his disciples, “. . . *no one comes to the Father but through me.*”?—Is it the *historical* Jesus of the Bible, or the *mythological* Jesus of modern liberalism?

So what if liberals preach a *different Jesus* and a *different gospel*? Let’s let the apostle Paul answer that one: “*If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned.*” [Galatians 1:9] Does modern liberalism proclaim Paul’s gospel?—No. Would Jesus, Peter, Paul or any of the apostles or early church fathers, have welcomed with open arms any of today’s liberal theologians or their theology?—Again, no. Jesus, Paul, and the early disciples did anything but espouse liberal theology.—Correct? This is not to say Jesus and his disciples would be singing in the choir at First Church Sunday morning either, but Jesus and the early disciples were anything but *liberal*. They were conservative orthodox Jews who staunchly defended the Law of Moses and the prophets.

Had you walked with the Jesus of scripture and listened to him teach about faith and love, of Heaven and hell, seen him cast out demons, seen him heal, walk on water, etc., could you, with your current beliefs, have been one of his disciples? Had Jesus appeared to you physically after his death, ate some fish in front of you, asked you to put your finger in his nail prints, asked you to place your hand into his side, would you still deny his physical resurrection?—This is the faith and teachings of the Bible. Jesus taught it. His disciples believed it. Church history affirms it. Why do so many liberals deny it?—Is it because of factual evidence?—No, rather it is because a major deception has occurred.

Think through the implications with me. If the majority of liberals really feel and believe that the Bible is 90% false [most of the Old Testament, almost all of Paul’s writings, etc.], then why do they remain Christian? Why don’t they switch religions?

Would a person continue to use a math book if over 90% of its math problems were wrong? Would one say, “*It still serves as a good example*”? Would parents recommend that their school board adopt a history book if they believed 90% of its historical facts and teachings were wrong? Would a Muslim remain a Muslim if he/she thought that 90% of the Qur’an [Koran] was hog wash? So, why do liberals remain Christian? Why profess to adhere to a religion and a Bible one so profoundly disagrees with? Why profess to follow Jesus as an example, when in fact they don’t. Except for Jesus’ teachings on love and caring for one’s fellow man, liberalism contradicts almost everything Jesus stood for and taught.

Can you imagine infiltrating the Islamic faith, and then systematically trying to destroy 90% of everything Islam stands for? I’m sure you wouldn’t. So why are modern day liberals trying to destroy Christianity from within? I believe it is because they are unknowingly controlled by a dark spiritual force. From firsthand experience, I can tell you Satan and his associates hate Christians and Christianity. Through their deception of many fine people, hundreds of thousands of people have been turned away from the real faith of Jesus as taught in scripture.

Why do kids eventually reject belief in Santa Claus? Because, while the story line may be good, it is not true. If the Christian faith is no more than a good story line based on historical falsehoods, is it any wonder that people are leaving liberal churches in droves, and so many liberal churches are dying? When you get down to it, what does liberalism have to offer besides a feel-good, humanistic, naturalistic religion that is not remotely akin to the faith or teachings of the real Jesus or the true Church? What hope is there beyond this life if one rejects the notion of Heaven? What deterrent is there to evil if there is no judgment, no consequences for one’s behavior? What real hope can liberals preach at a funeral? What incentives are there to live holy, godly lives?

Am I being too hard? If I didn’t really care and appreciate liberals as people and friends, I wouldn’t

have taken the time to write this.

Do you remember the story of the emperor who was tricked into believing that his tailors had made a suit of invisible clothes? Because no one wanted to offend the king, everyone kept the lie going. “*Oh yes, they are wonderful clothes, beautiful!*” until one day, during a parade, a little boy spoke out, “*He has no clothes on!*” Suddenly, the lie was broken and the king realized that he’d been tricked. Truth has a way of shattering illusion.

I feel a little bit like that little boy. Much pretending accompanies liberalism.—“*We pretend Jesus is alive even though we know he’s not.*” “*We pretend to revere the Bible, even though we think 90% of it is false.*” “*We say the Lord’s Prayer but we really don’t believe there is a Father in Heaven,*” “*We repeat the Apostles Creed, but we believe most of it is myth.*” And so liberalism parades on.—“*But the Emperor has no clothes!*” Or should I say, “*Liberalism has no clothes?*” Stripped of the historical clothing of truth, what is left besides mythology based on distortions and lies? Why continue to sing “*Up from the grave he arose,*” if Jesus’ bones are hard and brittle, or have turned to dust [ashes to ashes, dust to dust]? Where is the hope? Where is the truth? Where is the integrity?

I am aware that there are many emotional feelings associated with changing a long-held position, not the least of which is pride and fear. What you do with the facts and opinions I’ve expressed is up to you. I’m not here to play God. Guarding the gospel is a bit like guarding a lion. The best way to guard it is to turn it loose and get out of the way. I have tried to turn the gospel and the power of God’s word loose in your thinking. Now it is time for me to get out of the way. I leave it to you and God to arrive at a conclusion.

In closing, I share with you the simple words of scripture. Will you read this last portion of this booklet with an open mind as you prayerfully, meditatively allow God’s Holy Spirit to speak to you? What you will be reading is 100% from the Bible, except for the few clarifying words I place in brackets. These passages are reflective of most of the major themes of Scripture, both Old and New Testaments. With few exceptions, the verses are written as they appear chronologically in scripture, beginning with Genesis and culminating in Revelation. You may find, as I did, that these verses both convict and comfort, terrify and give hope. If you have problems with any of these concepts, remember these are God’s words and thoughts, not mine.

A READING FROM GOD’S WORD

HOW IT ALL BEGAN

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.¹ So God created man in his own image . . . male and female.² God saw all that he had made and it was very good.³ The Lord God planted a garden in the east, in Eden, and there he put the man he had formed.⁴ And the Lord God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.⁵ . . . “You will not surely die,” the serpent said to the woman. “For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good from evil.”⁶ . . . the woman . . . took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband . . . Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked.⁷ . . . the Lord God banished [them] from the Garden of Eden.⁸

The Lord saw how great man’s wickedness on the earth had become and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time . . . his [God’s] heart was filled with pain.⁹ But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord.¹⁰ So God said to Noah, “I am going to put an end to all people.¹¹ . . . make yourself an ark.¹² . . . I will establish my covenant with you . . . You are to bring into the ark two of every living creature¹³. . . I will send rain on the earth for forty days and nights; and I will wipe from

the face of the earth every living creature I have made.¹⁴ . . . The flood waters came. . . Everything on dry land . . . died.¹⁵

GOD BEGINS ANEW

. . . God blessed Noah.¹⁶

[Many years later] . . . The LORD . . . said to Abram [Abraham], “I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; . . . I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”¹⁷

The LORD your God has chosen you [Jewish descendants of Abraham] out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession. The LORD did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. But it was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath he swore to your forefathers . . . Know therefore that the LORD your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commands. But those who hate him he will repay to their face by destruction . . .¹⁸

When you enter the land the LORD your God is giving you, do not learn to imitate the detestable ways of the nations there. Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or cast spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to the LORD, and because of these detestable practices the LORD your God will drive out those nations before you.¹⁹

THINGS START TO GO WRONG

If only you had paid attention to my commands, your peace would have been like a river, your righteousness like the waves of the sea. . . “There is no peace,” says the LORD, “for the wicked.”²⁰ Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God for he will freely pardon. “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the LORD. “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts . . . so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.”²¹

Now this was the sin of your sister Sodom [Israel]: She and her daughters were arrogant, overfed and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy. They were haughty and did detestable things before me . . .²² When I say to the wicked, ‘O wicked man, you will surely die,’ and you do not speak out to dissuade him from his ways, that wicked man will die for his sin, and I will hold you accountable for his blood . . . Say to them, ‘As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! . . . Why will you die . . .?’²³

Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.²⁴

I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed: “O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with all who love him and obey his commands, we have sinned and done wrong. We have been wicked and have rebelled; we have turned away from your commands and laws. We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name . . . Lord, you are righteous, but this day we are covered with shame . . . O LORD, we and our kings, our princes and our fathers are covered with shame because we have sinned against you. The Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against him; we have not obeyed the LORD our God . . . Therefore the curses and sworn judgments [cf. Deuteronomy 28-30] written in the Law of Moses, the servant of God, have been

poured out on us, because we have sinned against you . . . The LORD did not hesitate to bring the disaster upon us, for the LORD our God is righteous in everything he does; yet we have not obeyed him.”²⁵

GOD WRITES HIMSELF INTO HIS OWN STORY AND BECOMES ONE OF US

The LORD himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel [which means *God with us*].²⁶ God sent the angel Gabriel . . . to a virgin . . . The virgin’s name was Mary.²⁷ The angel answered [Mary], “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son Of God.²⁸ Joseph . . . took Mary home as his wife. But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he was given the name Jesus.”²⁹

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men . . . He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God . . . born of God. The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.³⁰

“ . . . I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless is is born again . . . You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows wherever it pleases. You have heard its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”³¹ For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son. This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light . . .”³²

“Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him. I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.”³³ “

. . . nor does his word dwell in you, for you do not believe the one he sent. You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life.”³⁴ “The work of God is this, to believe in the one he has sent.”³⁵

“All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away . . . For my Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.”³⁶ “My teaching is not my own. It comes from him who sent me. If anyone chooses to do God’s will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own.”³⁷ “I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins.”³⁸

“So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed . . . I am telling you what I have seen in the Father’s presence.”³⁹ “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full . . . I lay down my life—only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again.”⁴⁰ My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand . . . I and the Father are one.”⁴¹ I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes

in me will never die. Do you believe this?"⁴²

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am . . . I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me . . . Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father . . . If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—The Spirit of truth."⁴³

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing . . . If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin. Now, however, they have no excuse for their sin. He who hates me hates my Father as well."⁴⁴

"I came from the Father and entered the world; now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father."⁴⁵ "Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent . . . My prayer is not that you [God] take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one . . . Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth."⁴⁶

THE DEATH OF JESUS CHRIST

Then the detachment of soldiers with its commander and the Jewish officials arrested Jesus . . . Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged . . . So the soldiers took charge of Jesus. Carrying his own cross, he went out to a place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha). Here they crucified him, and with him two others—one on each side and Jesus in the middle."⁴⁷

But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all . . . For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."⁴⁸

The soldiers also came up and mocked him. . . One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!" But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."⁴⁹

HE'S ALIVE!

He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.⁵⁰ . . . While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have."⁵¹

A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."⁵²

By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than

five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living . . . If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead . . . if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins . . . For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.⁵³

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. . . “Men of Galilee,” they [angels] said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”⁵⁴

MAKING SENSE OF IT ALL

. . . for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified [declared innocent] freely by his grace [an undeserved gift] through the redemption [purchase] that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood.⁵⁵ Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him.⁵⁶ But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him!⁵⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! . . . God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.⁵⁸

I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.⁵⁹ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.⁶⁰

All this is evidence that God’s judgment is right, and as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which we are suffering. God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed.⁶¹

For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.⁶² For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form . . .⁶³ Since then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.⁶⁴ For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.⁶⁵

And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.⁶⁶

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.⁶⁷

But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves . . . For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment; if he did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly people, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others; if he condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by burning them to ashes, and made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly . . . the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment . . .⁶⁸

First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, “Where is this coming he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.” But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's word, the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water. By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.⁶⁹

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness . . . Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world.⁷⁰

How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him . . . We are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.⁷¹ And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment . . . There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.⁷²

And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life. This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.⁷³

“I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So,

because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am going to spit you out of my mouth. Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in [to him] and eat with him and he with me.⁷⁴

Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.⁷⁵—Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.⁷⁶

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.⁷⁷ Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it. For we also have had the gospel [good news] preached to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith . . . Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.⁷⁸

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

Thus ends the reading of God's word. I encourage you to read and re-read these passages. Look them up. Read them in context. Do you believe them? More importantly, do you know Him?—not just in theory, but know Him as a living presence in your life? If not, He stands at the door of your heart knocking. Quietly humble yourself, and in your own words, confess your sins and your need of Him. Invite Him to live within you.—Once you do this, try to find a church where you can grow and be spiritually fed. Not all churches are the same as you know. Check around. Ask God to lead you to one that honors Him, where Scripture and the salvation message are preached with integrity, and where you sense the love and presence of the living Christ.—May his peace and presence go with you.

APPENDIX A: CHRISTIANITY AND LIBERALISM

By J Gresham Machen,

Eerdmans Pub., Grand Rapids, MI. 1923, 1999.

One of the best books I have ever read delineating between Christianity and liberalism is the book, “*Christianity and Liberalism*,” written by the late Professor of New Testament, J. Gresham Machen, Westminster Theological Seminar. This work was first published in the Princeton Theological Review. Although it has been around for three quarter of a century, it has yet to be refuted, and its arguments are as historically sound today as when they were first presented. Because I had already completed my manuscript before reading his book, and because it would have been very difficult to weave his work into mine, I decided to include some quotes by him in this special appendix.

“ . . . what the liberal theologian has retained after abandoning to the enemy one Christian doctrine after another is not Christianity at all, but a religion which is so entirely different from Christianity as to belong to a distinct category . . . modern liberalism not only is a different religion from Christianity

but belongs in a totally different class of religions . . . the liberal attempt at reconciling Christianity with modern science has really relinquished everything distinctive of Christianity . . .” [pages 6,7]

“If . . . all the preaching of the Church should be controlled by the liberalism which in many quarters has already become preponderant, then, we believe, Christianity would at last have perished from the earth and the gospel would have sounded forth for the last time.”[pages 8]

“Christianity is an historical phenomenon, like the Roman Empire, or the Kingdom of Prussia, or the United States of America. And as an historical phenomenon it must be investigated on the basis of historical evidence. . . The beginning of Christianity constitute a fairly definite historical phenomenon. The Christian movement originated a few days after the death of Jesus of Nazareth . . . if any one fact is clear, on the basis of this evidence, it is that the Christian movement at its inception was not just a way of life in the modern sense, but a way of life founded upon a message. It was based, not upon mere feeling, not upon a mere program of

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| 1. Genesis 1:1 | 27. Luke 1:26,27 | 53. I Corinthians 15:2-6a, 13-15, 17, 22 |
| 2. Genesis 1:27 | 28. Luke 1:35 | 54. Acts 1:8,9,11 |
| 3. Genesis 1:31 | 29. Matthew 1:24 | 55. Romans 3:23-25 |
| 4. Genesis 2:8 | 30. John 1:1-4, 10, 12, 13b, 14 | 56. Romans 4:7,8 |
| 5. Genesis 2:17 | 31. John 3:3, 7,8 | 57. Romans 5:8,9 |
| 6. Genesis 3:4 | 32. John 3:16-21a | 58. II Corinthians 5:17,21 |
| 7. Genesis 3:6,7 | 33. John 5:22-24 | 59. Ephesians 1:17-21 |
| 8. Genesis 3:23 | 34. John 5:37b-40 | 60. Ephesians 2:8-10 |
| 9. Genesis 6:5,6 | 35. John 6:29 | 61. II Thessalonians 1:5-10 |
| 10. Genesis 6:8 | 36. John 6:37, 40 | 62. Colossians 1:13,14 |
| 11. Genesis 6:13 | 37. John 7:16,17 | 63. Colossians 2:19 |
| 12. Genesis 6:14 | 38. John 8:24 | 64. Colossians 3:1-4 |
| 13. Genesis 6:18, 19 | 39. John 8:34,38a | 65. I Thessalonians 4:16-18 |
| 14. Genesis 7:4 | 40. John 10:10, 17b, 18] | 66. II Timothy 2:24-26 |
| 15. Genesis 7:6, 23 | 41. John 10:28,30 | 67. II Timothy 3:16-4:4 |
| 16. Genesis 9:1 | 42. John 11:25 | 68. II Peter 2:1, 4-6] |
| 17. Genesis 12:1-3 | 43. John 14:1-3,6, 9, 15-17a | 69. II Peter 3:3-9, 13 |
| 18. Deuteronomy. 7:6-10a | 44. John 15:5,22, 23a | 70. I John 1:9, 2:15-17 |
| 19. Deuteronomy 18:9-13 | 45. John 16:28 | 71. I John 3:1-2 |
| 20. Isaiah 48:18,22 | 46. John 17:3, 15, 17 | 72. I John 4:16-18 |
| 21. Isaiah 55:6-9,11 | 47. John 18:12; 19:1, 16b-18] | 73. I John 5:11-14 |
| 22. Ezekiel 16:49,50 | 48. Isaiah 53:5, 6, 12b | 74. Revelation 3:2 |
| 23. Ezekiel 33:8, 11 | 49. Luke 23:36,39-43 | 75. Daniel 12:2 |
| 24. Isaiah 59:1,2 | 50. Luke 24:25-27 | 76. Revelation 20:11-15 |
| 25. Daniel 9:4-7a, 8-10, 11b, 14 | 51. Luke 24:36-39 | 77. Revelation 21:1-4 |
| 26. Isaiah 7:14 | | |

work, but upon an account of facts.” [pages 21,22]

“The primitive Church was concerned not merely with what Jesus had said, but also, and primarily, with what Jesus had done. The world was to be redeemed through the proclamation of an event. And with the event went the meaning of the event; and the setting forth of the event with the meaning of the event was doctrine. . . ‘Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried’—that is history . . . yet we are now asked to believe that the thing that has given Christianity its power all through the centuries was a blunder . . . even if Jesus Himself taught a religion like that of modern liberalism, it would still be doubtful whether such a religion could rightly be called Christianity.” [page 29, 30]

“We shall never have vital contact with Jesus if we attend to His person and neglect the message; for it is the message which makes Him ours.” [Page 42]

“. . . if we are to have a non-doctrinal religion, or a doctrinal religion founded merely on general truth, we must give up not only Paul, no only the primitive Jerusalem Church, but also Jesus Himself.” [page 45]

“Ultimately the attack is not against the seventeenth century, but against the Bible and against Jesus Himself.” [pages 46]

“Christian fellowship exists only between those to whom the message has become the very basis of all life.” [page 52]

“To say, ‘Jesus is God,’ is meaningless unless the word ‘God’ has an antecedent meaning attached to it. . . the disciples to whom Jesus was speaking had already a very definite conception of God; a knowledge of the one supreme Person was presupposed in all that Jesus said.” [page 56]

“According to the Bible, man is a sinner under the just condemnation of God; according to modern liberalism, there is really no such thing as sin . . . The change is nothing less than the substitution of paganism for Christianity as the dominant view of life.” [pages 64,65]

“Christianity depends, not upon a complex of ideas, but upon the narration of an event. Without that event, the world, in the Christian view, is altogether dark, and humanity is lost under the guilt of sin.” [page 70]

“We know that the gospel story is true partly because of the early date of the documents in which it appears, the evidence as to their authorship, the internal evidence of their truth, the impossibility of explaining them as being based upon deception or upon myth.” [page 72]

“The modern liberal rejects not only the doctrine of plenary inspiration, but even such respect for the Bible as would be proper over against any ordinarily trustworthy book.” [page 76]

“It is no wonder, then, that liberalism is totally different from Christianity, for the foundation is different. Christianity is founded upon the Bible. It bases upon the Bible both its thinking and its life.” [page 79]

“He [Jesus] did not say: ‘Trust me to give you acceptance with God, because acceptance with God is not difficult; God does not regard sin so seriously after all.’ On the contrary Jesus present the wrath of God in a more awful way than it was afterwards presented by His disciples; it was Jesus—Jesus whom modern liberals represent as a mild-mannered exponent of an indiscriminating love—it was Jesus who spoke of the outer darkness and the everlasting fire, of the sins that shall not be forgiven either in this world or in that which is to come.” [page 84]

“Liberalism regards Him as an Example and guide; Christianity, as a Saviour: liberalism makes Him an example for faith; Christianity, the object of faith.” [page 96]

“The historian would indeed be obliged to say that no naturalistic explanation of the origin of the Church has yet been discovered, and that the evidence for the miracle is exceedingly strong.” [page 104]

“ . . . the question concerning all miracles is simply the question of the acceptance or rejection of the Saviour that the New Testament presents . . . The difference between those two views is the difference between two totally diverse religions.” [pages 109]

“ . . . the witness of the New Testament is everywhere the same; the New Testament everywhere presents One who was both God and man.” [page 114]

“The Jesus of the New Testament has at least one advantage over the Jesus of modern reconstruction—He is real.” [page 116]

“Jesus is our Savior, not by virtue of what He said, not even by virtue of when He was, but by what He did. He is our Savior . . . He took upon Himself the dreadful guilt of our sins and bore it instead of us on the cross.” [page 117]

“ . . . one has the feeling that traditional language is being strained to become the expression of totally alien ideas.” [page 118]

“What struck the early observers of Christianity most forcibly was not merely that salvation was offered by means of the Christian gospel, but that all other means were resolutely rejected . . . Salvation, in other words, was not merely through Christ, but it was only through Christ.” [page 128]

